



**Mrs. Grundy.**

If ever virtuous and valuable female was ungratefully rewarded, in this world, it is Mrs. Grundy. Somewhere or other, whether as a sweet little cherub aloft, or a viewless messenger of air among us, we know not—perhaps no man ever shall know—she takes care of us all and individually. She watches over our cradles, she instigates our funerals, she assists in choosing our spouses, our hats, our bonnets, our houses, our friends, our religion—even our dinners. She inspires many and controls nearly all of our legislative acts. She breathes her spirit into our heart, she prompts our literature, our pulpit eloquence, our evening-party ballads of the affections. What should we do without her? Fancy having to settle all the details of our lives for ourselves, which quarter of the town to live in, what sort of house to have, what furniture, how many servants,

what o'clock to dine at, at which part of the dinner to have the celery. Fancy having to find out our own wishes, to create our own tastes, to formulate our own code of social morals. Ninetenths of us would have our minds like the old fresco of the man clad with a pair of shears, meditating into what fashion he should cut the provision of cloths and silks spread around him for his covering, and would wait in hesitating bewilderment, not provided with ideas at all, and the remaining tenth of us would live in a state of perpetual variation and experiment and would be like independent hermits in a too crowded desert—each one an offence to all the others, in the way of each. There would be no certainty about anything; one lady would be found at family prayers at what we thought was her hour for morning calls and scandal; one would summon us to attend her "At Home" at 10 a. m. our friends would

scatter themselves round all the points of the compass, wherever their whims and their house-rents drew them; we should not know when it was right and when it was wrong to be in town, we should have no idea whither to betake ourselves, if need be, to avoid our acquaintances; the butler would demand our dining at one time of the day or at night the cook would strike for another time, nothing would be beyond discussion, and there would be no final argument "everybody does it; nobody does it;" "people would think we ought"—the safe decisive phrases, to the point and unanswerable, how we should miss them in our interminable debates on everything to be, to do, and to suffer under the sun.

We are saved from cares by Mrs. Grundy; but her benefits do not end here; she rewards our virtues, she palliates our vices, she is the wisdom of fools, the courage of the faint-hearted, the conscience of us all. Mr. Greatheart was no surer guide along the road from the City of Destruction than she through the ways of the world, and she does not lead us into bogs and brakes and the many uncomfortable vales and hills—no Appolyons and Giant Despairs for her—she takes us along clean, nicely rolled, level highways, where respectable people go, and the police "move on" inconvenient vagabonds. Again, she is the guardian of our domestic happiness. Fear of her censure keeps ill-assorted couples under the parental discipline; it prevents uncongenial relations telling of each other, except to presumably safe confidants.

We inspire our little ones with meritorious conduct by impressing their non-intelligence with a sense of her ubiquitous supervision; she is the providence of nursemaids and governesses; we look to her to store the mind of grown up young people with manners and morality, and she does not disappoint us. Lenient in a good-humored way to young men, the fault is not hers if, at times, some foolhardy or daunter-headed fellow abuses his privileges, and breaks her rule of decorum. And then how capably she manages our girls. It is said that two or three hundred years ago, parents were noted for their severe and even cruel rules; it is evident that they had no gentle Mrs. Grundy to lighten their hands like the parents of to-day. Mrs. Grundy has always existed, though under different names, but it is not till railroads and conversation by newspapers and telephones have made one locality of everywhere, and the whole world subject to the reader of his newspaper in every city, that she has come to exercise the all-prevailing influence to which we are