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AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDING

Every difficult situation one comes up against in his daily dealings with his fellow men is mixed, not clear. It is mixed in the causes that brought it about and it is mixed in the emotions it stirs within us. We should recognise then, that two or even more contradictory viewpoints may be true, or partially true.

"I have an open mind on that question," we often hear someone say. This usually means that he is prepared to listen to all sides of the argument before coming to a final conclusion. It means that he is prepared to change his mind if new facts or new reasons come to hand. It is useful when each side in a controversy comes to see that the other has only the normal share of human wickedness. If only each side would preface its judgements with such a phrase as "it seems to me," many a misunderstanding and conflict would be avoided. To think oneself into "the other fellow's boots" as the saying goes also has a calming effect on our mind.

"I know best and I don't care what anybody says," is the attitude of the person with a closed mind who is not prepared to alter his views in any circumstances. In reality he is narrow-minded and lacks the wisdom and desire to see the other person's point of view, and because of that he never learns. The person with the open mind on the other hand is adding to his knowledge all the time. He is free from prejudice and is not one-eyed. He welcomes the correction of errors and the establishment of the truth no matter the source from which it comes. —W.R.

"I hold myself indebted to any one from whose enlightened understanding another ray of knowledge communicates to mine —really to inform the mind is to correct and enlarge the heart." —Junius.