



THE VICTORIAN ERA

1837 to 1901

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The Golden Rules of Etiquette

Etiquette may be defined as the minor morality of life. Its laws, like all other social laws, are the collected results of the wisdom and experience of many generations. Victorian men and women of distinction were expected to follow certain rules of etiquette. The following is a selection of some of the Golden Rules of Etiquette.

Introductions

To introduce persons who are unknown to each other is to undertake a serious responsibility. Never undertake this responsibility without, in the first place, asking yourself whether the persons are likely to be agreeable to each other.

Always introduce the gentleman to the lady ___ never the lady to the gentleman.



The Golden Rules of Etiquette

Never present a gentleman to a lady without first asking her permission to do so.

When you are introduced to a gentleman never offer your hand. When introduced, persons limit their recognition of each other to a bow.

At a ball, or evening party where there is dancing, the mistress of the house may introduce any gentleman to any lady without first asking the lady's permission.

A sister may present her brother, or a mother her son, without any kind of preliminary.



The Golden Rules of Etiquette

Visiting

Visits of ceremony should be short. Beware of letting your call exceed half-an-hour's length. It is always better to let your friends regret rather than desire your withdrawal.

When visitors rise to take leave you must also rise.

A lady should dress well, but not too richly, when she pays a morning visit.

The visiting cards of gentlemen are half the size of those of ladies.

Umbrellas should be left in the hall.

Gentlemen should rise when a lady takes her leave.

If a gentleman has need to look at his watch during a call, he should ask permission to do so and apologize for it.



The Golden Rules of Etiquette

Conversation

In order to talk well, three conditions are necessary namely -- fact, a good memory and a fair education.

In talking with ladies, gentlemen should avoid mentioning matters of politics, scientific or commercial topics and should choose only such topics as are likely to be of interest to them.

Never talk on subjects of which you know nothing, unless it be for the purpose of acquiring information.



The Golden Rules of Etiquette

Ball

A hundred guests or over that number constitutes a ball. The lady of the house must stand near the door, so as to receive her guests, to each of whom she must find something to say, no matter how insignificant.

If you escort a lady to a ball, call for her at the appointed hour, in a carriage, or send a bouquet early in the day. You may see that she gets her supper, and offer to leave the ball at any hour that she may wish to do so.

Do not remain too late.

Always give your arm to a lady in crossing a ball-room.