



VICTORIANA

IN...

*The Importance of
Being Earnest*
— Oscar Wilde

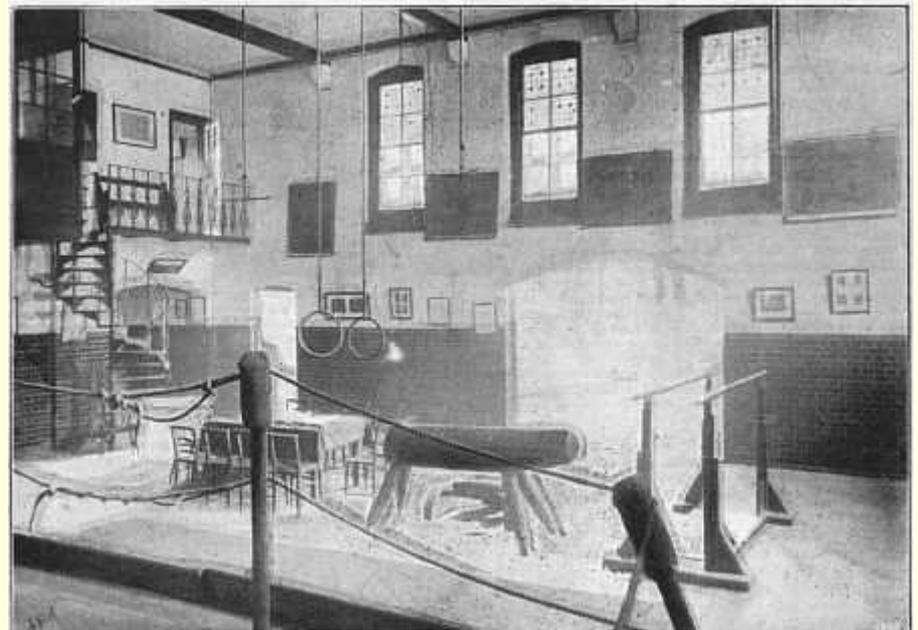


THE VICTORIAN GENTLEMAN



"It is the duty of a gentleman to know how to ride, to shoot, to fence, to box, to swim, to row and to dance. He should be graceful. If attacked by ruffians, a man should be able to defend himself, and also to defend women from their insults"

Rules of Etiquette and Home Culture.
1886



**"Keep up appearances whatever you do."
Charles Dickens in Martin Chuzzlewit, 1843**

THE VICTORIAN GENTLEMAN

Behavior Toward Others

- He is one who never inflicts pain.
- Merely *removes obstacles* which hinder free action of those about him.
- *Concurs* with their movement rather than takes the initiative himself.
- Carefully avoids whatever may cause a jolt -- clashing of opinion, suspicion, gloom, or resentment
- His great concern is to make every one at their ease and at home.
- Never takes unfair advantage, or mistakes personalities and sharp sayings for arguments. Never insinuates evil.
- He is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd.



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THE VICTORIAN GENTLEMAN

Behavior Toward Self



I have never allowed my duty as a gentleman to interfere with my pleasure in the slightest degree.



- His comforts and conveniences parallel those found in nature. An easy chair or a good fire, dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them.
- Never speaks of himself except when compelled, has no ears for slander or gossip.
- Has too much good sense to be affronted at insults,
- Is too well employed to remember injuries.
- He submits to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny.
- If he engages in controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blunder.

[From The Idea of a University, 1852]

- Oscar Wilde, "The Importance of Being Earnest"

Essential Questions about the GENTLEMAN

1. What three words (from the tutorial or of your own) perfectly describe the *public* and *private* Victorian gentleman? Explain.
2. Why do you suppose these guidelines for men existed during this era?
3. How is this behavior represented so far in Act I?

THE VICTORIAN LADY



“Sweetness is to woman what sugar is to fruit. It is her first business to be happy - a sunbeam in the house, making others happy. True, she will often have "a tear in her eye", but, like the bride of young Lochinvar, it must be accompanied with "a smile on her lips."

*Rev. E.J.Hardy,
Manners Makyth
Man, 1887*

QUALITIES OF A LADY



- A lady should be quiet in her manners
- Natural and unassuming in her language
- Careful to wound no one's feelings
- Give generously and freely from the treasures of her pure mind to her friends
- Scorn no one openly
- She should feel gentle pity for the unfortunate and the inferior
- Carry herself with an innocence and single heartedness which disarms ill nature, and wins respect and love from all.



ETIQUETTE OF A LADY

After breakfast, dress for the occasion. The skirt of the **walking dress** should only *just* to touch the ground and the bodice and sleeves should be loose and high in the neck with a band at the wrist and a belt.



morning dress for a lady upon first rising is a small muslin cap, to hide the hair papers, and a loose robe.



If a lady has a special day of receiving calls, her **calling dress** must be of silk, or other goods suitable to the season and her position, but must be of quiet colors and plainly worn with lace collars and cuffs.

ETIQUETTE OF A LADY

The full **dinner dress** for guests admits great splendor. It may be of any thick texture of silk or velvet for winter and light rich goods for summer, and should be long and sweeping. The fan should be perfect and the gloves quite fresh. Diamonds are used in broaches, pendants, earrings and bracelets.

