

ALFRED AYRES

THE MENTOR

Alfred Ayres

The Mentor

«Public Domain»

Ayres A.

The Mentor / A. Ayres — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFATORY NOTE	6
PERSONAL APPEARANCE	8
AT THE DINNER-TABLE	13
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	20

Alfred Ayres
The Mentor / A little book for the
guidance of such men and boys as /
would appear to advantage in the
society of persons of the / better sort

Virtue itself offends when coupled with forbidding manners. – Middleton.

*Well dressed, well bred, well carriaged,
Is ticket good enough to pass us readily
Through every door. – Cowper.*

*A good manner is the best thing in the world, either to get one a good
name or to supply the want of it. – Anonymous.*

PREFATORY NOTE

To select well among old things is almost equal to inventing new ones. – Trublet.

To be welcome in the society of persons of the better sort, who are always persons of culture and refinement, we must ourselves be persons of culture and refinement, *i. e.*, we must know and practise the usages that obtain in refined society, and have some acquaintance with letters and art.

In this world it is only like that seeks like. Those that have nothing in common, whose culture and breeding are unlike, whose thoughts are on different things, never seek the society of one another. What points of sympathy are there between the town gallant and the country spark, between the city belle and the dairymaid? If one would be received in the better social circles, one's culture must be of the kind found there, and, above all, one's manners must be marked by the observance of those usages that are to refined social commerce what the oil is to the engine.

It is often said that wealth is the surest passport to the better circles of society. Nothing could be further from the truth. The surest passport to the better circles of society is moral worth, supplemented with education, a thing that is made up of two other things – instruction and breeding. True, a little money is necessary to make one's self presentable, but this little will always suffice. Wealth, we know, contributes greatly to men's social success, and for good and obvious reasons; but it does not contribute more to social success than does distinction in intellectual pursuits. Laudable achievements will ever have quite as large a following as plethoric purses. Lands and goods are not the things we set the highest value on, many as there are that seem to think so.

This little book will be, I trust, of some service to those men that would better their acquaintance with the usages that govern in the polite world; and I am sure that he that learns half as much by reading it as I have learned in making it will feel well repaid for the time he gives to it.

A. A.

Manners are the ornament of action. – Smiles.

Manners are the lesser morals of life. – Aristotle.

Little minds are vexed with trifles. – La Rochefoucauld.

It is always easy to say a rude thing, but never wise. – Stacy.

Marriage is the true road to Paradise. – De La Ferrière.

Guard the manners if you would protect the morals. – Davidson.

Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. – Robert G. Ingersoll.

Good temper is the essence of good manners. – Anonymous.

Politeness is the expression or imitation of social virtues. – Duclos.

Some people get into the bad habit of being unhappy. – George Eliot.

He that has no character is not a man: he is only a thing. – Chamfort.

Contempt should be the best concealed of our sentiments. – Anonymous.

Sow good services; sweet remembrances will grow from them. – Mme. de Staël.

Good manners are the shadows of virtues, if not virtues themselves. – Anonymous.

Consideration for woman is the measure of a nation's progress in social life. – Grégoire.

In all professions and occupations, good manners are necessary to success. – Mrs. Ward.

Self-love is a balloon filled with wind, from which tempests emerge when pricked. – Voltaire.

Manners are the hypocrisies of nations; the hypocrisies are more or less perfected. – Balzac.

An earthly father who cannot govern by affection is not fit to be a father. – Robert G. Ingersoll.

It is generally allowed that the forming and the perfecting of the character is difficult. – Anonymous.

Respect your wife. Heap earth around that flower, but never drop any in the chalice. – A. de Musset.

Good manners is the art of making easy the persons with whom we are brought into contact. – Anonymous.

One should choose for a wife only such a woman as one would choose for a friend, were she a man. – Joubert.

It is a great misfortune not to have enough wit to speak well, or not enough judgment to keep silent. – La Bruyère.

Experience and observation in society are the chief means by which one acquires the polish that society demands. – Anonymous.

Let what you say be to the purpose, and let it be so said that if we forget the speech we may recollect the manner of it. – Anonymous.

The art of conversation consists less in showing one's own wit than in giving opportunity for the display of the wit of others. – La Bruyère.

There is no surer proof of low origin, or of an innate meanness of disposition, than to be always talking and thinking of being genteel. – Hazlitt.

Were we as eloquent as angels, we should please some men, some women, and some children, much more by listening than by talking. – Lacon.

If you speak the sense of an angel in bad words, and with a disagreeable utterance, nobody will hear you twice who can help it. – Chesterfield.

One of the most effectual ways of pleasing and of making one's self loved is to be cheerful; joy softens more hearts than tears. – Mme. de Sartory.

To live with our enemies as if they may some time become our friends, and to live with our friends as if they may some time become our enemies, is not a moral but a political maxim. – Anonymous.

There is no flattery so exquisite as the flattery of listening. It may be doubted whether the greatest mind is ever proof against it. Socrates may have loved Plato best of all his disciples because he listened best. – Anonymous.

Though conversation in its better part
May be esteemed a gift, and not an art,
Yet much depends, as in the tiller's toil,
On culture and the sowing of the soil.

– Cowper.

Simple nature, however defective, is better than the least objectionable affectation; and, defects for defects, those that are natural are more bearable than affected virtues. – Saint-Evremond.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Dress changes the manners. – Voltaire.

Whose garments wither shall receive faded smiles. – Sheridan Knowles.

