



Etiquette for Americans

A Woman of Fashion

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This extensive book on the etiquette rules of 19th century high society in America was published in 1898.

It covers details on: manners, conversation, invitations, dinner parties, luncheons, calling cards, weddings, funerals, letter writing, phrases and titles of address, telephoning, smoking, sports, chaperonage, rules for unmarried women, miscellaneous hints for men, obligations of bachelors, proper dress, servants and treatment of reporters.

Excerpts from the Preface:

The actual need of an up-to-date manual of American etiquette is evinced by the repeated and clamorous demands for such a manual entered at every bookseller's and publisher's in the land. It is shown, too, by the almost pathetic attempts of those who would gladly perform their social duties and pleasures in order if they could, but are prevented by their ignorance of the best usage in such matters. To many judicial and intellectual minds, to those employed in engrossing pursuits, from which hours spent in social intercourse are grudgingly doled, to those socially inclined by nature and training, the word etiquette may seem an unused frivolity, something flouted and jeered.

Yet there comes a time in the life of the most engrossed, the most disdainful, when a knowledge of the amenities of social life has to be scrambled for desperately in books, or learned hastily from polished friends. Every man has to conform, however infrequently, to polite usage. No man is impervious to the ceremonies attending courtship, marriage, entertaining for business purposes, or having to do the correct thing at some stage of his career. The story of the Chicago gentleman who took two coats with him to

a breakfast given a Spanish princess shows that even great minds must descend occasionally to the level of social ease. Men's wives cannot be depended upon to arrange everything for them, and some men have no wives.

In other countries, social duties are as important as business duties, in certain classes of life. Boys are taught that, no matter how distasteful ceremony is, there are times when it comes first in line of duty. The result is that these lands produce men versed, from school and home discipline, in the social arts and graces; while our youths of twenty-one are, as a rule, hobble-de-hoys, ashamed of having any manners at all, and they suffer accordingly.

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This book is intended for those persons who perceive the value of doing even the smallest things in life well; who do not care to figure as awkward or ignorant, no matter what their true worth. Other books on similar subjects have gone deeply into the aesthetics of good breeding — the subtlety of kindness: it is the purpose of this only to disclose, not so much the morals nor the philosophy of good manners, as the formulated rules for their observance. The reasons may appeal in good time to the accomplished man or woman of the world; and they may never do so. It is the intention of this writer to set forth the proper paths to follow', whether common-sense dictates the route or not. And, although it is only fair to state that most rules of etiquette were dictated originally by common-sense and comfort, it is equally generous to admit that many others are solely arbitrary. It is well to avoid extremes ; and this is about the only piece of advice that can be given as to selection.

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