

# Of Ceremonies, And Respects

HE THAT is only real, had need have exceeding great parts of virtue; as the stone had need to be rich, that is set without foil. But if a man mark it well, it is, in praise and commendation of men, as it is in gettings and gains: for the proverb is true, That light gains make heavy purses; for light gains come thick, whereas great, come but now and then. So it is true, that small matters win great commendation, because they are continually in use and in note: whereas the occasion of any great virtue, cometh but on festivals. Therefore it doth much add to a man's reputation, and is (as Queen Isabella said) like perpetual letters commendatory, to have good forms. To attain them, it almost sufficeth not to despise them; for so shall a man observe them in others; and let him trust himself with the rest. For if he labor too much to express them, he shall lose their grace; which is to be natural and unaffected. Some men's behavior is like a verse, wherein every syllable is measured; how can a man comprehend great matters, that breaketh his mind too much, to small observations? Not to use ceremonies at all, is to teach others not to use them again; and so diminisheth respect to himself; especially they be not to be omitted, to strangers and formal natures; but the dwelling upon them, and exalting them above the moon, is not only tedious, but doth diminish the faith and credit of him that speaks. And certainly, there is a kind of conveying, of effectual and imprinting passages amongst compliments, which is of singular use, if a man can hit upon it. Amongst a man's peers, a man shall be sure of familiarity; and therefore it is good, a little to keep state. Amongst a man's inferiors one shall be sure of reverence; and therefore it is good, a little to be familiar. He that is too much in anything, so that he giveth another occasion of satiety, maketh himself cheap. To apply one's self to others, is good; so it be with demonstration, that a man doth it upon regard, and not upon facility. It is a good precept generally, in seconding another, yet to add somewhat of one's own: as if you will grant his opinion, let it be with some distinction; if you will follow his motion, let it be with condition; if you allow his counsel, let it be with alleging further reason. Men had need beware, how they be too perfect in compliments; for be they never so sufficient otherwise, their enviers will be sure to give them that attribute, to the disadvantage of their greater virtues. It is loss also in business, to be too full of respects, or to be curious, in observing times and opportunities. Solomon saith, He that considereth the wind, shall not sow, and he that looketh to the clouds, shall not reap. A wise man will make more opportunities, than he finds. Men's behavior should be, like their apparel, not too strait or point device, but free for exercise or motion.

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