Men of sense follow fashion so far that they are neither conspicuous for their excess nor peculiar by their opposition to it. – Anonymous.

The famous French painter, Girard, when quite young, was the bearer of a letter of introduction to a high officer at the court of Napoleon I. Girard was poorly dressed, and his reception was cold; but the courtier discovered in him such evidences of talent and good sense that on Girard's rising to take leave, he arose also, and accompanied him to the antechamber.

The change in the courtier's manner was so marked that Girard could not suppress an expression of surprise.

"My young friend," said the courtier, "we receive strangers according to their dress; we take leave of them according to their merits."

Good clothes are far from being sufficient to gain one admittance to the better circles of society, but without them admittance is impossible. When we go out into the world, it is not sufficient to do as others do, we must also dress as others dress.

He is best dressed whose dress attracts least attention; and in order not to attract attention, one's dress must be seasonable, appropriate, conform to the prevailing fashion, without going in the least beyond it, and appear to be comfortable.

It requires something more than a full purse to enable one to dress well: it requires sense, taste, refinement. Indeed, dress may be considered in the light of a fine art. It is a pretty sure index of character, and few dress really well that would not be considered persons of culture.

In dress, as in all things else, the golden rule is to avoid extremes. The man of sense and taste never wears anything that is "loud," flashy, or peculiar; he yields always to fashion, but never is a slave to it.

The first thing to be considered in the replenishing of one's wardrobe is the material. This should always be good. Low priced stuffs are rarely, if ever, cheap, and they are certainly not cheap unless, though low-priced, they are of good quality. As a rule, one suit of clothes that costs fifty dollars does more service than two suits that cost the same sum. And then the low-priced suit never looks well, while the high-priced suit looks well to the last, if it is kept clean and care is taken to have it occasionally pressed into shape – a fact that few men properly appreciate.

"Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy,
For the apparel oft proclaims the man."

There is but one way to get a good fitting shirt, and that is to have it made. Nor is this all. You must try one on and have it "fitted," and then have the others made exactly like the pattern shirt. Nearly every man has one shoulder lower than the other, and if this peculiarity is not considered, the bosom of a shirt will never sit smoothly. It will bulge on the low-shoulder side. For several reasons it is better to have shirts made open in the back. Yet open-backed shirts are less worn now than they were; indeed, the fastidious nowadays wear only shirts open in front. They fit better around the neck. It is better to have the collar separate and for some reasons the cuffs also – dress shirts excepted, perhaps. Let your collars always be in and strictly within the fashion, unless you would look like a

rowdy, in which case you are at liberty to go to any extreme you please and to gratify any vulgar caprice you may chance to have. Your cuffs should be no larger than is necessary to admit of your slipping your hand through them when they are buttoned. Why should a man wear a cuff so large that one may see up to his elbow? A cuff so large that it slips down over the hand has an unæsthetic, slouchy look, besides being in the way and being very uncomfortable in warm weather. Colored shirts may be worn travelling, in the country, and, some say, in the morning in town; but most men of taste prefer white. The pattern of colored shirts should always be small and the color quiet.

If the coat, trousers, and vest of business and morning suits are not made of the same cloth, the coat and vest should be of the same, and be darker than the trousers. Men that cannot or do not choose to spend much money with their tailor, should always select dark stuffs. A dark morning suit may be worn on many occasions where the wearing of a light suit would be in singularly bad taste. The fashion should be followed, but beware of going to extremes, if you would not be taken for one of those vulgar, empty-headed fops that, if spring-bottomed trousers, for example, are the mode, insist on theirs being made to bell out at the bottom till their legs look as though they had been put on bottom up. The wrinkles and “knees” should be pressed out of trousers about every two weeks. The more closely woven the cloth the longer a garment keeps its shape. The vest should be kept buttoned from bottom to top, and the buttons on both coat and vest should be renewed as soon as they begin to show the effects of wear. There is always something “Jakey” in the appearance of a man that goes about with his vest half buttoned. Both coat and vest should be made snug around the waist and loose over the chest. A garment that is tight around the waist tends to make the wearer stand straight, while one that is tight over the chest tends to make him stoop. The carriage of men that do not wear suspenders is generally better than that of men that do wear them. If a single-breasted garment is too tight over the chest, the trouble is generally beyond remedy, as the tailor cannot add to the front; in a double-breasted garment, the moving of the buttons generally suffices.

Single-breasted overcoats, made with a “fly,” are most worn, and are, from every point of view, the most desirable. A short-waisted, double-breasted overcoat has been a good deal worn by quite young men of late. It is fashionable, and would, perhaps, become generally popular, if it did not tend to make the wearer look like a footman. The man of taste always selects for his overcoats dark, quiet colors.

There is nothing a man wears in which he shows his sense or his want of it more than in his boots and shoes. The man of sense and taste has his shoes made long, broad in the sole and in the shank, and with a big and only moderately high heel. No matter what the fashion chances to be, if you see a man that pinches his toes, you may be sure it would take a very small hat to pinch his head. The shoe that does not look comfortable never looks well. There are many of the New York women that wear shoes that distort the feet and are most uncomfortable; such shoes, however, are rarely, if ever, seen on the feet of the New York ladies. Many persons have one foot longer than the other. In such cases, the shoe for the longer foot must be made longer than the other, otherwise the longer foot will look to be the shorter when clothed. This, is something that few shoemakers know. The cloth of the tops of gaiters should always be dark. Fancy shoe leather is, if possible, more offensive than flashy neckties. Short, narrow-toed, high-heeled shoes often cause the big-toe nails to grow into the flesh. If taken in time, the trouble is easily remedied by scraping the nail on the top, cutting it in a semilunar form, with the concavity looking forward, and raising the corners and putting a bit of cork or cotton under them. The nails of the big toes should always be thus cut, care being taken to leave the corners long.

