

Chapters to Young Men, on How to Win a Wife
Chapter V – Manners
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Published in The Principia May 12, 1860

A perfectly *manly* character cannot be other than a *gentlemanly* one. Gentlemanliness is manliness carried out in little things. I know some very sensible men hold in supreme contempt the appellation of gentleman. They think it descriptive of extra polish of dickey and boots; and softness of cranium; and, indeed, the abuse of the word does in a measure bear them out in the opinion.

“Gentleman” has come to mean one of a select caste, a man of property, a man with dependents, a man of idleness or a fop – at best, one who regards only the mere outside forms, conventionalities, of life. As such it is justly contemptible. But this is a perversion. I wish I knew all about the origin of the word! It must have originated in an era, and among a people, of higher ideas than many of their successors seem to have; for, evidently, from the etymology, the word is intended to indicate “a man of gentleness” – a *gentle man*. Alas! If we go according to “strict construction,” how few gentlemen there are!

But your “strong-minded” man will object to the title of gentleman, even on this definition. His ideal of man is something very strong, very grand, very great, made to do all the powerful things in the world, but entirely too sublime to stoop to trifles. As for gentleness, and delicacy, and all that, it is very pretty little work for women!

Now this is carrying the principle of “division of labor” entirely too far! A very good principle it is, so far as things material are concerned, but doesn’t exactly work in things spiritual. A character, whether of man or woman, should be a *whole* character. What would you think of the man who professed to be wrought up to ecstasy by some sublime scene, as a storm at sea, or the view from a lofty summit, yet regarded with contempt a golden summer sunset, or a little blue violet. *Soul* shines out as truly in the most trivial acts of every day life as in great deeds which make men heroes. The man of true delicacy of feeling, is always one of true nobleness of nature. Gentlemanliness consists in showing, in all the little things of every day life, a kind regard for the happiness of those around you. Many of those little conventionalities, these little duties of etiquette, are founded upon this principle; and viewed in this light they are no longer little, for they are the carrying out of that highest law of our nature – the law of benevolence.

Now, young man, are you a gentleman? Are you – away down in your heart? It is not necessary that you should become familiar with all the requirements of fashionable society, but it *is* necessary that you should have true refinement and cultivation. You may take off your hat and make the prettiest bow to Col. C’s daughter, or pick up the superb Miss L’s handkerchief half a dozen times in the course of the evening, or throw off your overcoat that she may go dry shod over a mud hole; yet if you neglect to pay your washer-woman, and don’t try to soothe your tired landlady’s cross baby, and push aside with a sour look the ragged little boy in your way, you are no gentleman; you lack the element of which a gentleman is made. All this outside polish won’t do – the real character will show itself out.

But are you sure that you are perfectly gentlemanly, even toward ladies to whom you are trying to be gallant? If you invite a lady out, of an evening, do your manners indicate that you consider yourself granting a favor, instead of asking one? If you attend her to a musical entertainment do you retain her in a conversation, *sotto voce*, on some of your favorite topics while she is longing to enjoy undisturbed the

sweet strains of melody which at broken intervals reach her ear? Or, at a lecture do you, in the midst of some of the finest bursts of eloquence, regale your patient victim with a whispered elucidation of your own views of the subject under discussion? Or, in visiting an Exhibition of Art, do you criticize freely every picture before which she pauses; giving your opinion on this and that, with great nonchalance, and never think to consult her taste in the matter? Or, are you continually making little attempts at wit, at which she is expected to laugh? Do you, in any way, thrust yourself and your opinions upon others? In short, is *self* uppermost in your mind? If it is, it "will out!"

How are your manners toward those with whom you consider yourself on terms of "friendship?" Are you a friend, in a sincere, frank, manly way; or do you love to flirt, and do little trying, annoying acts, for the purpose of experimenting on her feelings, testing her friendship, and perhaps gratifying your own vanity. Do you practice this method of doing, in an apparently very polite delicate manner, the most unkind, ungentlemanly acts, which are calculated to give acute pain? Do you consider it a triumph that your "friend" is wounded by a little unkindness from you? This is the "Triumph" – you have discovered that her nature is a deep, earnest one; yours shallow and superficial. And she will discover her mistake and cease to regard you as a friend.

Are you a gentleman to those of your own sex? Are you jealous if Will has the handsomest hair and eyes, Ned the most fascinating smile, or Alf is the greatest favorite with the ladies? Do you feel very much injured if a young lady with whom you have been in company a number of times sees fit to go out with another gent; or worse yet, seems to enjoy his society just as well as she did your own? Are you in the habit of making disparaging remarks of other young men, in the presence of ladies? Be assured they won't admire it in you!

Are you a gentlemen everywhere: at all times: to everybody? Are you a gentleman in your heart? If you are, you will live it out – if not, it's no use trying to polish the outside! You must commence at the central point, from which all radiates.

L.