Costly cashmeres, rich furs, and diamonds, as well as other brilliant ornaments, are forbidden on a **young unattached lady**.



Essential Questions about the LADIES

1. What two to three words (from the tutorial or of your own) perfectly describe the public and private Victorian lady? Explain.
2. Have you come across an incident of lady-like behavior so far in Act I? Describe its effect.
3. What is the function of such expectations for Victorian ladies?

TEA TIME

High Tea

- Anna, 7th Duchess of Bedford, is reputed to have conceived the idea of having tea around four or five o'clock in the afternoon to ward off the hunger pangs between lunch and dinner.
- For working and farming communities, it became high tea – the main meal of the day – a cross between the delicate afternoon meal enjoyed in the ladies' drawing rooms and the dinner enjoyed in houses of the gentry at seven or eight in the evening.

Low Tea

- a.k.a “afternoon tea”
- usually taken in a sitting room or withdrawing room where low tables (like a coffee table) were placed near sofas or chairs generally in a large withdrawing room.
- Tea, scones, jam and cream, savories, sweets and dessert
- Bread, butter, cakes, tiny sandwiches, shortbread
- In England, the traditional time for tea was four or five o'clock and no one stayed after seven o'clock.



- With the meats, bread and cakes served at high tea, hot tea was taken.
- Called “high tea” because it would be taken at pub counters or standing around tall pub tables.

LANGUAGE OF VICTORIAN FLOWERS



- Flowers adorned almost everything... hair, clothing, jewelry, gowns, men's lapels, home décor and china, and stationery.
- Flowers would convey messages of love or dislike depending upon which ones were given, their sizes how they were held, or also grouped together.
- A flower presented in an upright position represented a "positive thought; whereas one presented in the opposite direction had a negative meaning.
- A person could say "yes" by offering a flower with the right hand - the left hand "no.
- Dictionaries were written to explain this language to all.



FLOWER DICTIONARY

- AZALEA - Take Care, Temperance, Fragile, Passion, Chinese Symbols of Womanhood
- BABY'S BREATH - Innocence, Pure of Heart
- CACTUS - Endurance, My Heart Burns with Love
- CALLA LILY - Magnificent Beauty
- CARNATION (WHITE) - Sweet & Lovely, Innocence, Pure Love, Woman's Good Luck Gift
- CARNATION (SOLID COLOR) - Yes
- CARNATION (STRIPED) - No, Refusal, Sorry I can't be with you, Wish I could be with you.
- CARNATION (YELLOW) - Disappointment, Rejection
- CHERRY BLOSSOM (SINGLE) - Education



FLOWER DICTIONARY

- CLOVER (FOUR-LEAF) - Be Mine
- DAFFODIL (YELLOW) - Chivalry
- FERN - Magic, Fascination, Confidence, Shelter
- FOXTAIL GRASS - Sporting
- LILAC (PURPLE) - First emotions of love
- MAGNOLIA - Nobility, Perseverance
- OLIVE BRANCH - Peace
- ORCHID - Love, Beauty, Refinement, Chinese Symbol for Many Children, Thoughtfulness
- PETUNIA - Your Presence Soothes Me
- PINE - Hope, Pity
- TULIP (VARIEGATED) - Beautiful eyes
- WOLFBANE- Misanthropy, Chivalry, Knight
- WOODBINE - Fraternal Love





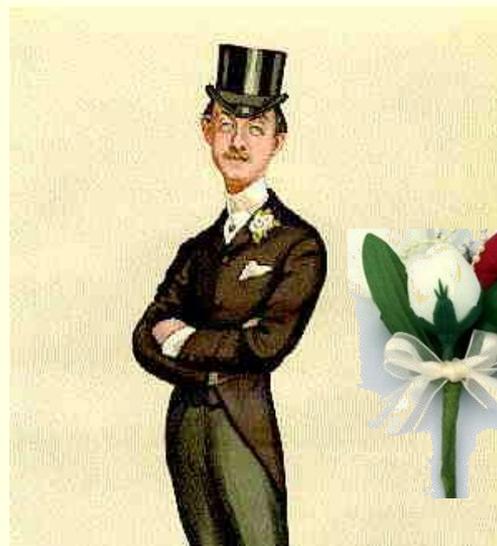
THE NOSEGAY

Tussie-Mussies were very well liked gifts. They were small bouquets of flowers wrapped in a lace doily and tied with satin.

The intrigue of secret messages sent this way, became a popular pastime.



THE BUTTONHOLE



Essential Questions about VICTORIAN TRADITIONS

1. Do these traditions perpetuate the gender roles of gentlemanly and lady-like behavior? Explain your response.
2. What do these traditions have in common with each other? Why do you suppose they existed?

PRODUCTION PHOTOS

VICTORIAN STAGE VERSION



IDA VERNON, WILLIAM FAVERSHAM, VIOLA ALLEN, E. Y. BACKUS,
HENRY MILLER in "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"
(1895)

PRODUCTION PHOTOS

CONTEMPORARY STAGE VERSION



PRODUCTION PHOTOS

1952 FILM VERSION



PRODUCTION PHOTOS

2002 FILM VERSION