In nothing that a man wears is it less desirable – in New York, at least – to be among the first to adopt a new fashion than in the hat, especially the silk hat. Here, the new styles in silk hats are first seen, as a rule, on the heads of the ward politicians, the keepers of the drinking saloons, and the gamblers. The least desirable hat for city wear is the soft felt. Besides having a slouchy look, it is not

easy to get it off one's head gracefully in saluting an acquaintance in the street. They are little worn by any but a few long-haired men, who affect the picturesque.

A man's jewelry should be good and simple. False jewelry, like every other form of falsehood, is vulgar. Unlike a woman's jewelry, a man's should always seem to serve a purpose. To this rule there is, as we shall see, but one exception.

A man's watch, to be in thoroughly good taste, should never be very large, nor very thick, nor elaborately chased, nor should it have a hunting-case, unless his business or pleasure renders him liable to break a crystal, when he is out of the easy reach of a jeweller to replace it. Very large, fancifully chased watches always have a common, cheap look; no man of any taste ever chooses one. As a rule, the more valuable the watch the plainer the case. The hunting-cased watch is carried largely by men that, in a measure at least, want a watch for the same reason that a peacock wants a tail. Probably as desirable a watch, in appearance at least, as could be found anywhere, is a plain-cased open-faced watch, sold by Tiffany & Co. It has what they call their extra thin movement. Nothing in the way of a watch could be more tasteful.

The watch-chain should always be small and the pattern plain. If the links are chased, the chasing must not be elaborate. Nothing does more toward vulgarizing a man's appearance than a big, elaborately chased watch-chain. Indeed, the young man that wears such a chain and attaches it in one of the lower button-holes of his vest has taken a long stride toward making himself look like a barber's apprentice. Watch-chains that go around the neck are no longer worn. The vest-chain should be attached nearly as high up as it will reach, in a button-hole, and not in a hole specially made for the purpose.

If a locket or seal is worn, it should be very plain. If a man wears a ring, it should be on the third finger of the left hand. This is the only piece of jewelry a man is allowed to wear that does not seem to serve a purpose. Some Englishmen of culture and high social position wear nowadays more than one ring, and wear rings on the little finger as well as on the third; but this is an example that neither taste nor discretion would counsel an American to follow. All kinds of rings are worn by men except cluster rings; they are worn by women only. Scarf-rings and collar-buttons with settings are in very bad taste. Diamond studs are not worn by men of the better sort, even when in evening dress; they are considered vulgar and ostentatious. Three studs in a dress shirt are to be preferred to one. Indeed, the single stud is as unartistic as anything well could be. Fashion changes in jewelry, as in everything else; but if a man follows the rule: "Plain, good, and seem to serve a purpose," he will never go far wrong.

It should not be necessary to add that the wearing of imitation diamonds is the very extreme of vulgarity. A man of taste would as soon be seen with rings in his ears as with an imitation diamond pin or stud in his shirt bosom. The genuine diamond or none, and that never in a breastpin, unless you do not object to being taken for a horse-jockey; and never in a stud, unless you are in full evening dress, and, even then, plain gold or white enamelled studs are to be preferred. Scarf-pins should, in strictness, be worn only in Claudent, Ascot, and puff scarfs; permissible, however, in four-in-hands.

Nowadays, with few exceptions, men wear the hair very short, and the exceptions are not found among men of taste. The most artistic and becoming cut is that that trims the hair very short on the sides and back of the head, and leaves it comparatively long on the top, for the reason that a high head is always more pleasing than a low, broad one. The "part" should be high up – in the middle, if one chooses to put it there. Parting the hair down the back of the head, as some men do, is only a little less objectionable than the plastering of a lock down on the forehead – a fashion much affected by bartenders and waiters in oyster saloons. The head should be frequently washed, especially in warm weather; otherwise, the hair will have a disagreeable odor. Brushing with a brush that reaches the skin tends to keep the hair from falling out. Pomatums and other inventions of the barbers are no longer used.

Most men look best with a full beard, if it is kept properly trimmed and is otherwise properly cared for. A man with a beard that reaches down over his chest or with a moustache that is so long as

to be in the way is a disgusting object to look on. Men that wear such beards are generally men that are not happy unless they make donkeys of themselves in some way – if not in one, then in another. If a man shaves a part of the face only, he should shave that part that is most prominent. A man with a prominent chin and thin cheeks should shave his chin and let his beard grow on the sides of his face; on the contrary, a man with a retreating or a light chin and full cheeks should shave his cheeks and let his beard grow on his chin. In short, the beard should be so trimmed, if worn full, or so cut, if only a part is worn, as to give regularity to the outline of the face. The eccentricities some men indulge in in cutting their beards is in very bad taste; so also is the training of the moustache to the right and the left *à la grenadier*. This practice gives a man the appearance of having nothing else to do or to think of; and then it is pretty sure to get him into the habit of continually tugging at his moustache – a habit that is not quite so bad as would be that of sucking his fingers, but the difference is not great. The color nature has given to a man's beard is always the one best suited to his complexion. He that changes that color, no matter what the color is, only vulgarizes his appearance.

