

Of bad habits, the most common one is that of making excuses. Excuses for tardiness, for incivility, for lack of industry, for any lack in any particular. The habit of excuse-making obliterates all distinction between doing and not doing. It sears the conscience and breaks down the distinctions between truth and falsehood. The reason given in the excuse at last becomes simply a subterfuge to hide one's failings. The habit of making excuses leads from apology to deception, and at last to downright lying.

Some persons excuse the formation of bad habits in youth, by saying that there is a time to sow wild oats. Thomas Hughes says, "The only thing to do with wild oats is to put them into the hottest part of the fire and get them burned to dust. If you sow them, no matter in what ground, up they will come, with long, tough roots and luxuriant stalks and leaves. You, and nobody else, will have to reap them."

In contrast with bad, rude, or even indifferent habits, how refreshing and inspiring are the refined, elevating, courteous and unassuming habits of a true gentleman. In appearance, having the grace of personal neatness; refined at the table, polite, affable and unobtrusive in all relations with others; cultivating a low, gentle voice, a quiet, winning manner and a general bearing that attracts. Honesty of purpose and purity of life must, of course, lie at the foundation of gentlemanly habits. Without these there is the seeming to be, without the reality. A pure life is the strength of man, as it is the beauty of woman.

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I hev often noticed that the man who would have done such wonderful things ef he had been thare never gits thare.—Josh Billings.