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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A FATHER'S LEGACY TO HIS DAUGHTERS

A Father's Legacy to His Daughters

A
FATHER'S LEGACY
TO
HIS DAUGHTERS.

By the late DR. GREGORY, of Edinburgh.

A NEW EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED WITH PLATES.



To face the Title
T. Stothard delin. R. Cromek sculp. pupil of F. Bartolozzi
R.A.

RELIGION.

Published March 1st. 1797, by Cadell and Davies Strand.

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LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THAT the subsequent Letters were written by a tender father, in a declining state of health, for the instruction of his daughters, and not intended for the Public, is a circumstance which will recommend them to every one who considers them in the light of admonition and advice. In such domestic intercourse, no sacrifices are made to prejudices, to customs, to fashionable opinions. Paternal love, paternal care, speak their genuine sentiments, undisguised and unrestrained. A father's zeal for his daughter's improvement in whatever can make a woman amiable, with a father's quick apprehension of the dangers that too often arise, even from the attainment of that very point, suggest his admonitions, and render him attentive to a thousand little graces and little decorums, which would escape the nicest moralist who should undertake the subject on uninterested speculation. Every faculty is on the alarm, when the objects of such tender affection are concerned.

In the writer of these Letters, paternal tenderness and vigilance were doubled, as he was at that time sole parent; death having before deprived the young ladies of their excellent mother. His own precarious state of health inspired him with the most tender solicitude for their future welfare; and though he might have concluded, that the impression made by his instruction and uniform example could never be effaced from the memory of his children, yet his anxiety for their orphan condition suggested to him this method of continuing to them those advantages.

The Editor is encouraged to offer this Treatise to the Public, by the very favourable reception which the rest of his father's works have met with. The Comparative View of the State of Man and other Animals, and the Essay on the Office and Duties of a Physician, have been very generally read; and if he is not deceived by the partiality of his friends, he has reason to believe they have met with general approbation.

In some of those tracts the Author's object was to improve the taste and understanding of his reader; in others, to mend his heart; in others, to point out to him the proper use of philosophy, by showing its application to the duties of common life. In all his writings his chief view was the good of his fellow-creatures; and those among his friends, in whose taste and judgement he most confided, think the publication of this small work will contribute to that general design, and at the same time do honour to his memory, the Editor can no longer hesitate to comply with their advice in communicating it to the Public.

A
FATHER'S LEGACY
TO
HIS DAUGHTERS.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Religion</i>	11
<i>Conduct and Behaviour</i>	31
<i>Amusements</i>	55

INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR GIRLS;

You had the misfortune to be deprived of your mother, at a time of life when you were insensible of your loss, and could receive little benefit, either from her instruction, or her example.—Before this comes to your hands, you will likewise have lost your father.

I have had many melancholy reflexions on the forlorn and helpless situation you must be in, if it should please God to remove me from you, before you arrive at that period of life, when you will be able to think and act for yourselves. I know mankind too well. I know their falsehood, their dissipation, their coldness to all the duties of friendship and humanity. I know the little attention paid to helpless infancy.—You will meet with few friends disinterested enough to do you good offices, when you are incapable of making them any return, by contributing to their interest or their pleasure, or even to the gratification of their vanity.

I have been supported under the gloom naturally arising from these reflexions, by a reliance on the goodness of that Providence which has hitherto preserved you, and given me the most pleasing prospect of the goodness of your dispositions; and by the secret hope that your mother's virtues will entail a blessing on her children.

The anxiety I have for your happiness has made me resolve to throw together my sentiments relating to your future conduct in life. If I live for some years, you will receive them with much greater advantage, suited to your different geniuses and dispositions. If I die sooner, you must receive them in this very imperfect manner,—the last proof of my affection.

You will all remember your father's fondness, when perhaps every other circumstance relating to him is forgotten. This remembrance, I hope, will induce you to give a serious attention to the advices I am now going to leave with you.—I can request this attention with the greater confidence, as my sentiments on the most interesting points that regard life and manners, were entirely correspondent to your mother's, whose judgment and taste I trusted much more than my own.

You must expect that the advices which I shall give you will be very imperfect, as there are many nameless delicacies, in female manners, of which none but a woman can judge.—You will have one advantage by attending to what I am going to leave, with you; you will hear at least for once in your lives, the genuine sentiments of a man who has no interest in flattering or deceiving you.—I shall throw my reflexions together without any studied order; and shall only, to avoid confusion, range them under a few general heads.

You will see, in a little Treatise of mine just published, in what an honourable point of view I have considered your sex; not as domestic drudges, or the slaves of our pleasures, but as our companions and equals; as designed to soften our hearts and polish our manners; and, as Thomson finely says,

To raise the virtues, animate the bliss,
And sweeten all the toils of human life.

I shall not repeat what I have there said on this subject, and shall only observe, that from the view I have given of your natural character and place in society, there arises a certain propriety of conduct peculiar to your sex. It is this peculiar propriety of female manners of which I intend to give you my sentiments, without touching on those general rules of conduct, by which men and women are equally bound.

While I explain to you that system of conduct which I think will tend most to your honour and happiness, I shall, at the same time, endeavour to point out those virtues and accomplishments which render you most respectable and most amiable in the eyes of my own sex.

RELIGION.

THOUGH the duties of religion, strictly speaking, are equally binding on both sexes, yet certain differences in their natural character and education, render some vices in your sex particularly odious. The natural hardness of our hearts, and strength of our passions, inflamed by the uncontrolled licence we are too often indulged with in our youth, are apt to render our manners more dissolute, and make us less susceptible of the finer feelings of the heart. Your superior delicacy, your modesty, and the usual severity of your education, preserve you, in a great

measure, from any temptation to those vices to which we are most subjected. The natural softness and sensibility of your dispositions particularly fit you for the practice of those duties where the heart is chiefly concerned. And this, along with the natural warmth of your imagination, renders you peculiarly susceptible of the feelings of devotion.

There are many circumstances in your situation that peculiarly require the supports of religion to enable you to act in them with spirit and propriety. Your whole life is often a life of suffering. You cannot plunge into business, or dissipate yourselves in pleasure and riot, as men too often do, when under the pressure of misfortunes. You must bear your sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied. You must often put on a face of serenity and cheerfulness, when your hearts are torn with anguish, or sinking in despair. Then your only resource is in the consolations of religion. It is chiefly owing to these, that you bear domestic misfortunes better than we do.

But you are sometimes in very different circumstances, that equally require the restraints of religion. The natural vivacity, and perhaps the natural vanity of your sex, is very apt to lead you into a dissipated state of life, that deceives you, under the appearance of innocent pleasure; but which in reality wastes your spirits, impairs your health, weakens all the superior faculties of your minds, and often sullies your reputations. Religion, by checking this dissipation, and rage for pleasure, enables you to draw more happiness, even from those very sources of amusement, which, when too frequently applied to, are often productive of satiety and disgust.

Religion is rather a matter of sentiment than reasoning. The important and interesting articles of faith are sufficiently plain. Fix your attention on these, and do not meddle with controversy. If you get into that, you plunge into a chaos, from which you will never be able to extricate yourselves. It spoils the temper, and, I suspect, has no good effect on the heart.

Avoid all books, and all conversation, that tend to shake your faith on those great points of religion, which should serve to regulate your conduct, and on which your hopes of future and eternal happiness depend.

Never indulge yourselves in ridicule on religious subjects; nor give countenance to it in others, by seeming diverted with what they say. This, to people of good breeding, will be a sufficient check.

I wish you to go no further than the Scriptures for your religious opinions. Embrace those you find clearly revealed. Never perplex yourselves about such as you do not understand, but treat them with silent and becoming reverence.—I would advise you to read only such religious books as are addressed to the heart, such as inspire pious and devout affections, such as are proper to direct you in your conduct, and not such as tend to entangle you in the endless maze of opinions and systems.