Every man, no matter who he is, should be able to shave himself quickly and well. If he has difficulty in learning to use the razor, he should persevere in his endeavors to learn, allowing nothing short of the loss of at least one ear to discourage him. The man that shaves at all should shave every day; no man looks presentable with a two days' growth of beard on his face. Shaving should be as much a part of the regular morning toilet as the brushing of the hair. Several razors are necessary, as all razors "tire" by continual use. The microscope has shown that this tiring is due to the disarranging of the particles of the steel, and that when a razor is allowed to rest for a sufficient length of time, the particles readjust themselves, restoring the razor to its original usefulness. Much depends on having a good strap and knowing how to use it.

The nails should be kept moderately long – very short nails have a plebeian look – and be so cut that they are a little more pointed than the upper ends of the nails are. They should not be scraped, and in cutting care should be taken not to encroach too much on the angles. Either practice, in time, results in serious injury. They cannot be kept in good shape without using a file. Of course the nails should be kept scrupulously clean.

The teeth of most persons, if properly cared for from childhood, will not only never ache, but will also last a lifetime. But how few sets of teeth are properly cared for from childhood! The condition of their children's teeth is a matter that comparatively few parents pay any attention to until the children complain of having the toothache, whereas they should see that their children's teeth are kept scrupulously clean, that the cavities in them are filled before they get large enough to do any serious harm, and that a dentist's aid is called in, if necessary, to secure regularity. Art can do more – much more – than most people think to make a child's teeth grow in regular. It has been often said that the chief reason so many Americans have bad teeth is that they eat so much candy and other sweetmeats. This is an error. This is not the chief reason. The chief reason is that we, in common with many persons of other nations, do not use our teeth sufficiently; we live almost exclusively on food that requires very little masticating; and as for the front teeth, we scarcely use them at all. The child that is fed on hard-tack is likely to have much better teeth than the child that is fed on porridge. Next to disuse, acids – pickles, lemons, and the like – probably do the teeth most harm. Then come the practices that tend to disarrange the stomach – eating between meals and the eating of unwholesome food – and the habit of breathing with the mouth open.

There are many foolish persons that think that dentists do more harm than good, and that some of them do not hesitate to bore holes in their patients' teeth and then fill them in order to increase the amount of their bills. They do nothing of the sort. Not that there are no dentists that would be sufficiently dishonest to do such a thing, but they would not get paid for their labor, it would be so great. The chief harm dentists do is in extracting aching teeth, in compliance with the wishes of their patients, when the teeth should be treated and preserved by filling. A tooth must be in a sorry condition when a dentist will extract it for one of his own family. Let any one that would keep his

teeth go to a good dentist, and submit to his discretion, and not presume to dictate in a matter he knows nothing about. No man that does not keep his teeth clean looks like a gentleman, if he shows them. If one's teeth have been neglected until they have become discolored and have accumulated a covering of tartar, one must first go to a dentist and have the discoloration and tartar removed, after which it is not a difficult matter to keep them in good condition. A toothbrush should not be too wide, and should be used on one row of teeth at a time. A very wide brush, used on both rows at a time, never reaches the edges of the gum – the points where the tartar always begins to accumulate. The tooth-powder used must be soluble; if it is not, it gets between the gums and the neck of the tooth, remains there, and tends to inflame the periosteum. For this reason, neither pulverized charcoal nor cigar-ashes should be used. As a brush does not reach between the teeth, a sharpened stick should occasionally be used with a powder. At long intervals a little pumice-stone, if necessary, may also be used with a stick, but great care should be taken not to let it get under the edge of the gums. Dentists generally use orange wood.

Men that do not have their hair frequently cut, keep their faces clean shaven, and their teeth clean are never welcome in the society of ladies, should they chance to know any. They may be well received by women of the lower orders, but women that are ladies are never drawn toward men that do not have the appearance of being neat in their persons. Ladies may and often do tolerate such men; in fact, they are often compelled to tolerate them, but they generally do it with ill-concealed reluctance.

Men of taste that carry canes select those that are strong, plain, stiff, light, and small. Very large canes are in very bad taste, especially for young men.

A few hints concerning the wearing of a man's clothes should suffice.

A full-dress suit consists of a swallow-tailed coat, a low white or black single-breasted vest, black trousers, a white necktie, a stand-up collar, (?) a high black hat, and, properly, of a pair of very light kid gloves.

This dress should never be worn until evening, *i. e.*, never previously to the dinner hour, no matter what the occasion. There are a few men, in the large cities, where they dine late – at six or seven o'clock – that put on their dress suits regularly every day before dinner and wear them for the rest of the day.

A white necktie should never be worn except with a full-dress suit, save by clergymen and a few elderly men that never wear any other color.

Black trousers should never be worn except with a dress coat, save at funerals.

A high hat should not be worn with a sack coat, especially if the color is light.

A low hat should not be worn with a long coat – a double-breasted frock, for example.

Straw hats should be worn only with light summer suits.

Dark suits are to be preferred for Sundays, especially in town, and light suits should never be worn to church anywhere.

Double-breasted frock coats should always be of black or gray material.

At small, informal gatherings most men consider themselves sufficiently dressed when they wear black frock coats and dark trousers. Indeed, there is no good reason why men should appear in full dress on any occasion where the ladies do not wear full dress. At public entertainments, for example, where the ladies wear their bonnets, the man that wears a black frock coat, dark trousers, and light kid gloves is better dressed – because more appropriately – than he that wears a full-dress suit. True, the practice of wearing such a suit on such occasions entails additional expense, as otherwise a business or walking suit and a dress suit may be made to serve for all occasions.

