



**SOCIAL ETIQUETTE—THE WOMAN OF TACT AND PUNCTUALITY.**—A wise man once said that tact is better than genius. Very desirable in a man, it is almost essential in a woman; but it is a heaven born quality, and hardly acquired by those who have it not. You know at once by instinct when you are in a house managed by a woman who has a real talent for being the presiding genius of a home; there is a delicious atmosphere of repose, no hurry, no bustle; she always has leisure to attend to everything and everybody, be the house ever so large or the family ever so numerous. You are sure of a welcome when you arrive; but she is by no means one of those people who encourage visitors at all hours, leaving no time for her proper avocations. She does not (if living in a town) like running in and out of her neighbours' houses, and has no taste for gossip. But you never hear her complain she is overwhelmed with work, or that the servants are so troublesome, the children so tiresome, or the tradespeople so unsatisfactory. No; she has method and powers of organization—all goes on wheels, and her visitors are not wearied by long accounts of the cook's misdemeanours or the children's delinquencies. There is tidiness without primness—everything pretty, neat and comfortable; her poorer neighbours are well looked after, comforted, advised and helped in their hours of need. Punctuality is strictly enforced; indeed, without it, comfort—nay, even happiness—is well nigh impossible. Do not we all know establishments where the vaguest ideas of the hours for meals prevail? and we reluctantly shorten our walk or drive, put down an interesting book, or close the piano regretfully, knowing the luncheon hour has arrived, or the dressing bell for dinner has rung, only, alas! to find no one down but ourselves, the viands rapidly cooling, while we might very well have enjoyed ourselves for quite half an hour longer, had we only known. In the morning, tired perhaps, after a long journey, we would gladly repose an hour longer, but, having been told breakfast is at nine, we get up, and again are the first arrivals in the dining room, whilst the urn hisses forth its displeasure, the tea consequently is flat, rather cold and bitter, and the eatables decidedly chilly. The domestic machinery is thus put out of order and guests and family suffer from the lack in their hostess of two qualities very essential to good form.

**THE TEMPTATION TO OVERDECORATE.**—The great temptation now is to overdecorate. Even in a house of many rooms of ample size one can easily produce the effect of over-crowding, while in the small apartments, so common in large cities, it is very difficult to avoid it. The *Art Amateur*, speaking on the subject, says that it seems as if the decorator suffered from an "embarras des richesses." The temptation to use all the devices at hand is often too strong to be withstood, and accordingly paneled wainscots, carved pilasters, wooden ceilings with heavy transverse rafters, tapestries, rugs, bric-a-brac, stained glass and all the rest of it play a prominent part in helping to disfigure and distort many a small room that by judicious treatment might have been cozy, artistic, and, above all, habitable. We may have too many rugs on the floor, too many portieres and scarfs, too much bric-a-brac. In other words, too much decorative art is not decorative. The prime use of an apartment must always be remembered. If it is only for the display of a collection of objects, then the air of a museum is not objectionable. But if it is a room for dining, reading or sleeping in, then the comfort of the occupants should be the first consideration; and beauty need by no means be overlooked because utility is borne in mind. And it is a fact that some of our modern drawing-rooms resemble a furniture dealer's shop from the way in which things are scattered about, making it exceedingly difficult to avoid knocking over vases, five o'clock tea-tables, easels, etc., which obstruct one's way to a seat; and, though there may often be some gems of art among this miscellaneous collection, they are lost sight of among the vulgar display. How often has one gone from such a room with an eye weary from the incongruous colours and over-crowding of articles and turned with a feeling of relief into one of widely different style, and which, though not possessing half the richness of the other, has with its few choice works of art and well arranged, but not superfluous furnishings, afforded a striking contrast. Wood carving, that most delightful form of decoration, is rapidly becoming abused. Too much carving vulgarizes hopelessly a piece of furniture that half the amount of decoration would have enriched. A carved border or moulding around the edge of a table gives a fine effect, but I have lately seen tables the entire tops of which have been carved. Now a table is meant to put things on, and the carving completely spoils its usefulness, besides defeating its own purpose of decoration; for the decorated edge would look richer by contrast with the plain center. Care must be taken not to have the carving sand-papered down to a perfectly smooth finish, and the background should be irregular and not speckled all over with little holes. The beauty of carving is to feel the touch of the carver, to see a tool mark here and there. It is well to use carving rather sparingly. Rather have a little and have it good than much that is second rate. In some of the Italian work nearly every moulding was enriched and panel carved. But in the best examples the sawing is judiciously

disposed and some plain surface used as a foil. With care furniture may be kept looking nice for years, but without this care it soon becomes dingy and shabby. A thorough cleansing, once a month at least, should be given to upholstered furniture that is in every day use. Articles covered with plush or any goods with a pile may be brushed with a bristle brush, but for haircloth a light switch works the best, wiping off the surface afterward with a damp cloth. Wipe the woodwork with a damp cloth, and if there are any dents in it, it is said the application of several thicknesses of wet blotting paper held in place, till dry, by a warm flatiron, will remove the dent, unless a very deep one, when several applications may be necessary. When the woodwork is dry rub with warm linseed oil and polish with chamois skin. White spots may be removed by alcohol simply pressed on the spot by a cloth that is not linty, and not rubbed, as rubbing will take off the varnish. A flannel cloth moistened with kerosene is good to rub the furniture with, and the disagreeable odor of the oil soon disappears.