Be punctual in the stated performance of your private devotions, morning and evening. If you have any sensibility or imagination, this will establish such an intercourse between you and the Supreme Being, as will be of infinite consequence to you in life. It will communicate an habitual cheerfulness to your tempers, give a firmness and steadiness to your virtue, and enable you to go through all the vicissitudes of human life with propriety and dignity.

I wish you to be regular in your attendance on public worship, and in receiving the communion. Allow nothing to interrupt your public or private devotions, except the performance of some active duty in life, to which they should always give place.—In your behaviour at public worship, observe an exemplary attention and gravity.

That extreme strictness which I recommend to you in these duties, will be considered by many of your acquaintance as a superstitious attachment to forms; but in the advices I give you on this and other subjects, I have an eye to the spirit and manners of the age. There is a levity and dissipation in the present manners, a coldness and listlessness in whatever relates to religion, which cannot fail to infect you, unless you purposely cultivate in your minds a contrary bias, and make the devotional taste habitual.

Avoid all grimace and ostentation in your religious duties. They are the usual cloaks of hypocrisy; at least they show a weak and vain mind.

Do not make religion a subject of common conversation in mixed companies. When it is introduced, rather seem to decline it. At the same time, never suffer any person to insult you by any foolish ribaldry on your religious opinions, but show the same resentment you would naturally do on being offered any other personal insult. But the surest way to avoid this, is by a modest reserve on the subject, and by using no freedom with others about their religious sentiments.

Cultivate an enlarged charity for all mankind, however they may differ from you in their religious opinions. That difference may probably arise from causes in which you had no share, and from which you can derive no merit.

Show your regard to religion, by a distinguishing respect to all its ministers, of whatever persuasion, who do not by their lives dishonour their profession: but never allow them the direction of your consciences, lest they taint you with the narrow spirit of their party.

The best effect of your religion will be a diffusive humanity to all in distress.—Set apart a certain proportion of your income as sacred to charitable purposes. But in this, as well as in the practice of every other duty, carefully avoid ostentation. Vanity is always defeating her own purposes. Fame is one of the natural rewards of virtue. Do not pursue her, and she will follow you.

23

Do not confine your charity to giving money. You may have many opportunities of showing a tender and compassionate spirit where your money is not wanted.—There is a false and unnatural refinement in sensibility, which makes some people shun the sight of every object in distress. Never indulge this, especially where your friends or acquaintances are concerned. Let the days of their misfortunes, when the world forgets or avoids them, be the season for you to exercise your humanity and friendship. The sight of human misery softens the heart, and makes it better: it checks the pride of health and prosperity, and the distress it occasions is amply compensated by the consciousness of doing your duty, and by the secret endearment which nature has annexed to all our sympathetic sorrows.

24

Women are greatly deceived, when they think they recommend themselves to our sex by their indifference about religion. Even those men who are themselves unbelievers, dislike infidelity in you. Every man who knows human nature, connects a religious taste in your sex with softness and sensibility of heart; at least we always consider the want of it as a proof of that hard and masculine spirit, which of all your faults we dislike the most. Besides, men consider your religion as one of their principal securities for that female virtue in which they are most interested. If a gentleman pretends an attachment to any of you, and endeavours to shake your religious principles, be assured he is either a fool, or has designs on you which he dares not openly avow.

25

You will probably wonder at my having educated you in a church different from my own. The reason was plainly this: I looked on the difference between our churches to be of no real importance, and that a preference of one to the other was a mere matter of taste. Your mother was educated in the church of England, and had an attachment to it, and I had a prejudice in favour of every thing she liked. It never was her desire that you should be baptised by a clergyman of the church of England, or be educated in that church. On the contrary, the delicacy of her regard to the smallest circumstance that could affect me in the eye of the world, made her anxiously insist it might be otherwise. But I could not yield to her in that kind of generosity.—When I lost her, I became still more determined to educate you in that church, as I feel a secret pleasure in doing every thing that appears to me to express my affection and veneration for her memory.—I draw but a very faint and imperfect picture of what your mother was, while I endeavour to point out what you should be^[A].

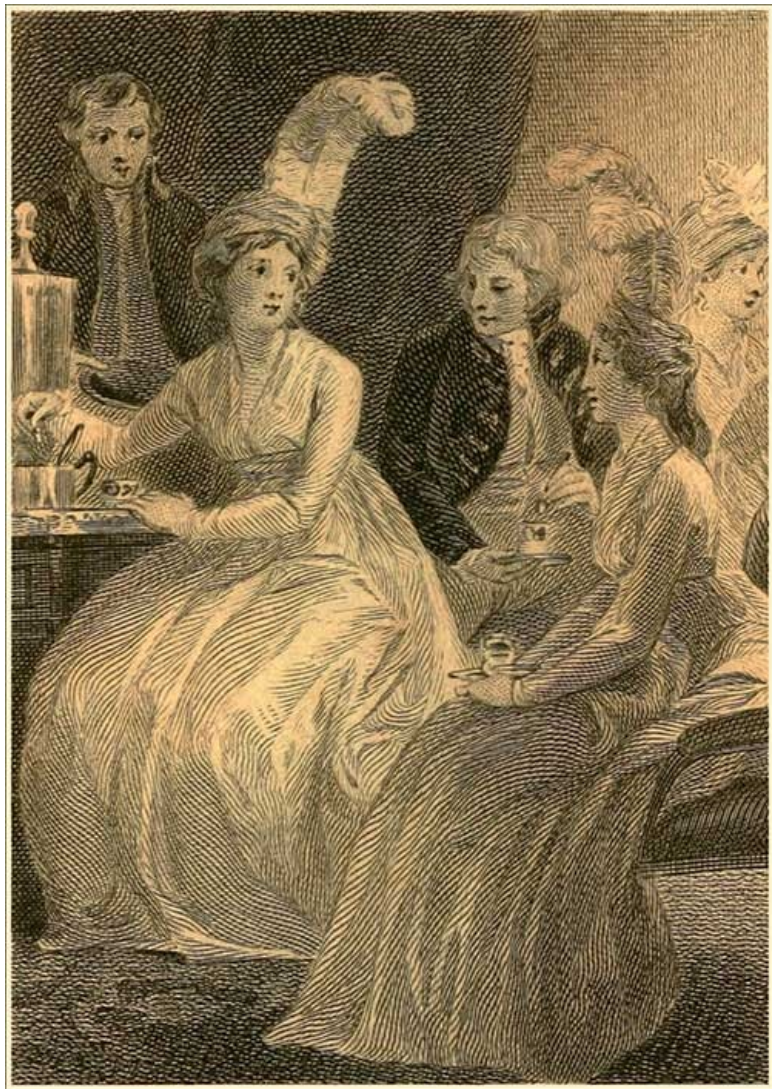
26

27

^A The reader will remember, that such observations as respect equally both the sexes, are all along as much as possible avoided.

CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR.

28-29



To face Page 26.

T. Stothard delin R. Slann sculpt.

CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR.

Published March 1st. 1797, by Cadell and Davies Strand.

ONE of the chief beauties in a female character, is that modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration.—I do not wish you to be insensible to applause. If you were, you must become, if not worse, at least less amiable women. But you may be dazzled by that admiration which yet rejoices your hearts.

31

When a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty. That extreme sensibility which it indicates may be a weakness and incumbrance in our sex, as I have too often felt; but in yours it is peculiarly engaging. Pedants, who think themselves philosophers, ask why a woman should blush when she is conscious of no crime? It is a sufficient answer, that nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault, and has forced us to love you because you do so.—Blushing is so far from being necessarily an attendant on guilt, that it is the usual companion of innocence.

32

This modesty, which I think so essential in your sex, will naturally dispose you to be rather silent in company, especially in a large one.—People of sense and discernment will never mistake such silence for dullness. One may take a share in conversation without uttering a syllable. The expression in the countenance shows it, and this never escapes an observing eye.

33

I should be glad that you had an easy dignity in your behaviour at public places, but not that confident ease, that unabashed countenance, which seems to set the company at defiance. If, while a gentleman is speaking to you, one of superior rank addresses you, do not let your eager attention and visible preference betray the flutter of your heart. Let your pride on this occasion preserve you from that meanness into which your vanity would sink you. Consider that you expose yourselves to the ridicule of the company, and affront one gentleman only to swell the triumph of another, who perhaps thinks he does you honour in speaking to you.