At home, the first consideration with pretty nearly every man will always be comfort. No man, however, that has any regard for the proprieties will ever appear at the table, whether there are any strangers present or not, or will show himself to any one with whom he is not on a familiar footing, in his shirt-sleeves.

AT THE DINNER-TABLE

Good humor makes one dish a feast. – Washington.

*Animals feed, men eat; but only men of intelligence know how to eat. –
Brillat-Savarin.*

Some philosopher has very truthfully said that he must be a very great man that can afford to ignore social observances. He might have added that of all places – in English-speaking countries at least – the one where a man can least afford to ignore social observances is the dinner-table. It is there that the well-bred man and the ill-bred man are the most strongly contrasted; and the man that does not there conform to those usages that constitute what is called manners is likely soon to find the doors of the better houses closed against him. Indeed, such men are not likely ever to find their way within them.

“Dinner-parties rank first among all entertainments, being of more frequent occurrence, and having more social significance than any other form of entertainment. An invitation to dinner conveys a greater mark of esteem, or friendship and cordiality toward the guest invited, than is conveyed with an invitation to any other social gathering, it being the highest social compliment that is offered by one person to another. It is also a civility that can be easily interchanged, which in itself gives it an advantage over all other civilities.”

An invitation to dine should be promptly replied to, whether you accept or decline. It may run thus:

Mr. and Mrs. – request the favor [or pleasure] of Mr. – ’s company at dinner on – day, the –, at – o’clock.

The reply, if an acceptance, may be worded thus:

Mr. – has the pleasure to accept Mr. and Mrs. – ’s kind invitation to dinner on the –.

If the invitation be declined, some good reason should be stated:

Mr. – regrets that, owing to a previous engagement [or in consequence of leaving town, etc.] he cannot have the pleasure of accepting Mr. and Mrs. – ’s kind invitation for the —.

The answer, whether affirmative or negative, should be addressed to the mistress of the house, and despatched within twenty-four hours, if possible, of the receipt of the invitation.

Having accepted an invitation, be punctual. “To be too late is a crime, and to be too early a blunder.” You should not fail to arrive within a very few minutes after the time named, say within five, or ten at most. “Dinner,” somebody has said, “is the hope of the hungry, the occupation of the idle, the rest of the weary, and the consolation of the miserable!” It is certainly the event of the day that should be honored with punctuality. In general, well-bred people and people that dine out frequently, make a point of arriving in good time. It is not well to arrive before the hour named, as you might find no one in the drawing-room to receive you.

“It is said that Beau Brummell had, among other follies, that of choosing to be always too late for dinner. Whenever he was invited he liked to be waited for. He considered it a proof of his fashion and consequence; and the higher the rank of his entertainer, the later was the arrival of this impudent parvenu. The Marquis of Abercorn had on several occasions submitted silently to this trial of his patience, but at length he resolved to bear it no longer. Accordingly, one day, when he had invited Brummell to dine, he desired to have the dinner on the table punctually at the appointed time. The servants obeyed, and Brummell and the cheese arrived together. The wondering Beau was desired by the master of the house to sit down. He vouchsafed no apology for what had happened, but coolly said, ‘I hope, Mr. Brummell, cheese is not disagreeable to you.’ The story runs that Brummell was never again late at that house.”

On entering the drawing-room, without looking to the right or the left, you will go and pay your respects to the hostess, then to the other members of the family, and finally to any acquaintances you may recognize.

Should you be stopped, on your way to the hostess, by an acquaintance ignorant of the proprieties, you will not refuse to respond to his greeting, but will make the response as brief as civility will permit.

Take good care that you do not offer your hand either to hostess, host, or to any other member of the family. For obvious reasons, any offer to shake hands should come from them.

On leaving, you may offer your hand to those of your entertainers that offered their hands to you when you arrived. But if the family is large, it is as well to confine your formal leave-taking to the hostess and the host. It is better not to go about the drawing-room to hunt up and take leave of all the members of the family, as some men do, especially if you are among the first to take leave. Of course it is still worse to go the rounds and take leave of the whole company individually. In such a proceeding there is always something egotistic and patronizing. In a word, never make more ado in leave-taking, whatever the occasion, than is really necessary.

If there is a lady with you, you will not enter the drawing-room arm in arm nor side by side. The lady, or the ladies – if more than one – will enter the room in advance of you.

Gentlemen do not wear gloves at dinner-parties.

When dinner is announced, the hostess will give the signal to leave the drawing-room. A gentleman does not choose the lady he will take in to dinner. The choice is made for him either by his host or his hostess. Offer whichever arm you please. On this point the authorities differ. Most men prefer to have a lady take the right arm. In some countries this is a matter of real importance, the right side being the place of honor. In passing through doors you will take the lead, until you reach the dining-room, when you may let the lady pass first. Should there be a flight of steps to descend that are so narrow that it is necessary to proceed single file, you may allow the lady to pass first, or – better perhaps – go a step or two in advance of her. If you go down side by side, give her the side toward the wall.

Arrived at the dining-room, you will assist your lady to be seated, and wait till all the other ladies are in their places before you take your seat. The host remains standing in his place until all his guests are seated.

