



*Pride and
Prejudice*
by Jane
Austen

I GET A CHILL WHEN YOU TOUCH ME
A THRILL I CAN'T IGNORE

Manners and Customs
in 19th Century
England

Etiquette Rules

- During the nineteenth century (when Jane Austen wrote) there were strict etiquette rules that men and women were expected, almost required, to follow.
- During this time, men inherited property over women. This process was called entailment.
- It became a priority of mothers to ensure the financial security of their daughters.

Basic Etiquette for Gentlemen

- In riding horseback or walking along the street, the lady always has the wall.
- Meeting a lady in the street whom you know only slightly, you wait for her acknowledging bow- then and only then may you tip your hat to her, which is done using the hand farthest away from her to raise the hat. You do not speak to her - or to any other lady - unless she speaks to you first.
- If you meet a lady who is a good friend and who signifies that she wishes to talk to you, you turn and walk with her if you wish to converse. It is not "done" to make a lady stand talking in the street.
- In going up a flight of stairs, you precede the lady (running, according to one authority); in going down, you follow.

Basic Etiquette for Gentlemen

- In a carriage, a gentleman takes the seat facing backward. If he is alone in a carriage with a lady, he does not sit next to her unless he is her husband, brother, father, or son. He exits the carriage first so that he may help her down. He takes care not to step on her dress.
- At a public exhibition or concert, if accompanied by a lady, he goes in first in order to find her a seat. If he enters such an exhibition alone and there are ladies or older gentlemen present, he removes his hat.
- A gentleman is always introduced to a lady - never the other way around. It is presumed to be an honor for the gentleman to meet her. Likewise a social inferior is always introduced to a superior.
- A gentleman never smokes in the presence of ladies.

Basic Etiquette for Ladies

- If unmarried and under thirty, she is never to be seen in the company of a man without a chaperone. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone, but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man, or a servant. (Note: this would seem to have become a more general rule later in the century, as Austen's women are seen walking alone.)
- Under no circumstances may a lady call upon a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that gentleman on a professional or business matter.
- A lady does not wear pearls or diamonds in the morning.
- A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner.
- A lady should never "cut" someone, that is to say, fail to acknowledge his presence after encountering him socially, unless it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, only a lady is ever truly justified in cutting someone.

Coming Out

- The London social season (lasting from Easter until August 12th, the start of Grouse hunting season) was filled each with girls just "out" in society. The principle reason for "coming out" was to marry well.
- Girls were expected to be quite childlike until they were about 18, when they were taken to London from their parents' country homes to be presented at court.
- This was their official entry into society which made them available for parties, balls, and of course, marriage. At least, this is the idea for the daughters of the nobility and gentry.

Dancing

- In Jane Austen's time, the most common dances were "country dances" which consisted of several couples walking through a series figures together.
- The couples stood, moved forward, walked around one another, sometimes with arms or hands interlaced, wove between the other dancers, and then stepped back into their places. One or two, or all of the couples could move at the same time. In some cases, this left a number of the dancers standing by waiting their turns to move allowing, time of conversation.

Dancing

- According to a somewhat hollow convention of the day, it was considered a violation of etiquette for a woman to decline a man's invitation to dance in any way which would make it seem that she didn't want to dance with *him* personally; rather, she had to maintain the pretense that she didn't want to dance at all with anybody for the moment, and then sit down for at least the next few "sets" of two dances each (i.e. must not soon be seen to be standing up with someone other than the man she has turned down). In some cases (depending on the lady's scruples and/or fear of being seen to violate etiquette or fear of giving offense, and the particular circumstances involved), it means she won't dance at all for the rest of the evening.

Letters

- In an era before telephones or cheap fast transportation, letter-writing was very important to the families of Jane Austen's day; Jane Austen herself wrote many hundreds of letters during her lifetime, of which about 150 have survived. Many 18th century literary works (even some quite long novels) were in the form of a series of letters between the characters (the "epistolary novel"), often regardless of plausibility. Jane Austen experimented with this form in her early works, and *Pride and Prejudice* itself (under its original title of *First Impressions*) was probably first written in epistolary form.

Women's Education

- In Jane Austen's day, there was no centrally-organized system of state-supported education. There were local charity or church-run day schools, but these were not attended by the children of the genteel social levels that Austen writes about.
- Instead, genteel children might be educated at home by their parents, particularly when young; or by live-in governesses or tutors; or by going off to a private boarding school or to live with a tutor.

Women's Education

Since women did not have careers and were not citizens in the sense of being directly involved in politics, there was little need for higher-education. Most women studied religion and became proficient at cooking and other household duties.

- For women of the genteel classes, the goal of non-domestic education was the acquisition of “accomplishments,” such as the ability to draw, sing, play music, or speak modern languages (generally French and Italian). Though it was not usually stated with such open cynicism, the purpose of such accomplishments was often only to attract a husband; so that these skills then tended to be neglected after marriage.

Works Cited

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