34

Converse with men even of the first rank with that dignified modesty which may prevent the approach of the most distant familiarity, and consequently prevent them from feeling themselves your superiors.

35

Wit is the most dangerous talent you can possess. It must be guarded with great discretion and good-nature, otherwise it will create you many enemies. Wit is perfectly consistent with softness

and delicacy; yet they are seldom found united. Wit is so flattering to vanity, that they who possess it become intoxicated, and lose all self-command.

Humour is a different quality. It will make your company much solicited; but be cautious how you indulge it.—It is often a great enemy to delicacy, and a still greater one to dignity of character. It may sometimes gain you applause, but will never procure you respect.

Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company.—But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding.

A man of real genius and candour is far superior to this meanness. But such a one will seldom fall in your way; and if by accident he should, do not be anxious to show the full extent of your knowledge. If he has any opportunities of seeing you, he will soon discover it himself; and if you have any advantages of person or manner, and keep your own secret, he will probably give you credit for a great deal more than you possess.—The great art of pleasing in conversation consists in making the company pleased with themselves. You will more readily hear than talk yourselves into their good graces.

Beware of detraction, especially where your own sex are concerned. You are generally accused of being particularly addicted to this vice—I think, unjustly.—Men are fully as guilty of it when their interests interfere.—As your interests more frequently clash, and as your feelings are quicker than ours, your temptations to it are more frequent. For this reason, be particularly tender of the reputation of your own sex, especially when they happen to rival you in our regards. We look on this as the strongest proof of dignity and true greatness of mind.

Show a compassionate sympathy to unfortunate women, especially to those who are rendered so by the villany of men. Indulge a secret pleasure, I may say pride, in being the friends and refuge of the unhappy, but without the vanity of showing it.

Consider every species of indelicacy in conversation, as shameful in itself, and as highly disgusting to us. All double *entendre* is of this sort.—The dissoluteness of men's education allows them to be diverted with a kind of wit, which yet they have delicacy enough to be shocked at, when it comes from your mouths, or even when you hear it without pain and contempt.—Virgin purity is of that delicate nature, that it cannot hear certain things without contamination. It is always in your power to avoid these. No man, but a brute or a fool, will insult a woman with conversation which he sees gives her pain; nor will he dare to do it, if she resent the injury with a becoming spirit.—There is a dignity in conscious virtue which is able to awe the most shameless and abandoned of men.

You will be reproached perhaps with prudery. By prudery is usually meant an affectation of delicacy. Now I do not wish you to affect delicacy; I wish you to possess it. At any rate, it is better to run the risk of being thought ridiculous than disgusting.

The men will complain of your reserve. They will assure you that a franker behaviour would make you more amiable. But, trust me, they are not sincere when they tell you so.—I acknowledge, that on some occasions it might render you more agreeable as companions, but it would make you less amiable as women;—an important distinction, which many of your sex are not aware of.—After all, I wish you to have great ease and openness in your conversation. I only point out some considerations which ought to regulate your behaviour in that respect.

Have a sacred regard to truth. Lying is a mean and despicable vice.—I have known some women of excellent parts, who were so much addicted to it, that they could not be trusted in the relation of any story, especially if it contained any thing of the marvellous, or if they themselves were the heroines of the tale. This weakness did not proceed from a bad heart, but was merely the effect of vanity, or an unbridled imagination.—I do not mean to censure that lively embellishment of a humorous story, which is only intended to promote innocent mirth.

There is a certain gentleness of spirit and manners extremely engaging in your sex; not that indiscriminate attention, that unmeaning simper, which smiles on all alike. This arises either from an affectation of softness, or from perfect insipidity.

There is a species of refinement in luxury, just beginning to prevail among the gentlemen of this country, to which our ladies are yet as great strangers as any women upon earth; I hope, for the honour of the sex, they may ever continue so: I mean, the luxury of eating. It is a despicable selfish vice in men, but in your sex it is beyond expression indelicate and disgusting.

Every one who remembers a few years back, is sensible of a very striking change in the attention and respect formerly paid by the gentlemen to the ladies. Their 'drawing-rooms are deserted; and after dinner and supper, the gentlemen are impatient till they retire. How they came to lose this respect, which nature and politeness so well entitle them to, I shall not here particularly inquire. The revolutions of manners in any country depend on causes very various and complicated. I shall only observe, that the behaviour of the ladies in the last age was very reserved and stately. It would now be reckoned ridiculously stiff and formal. Whatever it was, it had certainly the effect of making them more respected.

A fine woman, like other fine things in nature, has her proper point of view, from which she may be seen to most advantage. To fix this point requires great judgment, and an intimate knowledge of the human heart. By the present mode of female manners, the ladies seem to expect that they shall regain their ascendancy over us, by the fullest display of their personal charms, by being always in our eye at public places, by conversing with us with the same unreserved freedom as we do with one another; in short, by resembling us as nearly as they possibly can.—But a little time and experience will show the folly of this expectation and conduct.

47

The power of a fine woman over the hearts of men, of men of the finest parts, is even beyond what she conceives. They are sensible of the pleasing illusion, but they cannot, nor do they wish to dissolve it. But if she is determined to dispel the charm, it certainly is in her power: she may soon reduce the angel to a very ordinary girl.

48

There is a native dignity in ingenuous modesty to be expected in your sex, which is your natural protection from the familiarities of the men, and which you should feel previous to the reflexion that it is your interest to keep yourselves sacred from all personal freedoms. The many nameless charms and endearments of beauty should be reserved to bless the arms of the happy man to whom you give your heart, but who, if he has the least delicacy, will despise them if he knows that they have been prostituted to fifty men before him.—The sentiment, that a woman may allow all innocent freedoms, provided her virtue is secure, is both grossly indelicate and dangerous, and has proved fatal to many of your sex.

49

Let me now recommend to your attention, that elegance, which is not so much a quality itself, as the high polish of every other. It is what diffuses an ineffable grace over every look, every motion, every sentence you utter. It gives that charm to beauty, without which it generally fails to please. It is partly a personal quality, in which respect it is the gift of nature; but I speak of it principally as a quality of the mind. In a word, it is the perfection of taste in life and manners;—every virtue and every excellency in their most graceful and amiable forms.

50

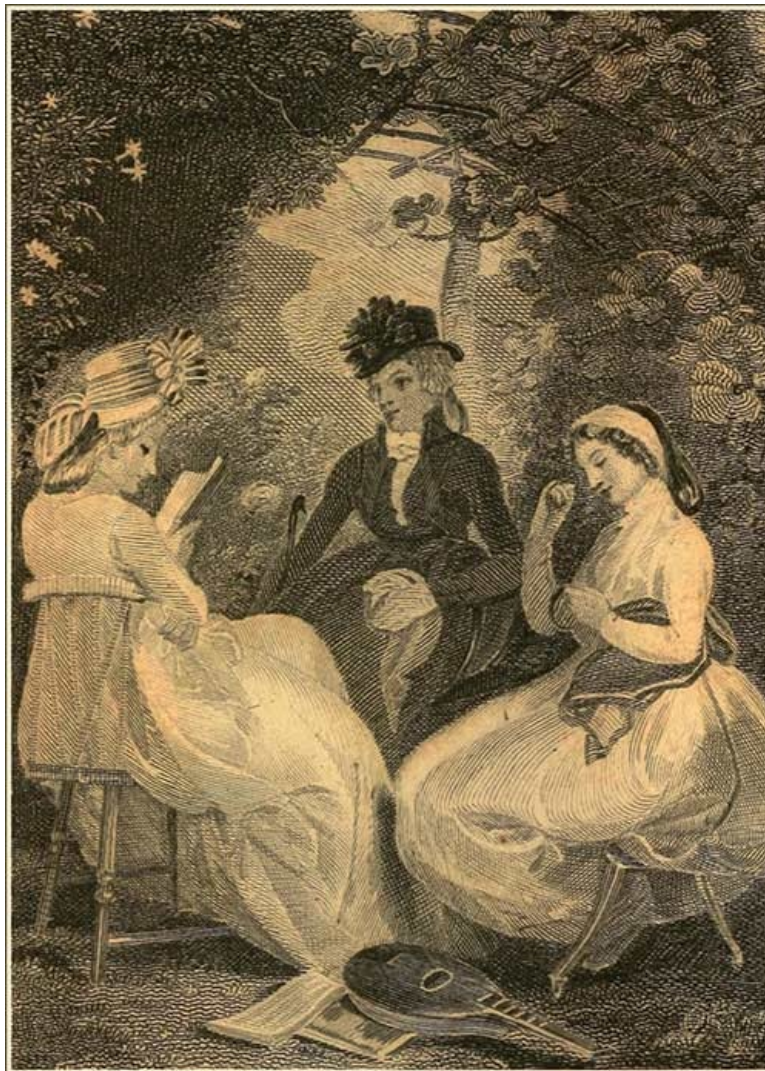
You may perhaps think that I want to throw every spark of nature out of your composition, and to make you entirely artificial. Far from it. I wish you to possess the most perfect simplicity of heart and manners. I think you may possess dignity without pride, affability without meanness, and simple elegance without affectation. Milton had my idea, when he says of Eve,