Abroad, the question of precedence is a very important one. In this country it is perhaps sufficient for the younger persons to yield the *pas* to the older in passing from the drawing-room to the dining-room.

A man's bearing at the table depends very much upon the distance he sits from it. He should sit rather close; indeed, it is rare that we see any one sit too near the table, while we often see people sit too far from it. This is a fault that is wellnigh universal with the Germans – a people whose table manners I would not counsel any one to copy. Sit close to the table, and sit erect.

If no grace is said, you will immediately proceed to unfold your napkin and spread it over your lap. There are those that would tell you partly to unfold it and throw it over one knee; others would tell you to throw it over both knees; but when it is simply thrown over your knees, it cannot serve the purpose for which it is supplied – that of protecting your clothing. In fact, the clothing of no man that has a heavy moustache is out of danger, unless he virtually makes a bib of his napkin, a thing that from time immemorial has been considered a sin against good usage. Men that are not slaves to fickle fashion, to the dicta of nobody knows whom, will use their napkins so as to accomplish the object for which they are provided. A man of sense, however, will consider the occasion, and be governed somewhat by it.

Previously to being served and during the waits that occur between the courses, do not play with the knives, the forks, the spoons, or with anything that is before you. Leave everything as you

find it, unless you should find a piece of bread on your right hand, in which case you may remove it to your left.

As soon as you are helped, begin to eat, or at least begin to occupy yourself with what you have before you. Do not wait till your neighbors are served – a custom that was long ago abandoned.

Never offer to pass to another a plate to which you have been helped. What your host or hostess sends you you should retain.

The second course, at all formal dinners, however served, is usually a soup, which, if its consistency and the beard on your upper lip will admit of it, you will take from the side of the spoon, being careful the while to make no noise. Better far to put your spoon into your mouth, handle and all, than to make a noise in sipping your soup, as some people do, that can be heard all over the dining-room; better also put your spoon into your mouth than to slobber or to bespatter yourself. The writer would have to materially shorten his moustache, or to go without his daily dish of soup, if he had to take it from the side of the spoon. He is not willing to do either. Soup, when practicable, should be sipped from the side of the spoon, not, as most people suppose, because there is any objection to putting a spoon in the mouth, but because to put the spoon in the mouth the elbow must be extended, whereas, when we sip from the side of the spoon, the elbow remains almost stationary at the side, the spoon being manipulated wholly with the forearm – a much more graceful movement, because simpler than that that the putting of the spoon in the mouth renders necessary. Not only soup, but everything else eaten with a spoon should be sipped from its side when practicable, but then only. For any one to attempt to sip from the side of the spoon certain soups that are usually served nearly as thick as porridge – pea, bean, and tomato with rice, for example – is absurd. Nothing has a more vulgar look than an obvious endeavor to be fine. The spoon should be filled by an outward rather than an inward movement, and the plate should never be tilted to get the last teaspoonful. If your soup is too hot, do not blow it, but wait till it cools. In eating it sit upright, and do not rest your forearms on the table.

Silver fish-knives are now found on most tables. Where there are none, fish should be eaten with a bit of bread in the left hand and a fork in the right. Neither soup nor fish, where there is any ceremony, is ever offered, much less accepted, twice.

At the table, the most difficult and the most important thing to learn is to use the knife and fork thoroughly well. To do this both must be so held that the ends of the handles are directly in the palms of the hand, *i. e.*, when the point of the knife is used.

At all tables where four-tined forks are provided, the knife should be used only to divide the food, never to convey it to the mouth. For this purpose, we use either the fork, a spoon, or the fingers.

As the fork is now used almost exclusively to convey all kinds of food that have any consistency to the mouth, it is very desirable that one should know how to use it properly. There is a right and a wrong way, a skilful and an awkward way to use it, as well as to use any other implement.

The fork must not be used in the left hand with the tines pointing upward, *i. e.*, spoon fashion. Persons that so use it, though they may and generally do think they are doing quite the proper thing, are really doing as awkward a thing as it would be possible for them to do at the table. They have – they will doubtless be surprised to hear – their lesson but half learned.

Food that is conveyed to the mouth with the fork held in the left hand should be taken up either on the point of the tines, or on their convex side. In the right hand, the fork may be used with the tines pointing upward or downward, as one will.

Previously to the advent of the four-tined silver fork, which was introduced into England from the Continent about the year 1814 or 1815, everybody ate with the knife – the Chesterfields, the Brummels, the Blessingtons, the Savarins, and all. The fastidious were very careful, however, not to put the knife into the mouth edge first. That was avoided by the well bred then as much as the putting the knife into the mouth at all is avoided by the well bred now.

Eating with the knife is not, in itself, a grievous offence; it does not, as some pretend, endanger the lips, even though the knife is used edge first. It is simply a matter of prejudice. Yet your lady hostess would rather you would speak ill of her friends and make bad puns than eat with your knife at her table. Why? Because your eating with your knife at her table would argue, nowadays, that she associated with low-bred, uncultured people.

Should you, however, find yourself at a table where they have the old-fashioned steel forks, eat with your knife, as the others do, and do not let it be seen that you have any objection to doing so, nor let it be known that you ever do otherwise. He that advised us “to do in Rome as the Romans do” was a true gentleman.

The fork is used in eating such vegetables as can be easily managed with it; those that cannot be easily managed with it are eaten with a dessert-spoon – peas, stewed tomatoes, and succotash, for example, especially when they are served in small dishes. A high English authority says: “Eat peas with a dessert-spoon, and curry also.”