#### WILKIE COLLINS.

The following interesting contribution is from the pen of Dr. George Stewart, of the *Quebec Chronicle*:

The death of Wilkie Collins robs the admirers of interesting books of a strong creator of fiction. He belonged to the school of Charles Dickens rather than that of Thackeray. He was a happy mean between the two, though in directness of telling a story he was superior to either. He never digressed as Thackeray often did. He never preached as Dickens frequently did. But he told his story in a continuous way, and he never made his reader halt between chapters. A few of his novels stand out far above his average work. He never quite equalled "The Woman in White," though he wrote many entertaining books fully as weird. His stories were always full of movement, and despite the fact that character-drawing was not Collins' forte in the light that character-drawing is the forte of George Meredith or Charles Reade, he contrived to create at least half a dozen personages who will survive the century. He depended on action and a plot, and action and a plot will be found in every tale that has fallen from his prolific pen. He had, moreover, a style of his own,—a singularly direct and fascinating style,—and his books have given pleasure to many thousands of men and women. Nothing immoral ever came from the mind of Wilkie Collins, the son of William Collins, an artist who painted nothing base, and the namesake of a great painter in pigments, who gave us only beauties and nothing gross. The writer of these lines ten or eleven years ago, while editing the *Canadian Monthly*, enjoyed the personal friendship of Wilkie Collins. In his letters to his editor he always had something interesting to say about the book immediately under his hand. From a mass of correspondence this letter is selected. It refers to the story of "The Fallen Leaves," published in 1879. It has never been published before, and as it throws light on one of Mr. Collins' favorite characters, we print it here entire:—

LONDON, Thursday, March 13th, 1879.

MY DEAR STEWART,—A line to thank you for the *Canadian Monthly*,—which reaches me regularly,—and to say that I enclose three more revises of "The Fallen Leaves," in advance of the publication here on the 2nd, 9th and 16th April next.

On February 13th, I wrote to answer your letter—sending revise to the end of March, and asking for a line in reply to assure me that the business part of my communication was clearly understood between us.

You will find that the 16th weekly part introduces a new character, belonging to a class which some of my brethren are afraid to touch with the tips of their pens. She is, nevertheless, the chief character in the story—and will probably lead me into another novel in continuation of "The Fallen Leaves." You will see, (especially when you receive the revise of part 17, for April 23rd), that the character is so handled as to give no offence to any sensible persons, and that every line is of importance to the coming development of the girl, placed amid new surroundings. But perhaps some of the "nice people with nasty ideas" on your side of the ocean may raise objection. In this case, you are entirely at liberty to state as publicly as you please

(if you think it necessary) that my arrangement with you stipulates for the absolute literal reprinting of "The Fallen Leaves" from my revises, and that the gentle reader will have the story exactly as I have written it, or will not have the latter portions of the story at all. I don't anticipate any serious objections. On the contrary, I believe "Simple Sally" will be the most lovable personage in the story. But we have (as Mr. Carlyle reckons it) 30 millions of fools in Great Britain and Ireland—and (who knows?) some of them may have emigrated?

I intended to write a short letter. "Hell is paved—," you know the rest.

Yours very truly,

WILKIE COLLINS.

George Stewart, Jr., Esq.

This cablegram from the New York *Herald* tells the story of Wilkie Collins' last hours on the earth which he gladdened by his presence and his work:—

Wilkie Collins, the eminent and world-famous novelist, died at his residence, 82 Wimpole street, Cavendish square, at half-past ten this morning. It was a strange death for a man whose brain had pictured and whose pen had described the death of all kinds of men in all kinds of places that could be conceived. He died alone, without wife, child, or relative to soothe his last agonies with that love and sympathy which only comes from ties of blood. He had no relative in the world save one old aunt who was far away in Dorsetshire, and whom he had not seen for a long time. By his side was only Dr. F. Carr Beard, his life-long friend and physician, and the old housekeeper, who for thirty years has looked after her master's comfort with the care and devotion of a slave. His valet, George, was not present, and it was in the company of a single friend and servant that he breathed his last. The death room stretches across the front of the Wimpole street house on the third floor. There was a hot fire in the grate and on the coals some medicine was steaming. All about were the paraphernalia of a sick room. The curtains were drawn, the lights were low, and the sick man sat near the fire in a large armchair draped with blankets. He was very much emaciated, and the pallor on his thin face was heightened by a long dark moustache and heavy beard that curled over his nightshirt. Wilkie Collins was a short man of slender build, with large head and broad, prominent forehead, and large intelligent eyes. He had for three months been a prisoner in the room in which he died. He was sixty-five years of age, and his illness, which was primitively due to a long-standing affection of the heart, was made serious by a stroke of paralysis two months ago. This stroke Dr. Carr Beard brought him through successfully, and his patient was steadily progressing towards recovery when he was seized with an attack of bronchitis. This greatly complicated the symptoms and he was not strong enough to throw it off. For two weeks past he had been steadily failing owing to lack of nutrition. He could not retain or digest the slightest food. Since Friday his death had been known to be only a matter of time, and long before midnight last evening it was feared he would not live to see another day. His death took place amid perfect calm, he leaning back with his head buried in the pillow of his chair. From time to time the doctor felt the fluttering pulse, whose beats were growing weaker and more irregular. Now and then the dying man opened his eyes in a vague dreamy sense of his condition, but that was all. At half-past ten there was a slight convulsive movement, his head sank back, and when the doctor took his wrist, the heart had ceased to beat.

Wilkie Collins was in comfortable circumstances, but was scarcely a rich man. His fortune is under £10,000. He lived for a long time in the Wimpole street house, though it was not his own property. It is filled with a wonderful store of bric-a-brac and some valuable old furniture, most of the articles having, in addition to their value, an added interest from literary associations. Prominent among these are sketches, pictures and old prints, the latter covering the walls. Wilkie Collins' executors are Dr. Carr Beard and Mr. Alexander