51

Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.

AMUSEMENTS.

52-54]



To face Page 47.

T. Stothard R.A. del. Medland sculp.

AMUSEMENTS.

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EVERY period of life has amusements which are natural and proper to it. You may indulge the variety of your tastes in these, while you keep within the bounds of that propriety which is suitable to your sex. 55

Some amusements are conducive to health, as various kinds of exercise: some are connected with qualities really useful, as different kinds of women's work, and all the domestic concerns of a family: some are elegant accomplishments, as dress, dancing, music, and drawing. Such books as improve your understandings, enlarge your knowledge, and cultivate your taste, may be considered in a higher point of view than mere amusements. There are a variety of others, which are neither useful nor ornamental, such as play of different kinds. 56

I would particularly recommend to you those exercises that oblige you to be much abroad in the open air, such as walking, and riding on horseback. This will give vigour to your constitutions, and a bloom to your complexions. If you accustom yourselves to go abroad always in chairs and carriages, you will soon become so enervated, as to be unable to go out of doors without them. They are like most articles of luxury, useful and agreeable when judiciously used; but when made habitual, they become both insipid and pernicious. 57

An attention to your health is a duty you owe to yourselves and to your friends. Bad health seldom fails to have an influence on the spirits and temper. The finest geniuses, the most delicate minds, have very frequently a correspondent delicacy of bodily constitution, which they are too apt to neglect. Their luxury lies in reading and late hours, equal enemies to health and beauty. 58

But though good health be one of the greatest blessings of life, never make a boast of it, but enjoy it in grateful silence. We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigue, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of. 59

The intention of your being taught needle-work, knitting, and such like, is not on account of the intrinsic value of all you can do with your hands, which is trifling, but to enable you to judge more perfectly of that kind of work, and to direct the execution of it in others. Another principal end is

to enable you to fill up, in a tolerably agreeable way, some of the many solitary hours you must necessarily pass at home.—It is a great article in the happiness of life, to have your pleasures as independent of others as possible. By continually gadding abroad in search of amusement, you lose the respect of all your acquaintances, whom you oppress with those visits, which, by a more discreet management, might have been courted.

60

The domestic economy of a family is entirely a woman's province, and furnishes a variety of subjects for the exertion both of good sense and good taste. If you ever come to have the charge of a family, it ought to engage much of your time and attention; nor can you be excused from this by any extent of fortune, though with a narrow one the ruin that follows the neglect of it may be more immediate.

61

I am at the greatest loss what to advise you in regard to books. There is no impropriety in your reading history, or cultivating any art or science to which genius or accident lead you. The whole volume of Nature lies open to your eye, and furnishes an infinite variety of entertainment. If I was sure that Nature had given you such strong principles of taste and sentiment as would remain with you, and influence your future conduct, with the utmost pleasure would I endeavour to direct your reading in such a way as might form that taste to the utmost perfection of truth and elegance. "But when I reflect how easy it is to warm a girl's imagination, and how difficult deeply and permanently to affect her heart; how readily she enters into every refinement of sentiment, and how easily she can sacrifice them to vanity or convenience;" I think I may very probably do you an injury by artificially creating a taste, which if Nature never gave it you, would only serve to embarrass your future conduct.—I do not want to *make* you any thing: I want to know what Nature has made you, and to perfect you on her plan. I do not wish you to have sentiments that might perplex you: I wish you to have sentiments that may uniformly and steadily guide you, and such as your hearts so thoroughly approve, that you would not forego them for any consideration this world could offer.

62

63

Dress is an important article in female life. The love of dress is natural to you, and therefore it is proper and reasonable. Good sense will regulate your expence in it, and good taste will direct you to dress in such a way, as to conceal any blemishes, and set off your beauties, if you have any, to the greatest advantage. But much delicacy and judgment are required in the application of this rule. A fine woman shows her charms to most advantage, when she seems most to conceal them. The finest bosom in nature is not so fine as what imagination forms. The most perfect elegance of dress appears always the most easy, and the least studied.

64

Do not confine your attention to dress to your public appearances. Accustom yourselves to an habitual neatness, so that in the most careless undress, in your most unguarded hours, you may have no reason to be ashamed of your appearance.—You will not easily believe how much we consider your dress as expressive of your characters. Vanity, levity, slovenliness, folly, appear through it. An elegant simplicity is an equal proof of taste and delicacy.

65

In dancing, the principal points you are to attend to are ease and grace. I would have you to dance with spirit: but never allow yourselves to be so far transported with mirth, as to forget the delicacy of your sex.—Many a girl dancing in the gaiety and innocence of her heart, is thought to discover a spirit she little dreams of.

66

I know no entertainment that gives such pleasure to any person of sentiment or humour, as the theatre.—But I am sorry to say, there are few English comedies a lady can see, without a shock to delicacy. You will not readily suspect the comments gentlemen make on your behaviour on such occasions. Men are often best acquainted with the most worthless of your sex, and from them too readily form their judgement of the rest. A virtuous girl often hears very indelicate things with a countenance no-wise embarrassed, because in truth she does not understand them. Yet this is most ungenerously ascribed to that command of features, and that ready presence of mind, which you are thought to possess in a degree far beyond us; or, by still more malignant observers, it is ascribed to hardened effrontery.

67

Sometimes a girl laughs with all the simplicity of unsuspecting innocence, for no other reason but being infected with other people's laughing: she is then believed to know more than she should do.—If she does happen to understand an improper thing, she suffers a very complicated distress: she feels her modesty hurt in the most sensible manner, and at the same time is ashamed of appearing conscious of the injury. The only way to avoid these inconveniencies, is never to go to a play that is particularly offensive to delicacy.—Tragedy subjects you to no such distress.—Its sorrows will soften and ennoble your hearts.