Asparagus may be handled with the fingers of the left hand. So may Saratoga potatoes and olives. On this subject we recently clipped the following paragraph from one of our periodicals: “That there is a variety of ways to eat asparagus, one may convince one’s self by a single visit to the dining-room of any of our fashionable summer hotels. There one will see all the methods of carrying the stalk to the mouth. But the Paris *Figaro*, in one of its ‘Conseils par Jour,’ on ‘How is Asparagus Eaten in Good Society?’ says: ‘One must carefully abstain from taking the stalk in the fingers to dip it in the sauce and afterward put it in the mouth, as a great many people do. The tip should be cut off and eaten by means of the fork, the rest of the stalk being laid aside on the plate, of course without being touched by the fingers. Those that proceed in any other way are barbarians.’ We may observe, in reply to ‘Pau de Paris,’ that many persons belonging to the best society do not hesitate to eat asparagus *à la bonne franquette*, and yet are by no means ‘barbarians.’ We do not agree with our confrère for two reasons. In the first place, the exquisite vegetable cannot be properly appreciated unless eaten in the way that excites the ire of our contemporary. Our second reason is that, from an art point of view, there cannot be a more charming sight than to see a pretty woman ‘caressing’ a piece of asparagus.”

Green corn should be cut from the cob and then eaten with a fork. First run your knife through the middle of each row of kernels and then cut them off. A dull knife is the best, because it does not really cut the kernels off, but forces them out of the hulls.

Cheese is eaten with a fork, or is placed, with a knife, on bits of bread and carried to the mouth with the thumb and finger, care being taken not to touch the cheese.

Pies and *pâtés*, as a rule, are eaten with a fork only. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to use a knife to divide the crust, but not often.

“Jellies, blanc-mange, iced puddings, and the like are eaten,” says an English authority, “with a fork, as are all sweets sufficiently substantial to admit of it.” This may be very sensible, but it will seem to many persons, as it does to the writer, to be very senseless. By and by the fork mania will banish the spoon altogether.

In a late number of the London *Queen* this fork-and-spoon question is discussed as follows: “But to go back to the debatable lands of our own compatriots, and the odd things that some do, and the undecided cases that still give rise to controversy. There is that battlefield of the fork and the spoon, and whether the former ought to be used for all sweets whatsoever, with the exception of custard and gooseberry food, which answer the question for themselves; or whether it is not better to use a spoon where slipperiness is an element, and ‘the solution of continuity’ a condition. Some people hunt their ice, for example, with a fork, which lets the melting margin drop through the prongs; and some stick their small trident into jelly, at the risk of seeing the whole thing slip off like an amorphous, translucent, gold-colored snake. The same with such compounds as custard pudding, *crème renversée*, and the like, where it is a feat of skill to skewer the separate morsels deftly, and where a small sea of unutilized juice is left on the plate. This monotonous use of the fork and craven fear of the vulgarity

lying in the spoon seems to us mere table snobbery. It is a well-known English axiom that the fork is to be used in preference to the spoon when possible and convenient. But the people who use it always – when scarcely possible and decidedly inconvenient – are people so desperately afraid of not doing the right thing, that they do the wrong out of very flunkeyism and of fear of Mrs. Grundy in the corner. It is the same with the law of eating all soft meats with the fork only, abjuring the knife. On the one hand, you will see people courageously hewing with their knives at sweetbread, *suprême de volaille*, and the like; on the other, the snobbish fine work themselves into a fever with their forks against a cutlet, and would not for the lives of them use a knife to cut with ease that which by main force and at great discomfort they can tear asunder with a fork.”

If you have occasion to help yourself from a dish, or if any one else helps you, move your plate quite close to the dish.

At a dinner served in courses, it is better, as a rule, not to take a second supply of anything. It might delay the dinner.

The English eat boiled eggs from the shell, a custom that is followed to some extent in this country; but most Americans prefer to break them, or to have them broken, into a glass, a mode that certainly has its advantages, and that will commend itself to those that have not time to dawdle over their breakfast. In noticing a little book on manners that recently appeared, the New York *Sun* feelingly inveighs in this wise against eating boiled eggs from a glass:

“We are glad to think that the time has gone by when Americans with any pretensions to refinement needed to be informed that an egg beaten up in a glass is an unsightly mess that has often turned the stomach of the squeamish looker-on. Those who cannot learn to eat boiled eggs from the shell will do well to avoid them altogether. If the author of this hand-book had watched American experiments with exhaustive attention, he might have deemed it well to add that no part of the contents of the egg should be allowed to drip down the outside of the shell, and that the eggshell, when depleted, should be broken before being deposited on the plate.”

It would seem to be as unpleasant to the writer of this paragraph to see an egg eaten from a glass as it is to a Bavarian to see a man wait till he gets over the threshold of a lager-beer saloon before he takes his hat off. A matter of mere prejudice in both cases. If an egg broken into a glass is really “an unsightly mess,” then let us have some opaque egg-glasses.

Bread should be broken. To butter a large piece of bread and then bite it, as children do, is something the knowing never do.

In eating game or poultry do not touch the bones with your fingers. To take a bone in the fingers for the purpose of picking it is looked upon as being a very inelegant proceeding.

Never gesticulate with your knife or fork in your hand, nor hold them pointing upward when you are not using them; keep them down on your plate.

Never load up your fork with food until you are ready to convey it to your mouth, unless you are famishing and you think your life depends on your not losing a second.