68

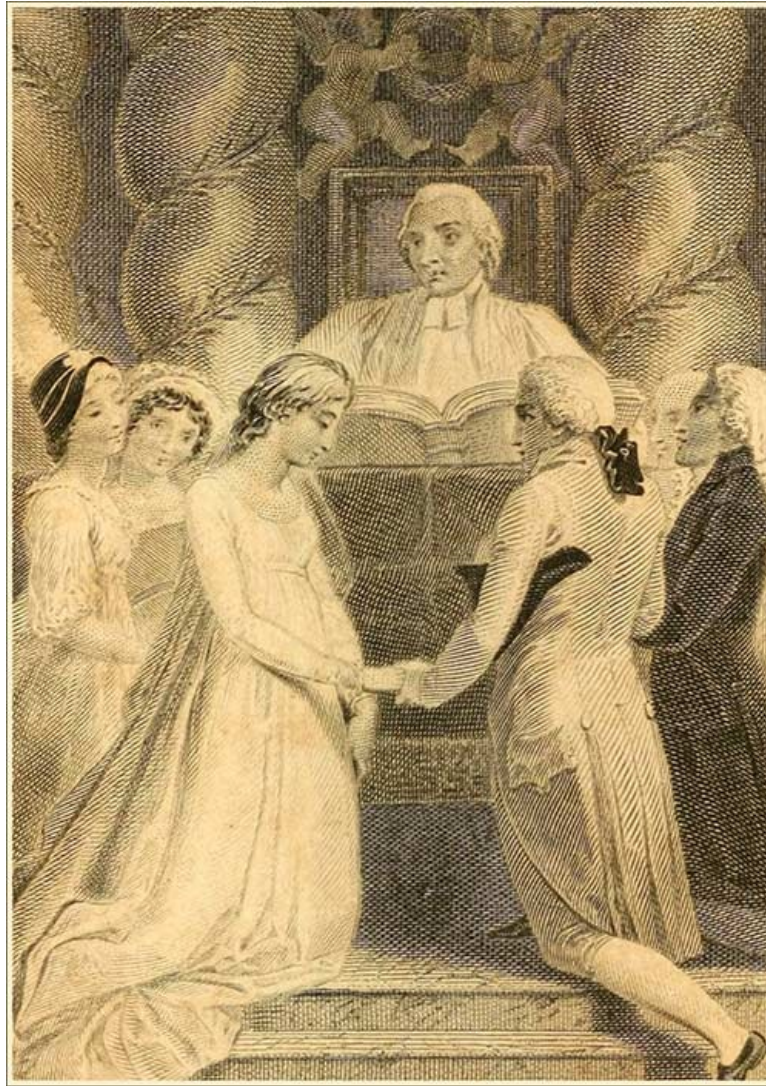
I need say little about gaming, the ladies in this country being as yet almost strangers to it.—It is a ruinous and incurable vice; and as it leads to all the selfish and turbulent passions, is peculiarly odious in your sex. I have no objection to your playing a little at any kind of game, as a variety in your amusements; provided, that what you can possibly lose is such a trifle as can neither interest you, nor hurt you.

69

In this, as well as in all important points of conduct, show a determined resolution and steadiness. This is not in the least inconsistent with that softness and gentleness so amiable in your sex. On the contrary, it gives that spirit to a mild and sweet disposition, without which it is apt to degenerate into insipidity. It makes you respectable in your own eyes, and dignifies you in ours.

70

FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, MARRIAGE.



To face Page 63.

Stothard R.A. del. Neagle Sc.

MARRIAGE.

Published March 1st. 1797, by Cadell and Davies Strand

THE luxury and dissipation that prevails in genteel life, as it corrupts the heart in many respects, so it renders it incapable of warm, sincere, and steady friendship. A happy choice of friends will be of the utmost consequence to you, as they may assist you by their advice and good offices. But the immediate gratification which friendship affords to a warm, open, and ingenuous heart, is of itself sufficient motive to court it.

In the choice of your friends, have your principal regard to goodness of heart and fidelity. If they also possess taste and genius, that will still make them more agreeable and useful companions. You have particular reason to place confidence in those who have shown affection for you in your early days, when you were incapable of making them any return. This is an obligation for which you cannot be too grateful.—When you read this, you will naturally think of your mother's friend, to whom you owe so much.

If you have the good fortune to meet with any who deserve the name of friends, unbosom yourself to them with the most unsuspecting confidence. It is one of the world's maxims, never to trust any person with a secret, the discovery of which could give you any pain: but it is the maxim of a little mind, and a cold heart, unless where it is the effect of frequent disappointments and bad usage. An open temper, if restrained but by tolerable prudence, will make you, on the whole, much happier than a reserved suspicious one, although you may sometimes suffer by it. Coldness and distrust are but the too certain consequences of age and experience; but they are unpleasant feelings, and need not be anticipated before their time.

But however open you may be in talking of your own affairs, never disclose the secrets of one friend to another. These are sacred deposits, which do not belong to you, nor have you any right

to make use of them.

There is another case, in which I suspect it is proper to be secret, not so much from motives of prudence, as delicacy; I mean in love matters. Though a woman has no reason to be ashamed of an attachment to a man of merit, yet Nature, whose authority is superior to philosophy, has annexed a sense of shame to it. It is even long before a woman of delicacy dares avow to her own heart that she loves; and when all the subterfuges of ingenuity to conceal it from herself fail, she feels a violence done both to her pride and to her modesty. This, I should imagine, must always be the case where she is not sure of a return to her attachment.

77

In such a situation, to lay the heart open to any person whatever, does not appear to me consistent with the perfection of female delicacy. But perhaps I am in the wrong.—At the same time I must tell you, that, in point of prudence, it concerns you to attend well to the consequences of such a discovery. These secrets, however important in your own estimation, may appear very trifling to your friend, who possibly will not enter into your feelings, but may rather consider them as a subject of pleasantry. For this reason, love-secrets are of all others the worst kept. But the consequences to you may be very serious, as no man of spirit and delicacy ever valued a heart much hackneyed in the ways of love.

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If, therefore, you must have a friend to pour out your heart to, be sure of her honour and secrecy. Let her not be a married woman, especially if she lives happily with her husband. There are certain unguarded moments, in which such a woman, though the best and worthiest of her sex, may let hints escape, which at other times, or to any other person than her husband, she would be incapable of; nor will a husband in this case feel himself under the same obligation of secrecy and honour, as if you had put your confidence originally in himself, especially on a subject which the world is apt to treat so lightly.

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If all other circumstances are equal, there are obvious advantages in your making friends of one another. The ties of blood, and your being so much united in one common interest, form an additional bond of union to your friendship. If your brothers should have the good fortune to have hearts susceptible of friendship, to possess truth, honour, sense, and delicacy of sentiment, they are the fittest and most unexceptionable confidants. By placing confidence in them, you will receive every advantage which you could hope for from the friendship of men, without any of the inconveniences that attend such connexions with our sex.

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Beware of making confidants of your servants. Dignity not properly understood very readily degenerates into pride, which enters into no friendships, because it cannot bear an equal, and is so fond of flattery as to grasp at it even from servants and dependants. The most ultimate confidants, therefore, of proud people, are valets-de-chambre and waiting-women. Show the utmost humanity to your servants; make their situation as comfortable to them as possible: but if you make them your confidants, you spoil them, and debase yourselves.

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Never allow any person, under the pretended sanction of friendship, to be so familiar as to lose a proper respect for you. Never allow them to tease you on any subject that is disagreeable, or where you have once taken your resolution. Many will tell you, that this reserve is inconsistent with the freedom which friendship allows. But a certain respect is as necessary in friendship as in love. Without it, you may be liked as a child, but you will never be beloved as an equal.

83

The temper and dispositions of the heart in your sex make you enter more readily and warmly into friendships than men. Your natural propensity to it is so strong, that you often run into intimacies which you soon have sufficient cause to repent of; and this makes your friendships so very fluctuating.

Another great obstacle to the sincerity as well as steadiness of your friendships, is the great clashing of your interests in the pursuits of love, ambition, or vanity. For these reasons, it would appear at first view more eligible for you to contract your friendships with the men. Among other obvious advantages of an easy intercourse between the two sexes, it occasions an emulation and exertion in each to excel and be agreeable: hence their respective excellencies are mutually communicated and blended. As their interests in no degree interfere, there can be no foundation for jealousy, or suspicion of rivalry. The friendship of a man for a woman is always blended with a tenderness, which he never feels for one of his own sex, even where love is in no degree concerned. Besides, we are conscious of a natural title you have to our protection and good offices, and therefore we feel an additional obligation of honour to serve you, and to observe an inviolable secrecy, whenever you confide in us.

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But apply these observations with great caution. Thousands of women of the best hearts and finest parts have been ruined by men who approach them under the specious name of friendship. But supposing a man to have the most undoubted honour, yet his friendship to a woman is so near a-kin to love, that if she be very agreeable in her person, she will probably very soon find a lover, where she only wished to meet a friend.—Let me here, however, warn you against that weakness so common among vain women, the imagination that every man who takes particular notice of you is a lover. Nothing can expose you more to ridicule, than the taking up a man on the suspicion of being your lover, who perhaps never once thought of you in that view, and giving yourselves those airs so common among silly women on such occasions.

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There is a kind of unmeaning gallantry much practised by some men, which, if you have any

discernment, you will find really very harmless. Men of this sort will attend you to public places, and be useful to you by a number of little observances, which those of a superior class do not so well understand, or have not leisure to regard, or perhaps are too proud to submit to. Look on the compliments of such men as words of course, which they repeat to every agreeable woman of their acquaintance. There is a familiarity they are apt to assume, which a proper dignity in your behaviour will be easily able to check.

88

There is a different species of men whom you may like as agreeable companions, men of worth, taste, and genius, whose conversation, in some respects, may be superior to what you generally meet with among your own sex. It will be foolish in you to deprive yourselves of an useful and agreeable acquaintance, merely because idle people say he is your lover. Such a man may like your company, without having any design on your person.

People whose sentiments, and particularly whose tastes, correspond, naturally like to associate together, although neither of them have the most distant view of any further connexion. But as this similarity of minds often gives rise to a more tender attachment than friendship, it will be prudent to keep a watchful eye over yourselves, lest your hearts become too far engaged before you are aware of it. At the same time, I do not think that your sex, at least in this part of the world, have much of that sensibility which disposes to such attachments. What is commonly called love among you is rather gratitude, and a partiality to the man who prefers you to the rest of your sex; and such a man you often marry, with little of either personal esteem or affection. Indeed, without an unusual share of natural sensibility, and very peculiar good fortune, a woman in this country has very little probability of marrying for love.

89

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It is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, That love is not to begin on your part, but is entirely to be the consequence of our attachment to you. Now, supposing a woman to have sense and taste, she will not find many men to whom she can possibly be supposed to bear any considerable share of esteem. Among these few it is very great chance if any of them distinguishes her particularly. Love, at least with us, is exceedingly capricious, and will not always fix where reason says it should. But supposing one of them should become particularly attached to her, it is still extremely improbable that he should be the man in the world her heart most approved of.

91

As, therefore, Nature has not given you that unlimited range in your choice which we enjoy, she has wisely and benevolently assigned to you a greater flexibility of taste on this subject. Some agreeable qualities recommend a gentleman to your common good liking and friendship. In the course of his acquaintance, he contracts an attachment to you. When you perceive it, it excites your gratitude; this gratitude rises into a preference, and this preference perhaps at last advances to some degree of attachment, especially if it meets with crosses and difficulties; for these, and a state of suspense, are very great incitements to attachment, and are the food of love in both sexes. If attachment was not excited in your sex in this manner, there is not one of a million of you that could ever marry with any degree of love.

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A man of taste and delicacy marries a woman because he loves her more than any other. A woman of equal taste and delicacy marries him because she esteems him, and because he gives her that preference. But if a man unfortunately becomes attached to a woman whose heart is secretly pre-engaged, his attachment, instead of obtaining a suitable return, is particularly offensive; and if he persists to tease her, he makes himself equally the object of her scorn and aversion.

94

The effects of love among men are diversified by their different tempers. An artful man may counterfeit every one of them so as easily to impose on a young girl of an open, generous, and feeling heart, if she is not extremely on her guard. The finest parts in such a girl may not always prove sufficient for her security. The dark and crooked paths of cunning are unsearchable and inconceivable to an honourable and elevated mind.

The following, I apprehend, are the most genuine effects of an honourable passion among the men, and the most difficult to counterfeit. A man of delicacy often betrays his passion by his too great anxiety to conceal it, especially if he has little hopes of success. True love, in all its stages, seeks concealment, and never expects success. It renders a man not only respectful, but timid to the highest degree in his behaviour to the woman he loves. To conceal the awe he stands in of her, he may sometimes affect pleasantry, but it sits awkwardly on him, and he quickly relapses into seriousness, if not into dulness. He magnifies all her real perfections in his imagination, and is either blind to her failings, or converts them into beauties. Like a person conscious of guilt, he is jealous that every eye observes him; and to avoid this, he shuns all the little observances of common gallantry.

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His heart and his character will be improved in every respect by his attachment. His manners will become more gentle, and his conversation more agreeable; but diffidence and embarrassment will always make him appear to disadvantage in the company of his mistress. If the fascination continue long, it will totally depress his spirit, and extinguish every active, vigorous, and manly principle of his mind. You will find this subject beautifully and pathetically painted in Thomson's Spring.

97

When you observe in a gentleman's behaviour these marks which I have described above, reflect seriously what you are to do. If his attachment is agreeable to you, I leave you to do as

nature, good sense, and delicacy shall direct you. If you love him, let me advise you never to discover to him the full extent of your love; no, not although you marry him. That sufficiently shows your preference, which is all he is intitled to know. If he has delicacy, he will ask for no stronger proof of your affection, for your sake; if he has sense, he will not ask it for his own. This is an unpleasant truth, but it is my duty to let you know it. Violent love cannot subsist, at least cannot be expressed, for any time together, on both sides; otherwise the certain consequence, however concealed, is satiety and disgust. Nature in this case has laid the reserve on you.

98

If you see evident proofs of a gentleman's attachment, and are determined to shut your heart against him, as you ever hope to be used with generosity by the person who shall engage your own heart, treat him honourably and humanely. Do not let him linger in a miserable suspense, but be anxious to let him know your sentiments with regard to him.

99

However people's hearts may deceive them, there is scarcely a person that can love for any time without at least some distant hope of success. If you really wish to undeceive a lover, you may do it in a variety of ways. There is a certain species of easy familiarity in your behaviour, which may satisfy him, if he has any discernment left, that he has nothing to hope for. But perhaps your particular temper may not admit of this.—You may easily show that you want to avoid his company; but if he is a man whose friendship you wish to preserve, you may not choose this method, because then you lose him in every capacity.—You may get a common friend to explain matters to him, or fall on many other devices, if you are seriously anxious to put him out of suspense.

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But if you are resolved against every such method, at least do not shun opportunities of letting him explain himself. If you do this, you act barbarously and unjustly. If he brings you to an explanation, give him a polite, but resolute and decisive answer. In whatever way you convey your sentiments to him, if he is a man of spirit and delicacy, he will give you no further trouble, nor apply to your friends for their intercession. This last is a method of courtship which every man of spirit will disdain. He will never whine nor sue for your pity. That would mortify him almost as much as your scorn. In short, you may possibly break such a heart, but you can never bend it. Great pride always accompanies delicacy, however concealed under the appearance of the utmost gentleness and modesty, and is the passion of all others the most difficult to conquer.

101

There is a case where a woman may coquette justifiably to the utmost verge which her conscience will allow. It is where a gentleman purposely declines to make his addresses, till such time as he thinks himself perfectly sure of her consent. This at bottom is intended to force a woman to give up the undoubted privilege of her sex, the privilege of refusing; it is intended to force her to explain herself, in effect, before the gentleman deigns to do it, and by this means to oblige her to violate the modesty and delicacy of her sex, and to invert the clearest order of nature. All this sacrifice is proposed to be made merely to gratify a most despicable vanity in a man who would degrade the very woman whom he wishes to make his wife.

103

It is of great importance to distinguish, whether a gentleman who has the appearance of being your lover, delays to speak explicitly, from the motive I have mentioned, or from a diffidence inseparable from true attachment. In the one case you can scarcely use him too ill; in the other, you ought to use him with great kindness: and the greatest kindness you can show him if you are determined not to listen to his addresses, is to let him know it as soon as possible.