Never put your own knife into the butter or the salt if there is a butter-knife and a salt-spoon. If you are compelled to use your own knife, first wipe it as clean as possible on your bread.

Never use your own knife or fork to help another. Use rather the knife or fork of the person you help.

Never send your knife and fork, or either of them, on your plate when you send for a second supply. There are several good reasons for not doing so, and not one good reason for doing so. Never hold your knife and fork meanwhile in your hand, either, but lay them down, and that, too, with something under them – a piece of bread, for example – to protect the table-cloth. Never carry your food to your mouth with any curves or flourishes, unless you want to look as though you were airing your company manners. Better a pound of awkwardness at any time than an ounce of self-consciousness.

Never use a steel knife to cut fruit if there is a silver one.

Never stick your elbows out when you use your knife and fork. Keep them close to your sides.

Having finished using your knife and fork, lay them on your plate, side by side, with the handles pointing a little to your right. This will be taken by an experienced waiter as an intimation that you are ready to have your plate removed.

Whenever you use the fingers to convey anything to the mouth or to remove anything from the mouth, let it be the fingers of the left hand.

When you eat a fruit that has a pit or a skin that is not swallowed, the pit or skin must be removed from the mouth with the fingers of the left hand, or with a spoon or fork in the right. Any other mode is most offensive.

Tea, coffee, chocolate and the like are drunk from the cup and never from the saucer. Put your spoon in the saucer should you send your cup to be refilled; otherwise, it may be left in the cup. Never blow your tea or coffee; if it is too hot to be drunk, wait till it cools.

In handling glasses, keep your fingers a goodly distance from the top, but do not go to the other extreme; and if you handle a goblet or a wine-glass, take hold of the stem only. Take hold of the bowl just above the stem.

In helping yourself to butter, take at once as much as you think you shall require, and try to leave the roll in as good shape as you find it. In returning the knife, do not stick it into the roll, but lay it on the side of the plate.

In masticating your food, keep your mouth shut; otherwise you will make a noise that will be very offensive to those around you.

Don't eat in a mincing, dainty manner, as though you had no appetite, nor devour your food as though you were famishing. Eat as though you relished your food, but not as though you were afraid you would not get enough.

Don't attempt to talk with a full mouth. One thing at a time is as much as any man can do well.

Few men talk well when they do nothing else, and few men chew their food well when they have nothing else to do.

Partake sparingly of delicacies, which are generally served in small quantities, and decline them if offered a second time.

Should you find a worm or an insect in your salad or in a plate of fruit, hand your plate to a waiter, without comment, and he will bring you another.

See that the lady that you escorted to the table is well helped. Anticipate her wants, if possible.

Never tip your chair, nor lounge back in it, nor put your thumbs in the arm holes of your waistcoat.

Never hitch up your sleeves, as some men have the habit of doing, as though you were going to make mud pies.

If the conversation tends to be general – and it should tend to be general at a small dinner-party – take good heed that you, at least, listen, which is the only sure way I know of for every man to appear to advantage.

Never, under any circumstances, no matter where you are, cry out “Waiter!” No man of any breeding ever does it. Wait till you can catch the attendant's eye, and by a nod bring him to you.

Unless you are asked to do so, never select any particular part of a dish; but if you are asked choose promptly, though you may have no preference.

If a dish is distasteful to you decline it, and without comment.

Never put bones or the pits of fruit on the table-cloth. Put them on the side of your plate.

Always wipe your mouth before drinking, in order that you may not grease the brim of your glass with your lips.

Taking wine with people and the drinking of toasts at private dinners are no longer the fashion. Every one drinks much or little or none at all as he chooses, without attracting attention.

If, however, you should find yourself at a table where the old custom is observed, you will not invite your host to take wine with you; it is his privilege to invite you.

If you are invited to drink with an acquaintance, and you do not drink wine, bow, raise your glass of water, and drink with him. If you do drink wine, take the same sort as that selected by the person you drink with.

It is considered ill bred to empty your glass on these occasions or to drink a full glass of wine at a draught on any occasion.

While on the subject of wine-drinking, it may not be amiss to observe that in England it is considered inelegant to say “port wine” or “sherry wine.” In England they always say “port” or “sherry.” On the other hand, no well-bred Frenchman ever speaks of wines in any other way than as “*Vin de Champagne*,” “*Vin de Bordeaux*,” and so on. Thus we see that what is the wrong thing to do in one country is the right thing to do in another.

Do not offer a lady wine till she has finished her soup.

Do not hesitate to take the last piece on a dish or the last glass of wine in a decanter simply because it is the last. To do so is to indirectly express the fear that you would exhaust the supply.

Avoid picking your teeth at the table if possible; but if pick them you must, do it, if you can, when you are not observed. “There is one continental custom,” says the London *Queen*, “which the true-born Briton holds in holy horror – that is, the use of those convenient little lengths of wood which to every foreigner are as necessary to his comfort as a napkin for his mouth or water for his fingers. We English regard the use of the toothpick as a barbarism, a horror, an indecency, and would not take one of those clean wooden spills between our lips for all the world. Nevertheless, a great many of us who would shudder at the iniquity of a toothpick, thrust our fingers into our mouths and free our back teeth with these natural ‘cure-dents,’ which gives a singularly wolfish and awful appearance to the operator, and makes the onlooker regret the insular prejudice which will not rather use the universal continental toothpick, wherein, at least, if properly and delicately done, is no kind of indecency or disgust.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.