104

I know the many excuses with which women endeavour to justify themselves to the world, and to their own consciences, when they act otherwise. Sometimes they plead ignorance, or at least uncertainty, of the gentleman's real sentiments. That may sometimes be the case. Sometimes they plead the decorum of their sex, which enjoins an equal behaviour to all men, and forbids them to consider any man as a lover till he has directly told them so.—Perhaps few women carry their ideas of female delicacy and decorum so far as I do. But I must say you are not intitled to plead the obligation of these virtues, in opposition to the superior ones of gratitude, justice, and humanity. The man is intitled to all these, who prefers you to the rest of your sex, and perhaps whose greatest weakness is this very preference.—The truth of the matter is, vanity, and the love of admiration, is so prevailing a passion among you, that you may be considered to make a very great sacrifice whenever you give up a lover, till every art of coquetry fails to keep him, or till he forces you to an explanation. You can be fond of the love, when you are indifferent to, or even when you despise, the lover.

105

But the deepest and most artful coquetry is employed by women of superior taste and sense, to engage and fix the heart of a man whom the world and whom they themselves esteem, although they are firmly determined never to marry him. But his conversation amuses them, and his attachment is the highest gratification to their vanity; nay, they can sometimes be gratified with the utter ruin of his fortune, fame, and happiness.—God forbid I should ever think so of all your sex! I know many of them have principles, have generosity and dignity of soul that elevate them above the worthless vanity I have been speaking of.

107

Such a woman, I am persuaded, may always convert a lover, if she cannot give him her affections, into a warm and steady friend, provided he is a man of sense, resolution, and candour. If she explains herself to him with a generous openness and freedom, he must feel the stroke as a man: but he will likewise bear it as a man: what he suffers, he will suffer in silence. Every sentiment of esteem will remain; but love, though it requires very little food, and is easily surfeited with too much, yet it requires some. He will view her in the light of a married woman;

108

and though passion subsides, yet a man of a candid and generous heart always retains a tenderness for a woman he has once loved, and who has used him well, beyond what he feels for any other of her sex.

109

If he has not confided his own secret to any body, he has an undoubted title to ask you not to divulge it. If a woman chooses to trust any of her companions with her own unfortunate attachments, she may, as it is her own affair alone; but if she has any generosity or gratitude, she will not betray a secret which does not belong to her.

Male coquetry is much more inexcusable than female, as well as more pernicious; but it is rare in this country. Very few men will give themselves the trouble to gain or retain any woman's affections, unless they have views on them either of an honourable or dishonourable kind. Men employed in the pursuits of business, ambition, or pleasure, will not give themselves the trouble to engage a woman's affections, merely from the vanity of conquest, and of triumphing over the heart of an innocent and defenceless girl. Besides, people never value much what is entirely in their power. A man of parts, sentiment, and address, if he lays aside all regard to truth and humanity, may engage the hearts of fifty women at the same time, and may likewise conduct his coquetry with so much art, as to put it out of the power of any of them to specify a single expression that could be said to be directly expressive of love.

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This ambiguity of behaviour, this art of keeping one in suspense, is the great secret of coquetry in both sexes. It is the more cruel in us, because we can carry it what length we please, and continue it as long as we please, without your being so much as at liberty to complain or expostulate; whereas we can break our chain, and force you to explain, whenever we become impatient of our situation.

112

I have insisted the more particularly on this subject of courtship, because it may most readily happen to you at that early period of life, when you can have little experience or knowledge of the world; when your passions are warm, and your judgments not arrived at such full maturity as to be able to correct them.—I wish you to possess such high principles of honour and generosity as will render you incapable of deceiving, and at the same time to possess that acute discernment which may secure you against being deceived.

113

A woman, in this country, may easily prevent the first impressions of love; and every motive of prudence and delicacy should make her guard her heart against them, till such time as she has received the most convincing proofs of the attachment of a man of such merit as will justify a reciprocal regard. Your hearts indeed may be shut inflexibly and permanently against all the merit a man can possess. That may be your misfortune, but cannot be your fault. In such a situation, you would be equally unjust to yourself and your lover, if you gave him your hand when your heart revolted against him. But miserable will be your fate, if you allow an attachment to steal on you before you are sure of a return; or, what is infinitely worse, where there are wanting those qualities which alone can insure happiness in a married state.

114

I know nothing that renders a woman more despicable, than her thinking it essential to happiness to be married. Besides the gross indelicacy of the sentiment, it is a false one, as thousands of women have experienced. But if it was true, the belief that it is so, and the consequent impatience to be married, is the most effectual way to prevent it.

115

You must not think from this, that I do not wish you to marry. On the contrary, I am of opinion, that you may attain a superior degree of happiness in a married state, to what you can possibly find in any other. I know the forlorn and unprotected situation of an old maid, the chagrin and peevishness which are apt to infect their tempers, and the great difficulty of making a transition, with dignity and cheerfulness, from the period of youth, beauty, admiration, and respect, into the calm, silent, unnoticed retreat of declining years.

116

I see some unmarried women, of active, vigorous minds, and great vivacity of spirits, degrading themselves, sometimes by entering into a dissipated course of life, unsuitable to their years, and exposing themselves to the ridicule of girls, who might have been their grandchildren; sometimes by oppressing their acquaintances by impertinent intrusions into their private affairs; and sometimes by being the propagators of scandal and defamation. All this is owing to an exuberant activity of spirit, which, if it had found employment at home, would have rendered them respectable and useful members of society.

117

I see other women, in the same situation, gentle, modest, blessed with sense, taste, delicacy, and every milder feminine virtue of the heart, but of weak spirits, bashful, and timid: I see such women sinking into obscurity and insignificance, and gradually losing every elegant accomplishment; for this evident reason, that they are not united to a partner who has sense, and worth, and taste, to know their value; one who is able to draw forth their concealed qualities, and show them to advantage; who can give that support to their feeble spirits which they stand so much in need of; and who, by his affection and tenderness, might make such a woman happy in exerting every talent, and accomplishing herself in every elegant art that could contribute to his amusement.

118

In short, I am of opinion, that a married state, if entered into from proper motives of esteem and affection, will be the happiest for yourselves, make you most respectable in the eyes of the world, and the most useful members of society. But I confess I am not enough of a patriot to wish

119

you to marry for the good of the public. I wish you to marry for no other reason but to make yourselves happier. When I am so particular in my advices about your conduct, I own my heart beats with the fond hope of making you worthy the attachment of men who will deserve you, and be sensible of your merit. But Heaven forbid you should ever relinquish the ease and independence of a single life, to become the slaves of a fool or tyrant's caprice.

120

As these have always been my sentiments, I shall do you but justice, when I leave you in such independent circumstances as may lay you under no temptation to do from necessity what you would never do from choice.—This will likewise save you from that cruel mortification to a woman of spirit, the suspicion that a gentleman thinks he does you an honour or a favour when he asks you for his wife.

If I live till you arrive at that age when you shall be capable to judge for yourselves, and do not strangely alter my sentiments, I shall act towards you in a very different manner from what most parents do. My opinion has always been, that, when that period arrives, the parental authority ceases.

121

I hope I shall always treat you with that affection and easy confidence which may dispose you to look on me as your friend. In that capacity alone I shall think myself intitled to give you my opinion; in the doing of which, I should think myself highly criminal, if I did not to the utmost of my power endeavour to divest myself of all personal vanity, and all prejudices in favour of my particular taste. If you did not choose to follow my advice, I should not on that account cease to love you as my children. Though my right to your obedience was expired, yet I should think nothing could release me from the ties of nature and humanity.

122

You may perhaps imagine, that the reserved behaviour which I recommend to you, and your appearing seldom at public places, must cut off all opportunities of your being acquainted with gentlemen. I am very far from intending this. I advise you to no reserve, but what will render you more respected and beloved by our sex. I do not think public places suited to make people acquainted together. They can only be distinguished there by their looks and external behaviour. But it is in private companies alone where you can expect easy and agreeable conversation, which I should never wish you to decline. If you do not allow gentlemen to become acquainted with you, you can never expect to marry with attachment on either side.—Love is very seldom produced at first sight; at least it must have, in that case, a very unjustifiable foundation. True love is founded on esteem, in a correspondence of tastes and sentiments, and steals on the heart imperceptibly.

123

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There is one advice I shall leave you, to which I beg your particular attention. Before your affections come to be in the least engaged to any man, examine your tempers, your tastes, and your hearts, very severely, and settle in your own minds, what are the requisites to your happiness in a married state; and, as it is almost impossible that you should get every thing you wish, come to a steady determination what you are to consider as essential, and what may be sacrificed.

125

If you have hearts disposed by nature for love and friendship, and possess those feelings which enable you to enter into all the refinements and delicacies of these attachments, consider well, for Heaven's sake, and as you value your future happiness, before you give them any indulgence. If you have the misfortune (for a very great misfortune it commonly is to your sex) to have such a temper and such sentiments deeply rooted in you, if you have spirit and resolution to resist the solicitations of vanity, the persecution of friends (for you will have lost the only friend that would never persecute you), and can support the prospect of the many inconveniencies attending the state of an old maid, which I formerly pointed out, then you may indulge yourselves in that kind of sentimental reading and conversation which is most correspondent to your feelings.

126

But if you find, on a strict self-examination, that marriage is absolutely essential to your happiness, keep the secret inviolable in your own bosoms, for the reason I formerly mentioned; but shun, as you would do the most fatal poison, all that species of reading and conversation which warms the imagination, which engages and softens the heart, and raises the taste above the level of common life. If you do otherwise, consider the terrible conflict of passions this may afterwards raise in your breasts.

127

If this refinement once takes deep root in your minds, and you do not obey its dictates, but marry from vulgar and mercenary views, you may never be able to eradicate it entirely, and then it will embitter all your married days. Instead of meeting with sense, delicacy, tenderness, a lover, a friend, an equal companion, in a husband, you may be tired with insipidity and dulness; shocked with indelicacy, or mortified by indifference. You will find none to compassionate, or even understand your sufferings; for your husbands may not use you cruelly, and may give you as much money for your clothes, personal expense, and domestic necessaries, as is suitable to their fortunes. The world would therefore look on you as unreasonable women, and that did not deserve to be happy, if you were not so.—To avoid these complicated evils, if you are determined at all events to marry, I would advise you to make all your reading and amusements of such a kind, as do not affect the heart nor the imagination, except in the way of wit or humour.

128

129

I have no view by these advices to lead your tastes; I only want to persuade you of the necessity of knowing your own minds, which, though seemingly very easy, is what your sex seldom attain on many important occasions in life, but particularly on this of which I am speaking. There is not

130

a quality I more anxiously wish you to possess, than that collected decisive spirit, which rests on itself, which enables you to see where your true happiness lies, and to pursue it with the most determined resolution. In matters of business follow the advice of those who know them better than yourselves, and in whose integrity you can confide; but in matters of taste, that depend on your own feelings, consult no one friend whatever, but consult your own hearts.

If a gentleman makes his addresses to you, or gives you reason to believe he will do so, before you allow your affections to be engaged, endeavour, in the most prudent and secret manner, to procure from your friends every necessary piece of information concerning him; such as his character for sense, his morals, his temper, fortune, and family; whether it is distinguished for parts and worth, or for folly, knavery, and loathsome hereditary diseases. When your friends inform you of these, they have fulfilled their duty. If they go further, they have not that deference for you which a becoming dignity on your part would effectually command.

Whatever your views are in marrying, take every possible precaution to prevent their being disappointed. If fortune, and the pleasure it brings, are your aim, it is not sufficient that the settlements of a jointure and children's provisions be ample, and properly secured; it is necessary that you should enjoy the fortune during your own life. The principal security you can have for this will depend on your marrying a good-natured, generous man, who despises money, and who will let you live where you can best enjoy that pleasure, that pomp and parade of life, for which you married him.

From what I have said, you will easily see that I could never pretend to advise whom you should marry; but I can with great confidence advise whom you should not marry.

Avoid a companion that may entail any hereditary disease on your posterity, particularly (that most dreadful of all human calamities) madness. It is the height of imprudence to run into such a danger, and in my opinion, highly criminal.

Do not marry a fool; he is the most intractable of all animals; he is led by his passions and caprices, and is incapable of hearing the voice of reason. It may probably too hurt your vanity to have husbands for whom you have reason to blush and tremble every time they open their lips in company. But the worst circumstance that attends a fool, is his constant jealousy of his wife being thought to govern him. This renders it impossible to lead him, and he is continually doing absurd and disagreeable things, for no other reason but to show he dares do them.

A rake is always a suspicious husband, because he has only known the most worthless of your sex. He likewise entails the worst diseases on his wife and children, if he has the misfortune to have any.

If you have a sense of religion yourselves, do not think of husbands who have none. If they have tolerable understandings, they will be glad that you have religion, for their own sakes, and for the sake of their families; but it will sink you in their esteem. If they are weak men, they will be continually teasing and shocking you about your principles.—If you have children, you will suffer the most bitter distress, in seeing all your endeavours to form their minds to virtue and piety, all your endeavours to secure their present and eternal happiness, frustrated and turned into ridicule.

As I look on your choice of a husband to be of the greatest consequence to your happiness, I hope you will make it with the utmost circumspection. Do not give way to a sudden sally of passion, and dignify it with the name of love.—Genuine love is not founded in caprice; it is founded in nature, on honourable views, on virtue, on similarity of tastes and sympathy of souls.

If you have these sentiments, you will never marry any one, when you are not in that situation, in point of fortune, which is necessary to the happiness of either of you. What that competency may be, can only be determined by your own tastes. It would be ungenerous in you to take advantage of a lover's attachment, to plunge him into distress; and if he has any honour, no personal gratification will ever tempt him to enter into any connexion which will render you unhappy. If you have as much between you as to satisfy all your demands, it is sufficient.

I shall conclude with endeavouring to remove a difficulty which must naturally occur to any woman of reflexion on the subject of marriage. What is to become of all those refinements of delicacy, that dignity of manners, which checked all familiarities, and suspended desire in respectful and awful admiration? In answer to this, I shall only observe, that if motives of interest or vanity have had any share in your resolutions to marry, none of these chimerical notions will give you any pain; nay, they will very quickly appear as ridiculous in your own eyes, as they probably always did in the eyes of your husbands. They have been sentiments which have floated in your imaginations, but have never reached your hearts. But if these sentiments have been truly genuine, and if you have had the singular happy fate to attach those who understand them, you have no reason to be afraid.

Marriage, indeed, will at once dispel the enchantment raised by external beauty; but the virtues and graces that first warmed the heart, that reserve and delicacy which always left the lover something further to wish, and often made him doubtful of your sensibility or attachment, may and ought ever to remain. The tumult of passion will necessarily subside; but it will be succeeded by an endearment, that affects the heart in a more equal, more sensible, and tender

manner.—But I must check myself, and not indulge in descriptions that may mislead you, and that too sensibly awake the remembrance of my happier days, which, perhaps, it were better for me to forget for ever.

I have thus given you my opinion on some of the most important articles of your future life, chiefly calculated for that period when you are just entering the world. I have endeavoured to avoid some peculiarities of opinion, which, from their contradiction to the general practice of the world, I might reasonably have suspected were not so well founded. But, in writing to you, I am afraid my heart has been too full, and too warmly interested, to allow me to keep this resolution. This may have produced some embarrassment, and some seeming contradictions. What I have written has been the amusement of some solitary hours, and has served to divert some melancholy reflexions.—I am conscious I undertook a task to which I was very unequal; but I have discharged a part of my duty.—You will at least be pleased with it, as the last mark of your father's love and attention.

141

142

THE END.

*Wood & Innes,
Printers, Poppin's Court, Fleet Street.*

Transcriber's Note:

Spelling has been retained as it appears in the original publication except as follows:

Page 75

- effect of frequent disdisappointments *changed to* effect of frequent [disappointments](#)

Page 131

- have fulfilled their duty *changed to* have [fulfilled](#) their duty

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A FATHER'S LEGACY TO HIS DAUGHTERS ***

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