

***HARVEY  
NEWCOMB***



***HOW  
TO BE A MAN***

**Harvey Newcomb**

# **How to Be a Man**

**A Book for Boys, Containing Useful Hints on the  
Formation of Character**

EAN 8596547368533

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.

CHAPTER I. ON CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

CHAPTER II. NATURE AND OBJECTS OF EDUCATION.

CHAPTER III. PIETY, AS THE SPRING OF ACTION, AND  
REGULATOR OF THE SOUL.

CHAPTER IV. FILIAL PIETY.

CHAPTER V. TREATMENT OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS, AND  
OTHERS IN THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER VI. BEHAVIOR AT SCHOOL.

CHAPTER VII. BEHAVIOR AT TABLE.

CHAPTER VIII. BEHAVIOR AT FAMILY WORSHIP.

CHAPTER IX. PRIVATE PRAYER.

CHAPTER X. KEEPING THE SABBATH.

CHAPTER XI. HABITS.

CHAPTER XII. EDUCATION OF THE BODY.

CHAPTER XIII. ON USEFUL LABOR.

CHAPTER XIV. EDUCATION OF THE HEART.

CHAPTER XV. EDUCATION OF THE MIND.

CHAPTER XVI. READING.

CHAPTER XVII. WRITING.

CHAPTER XVIII. INDOLENCE.

CHAPTER XIX. ON DOING ONE THING AT A TIME.

CHAPTER XX. ON FINISHING WHAT IS BEGUN.

CHAPTER XXI. CHOICE OF SOCIETY, AND FORMATION OF  
FRIENDSHIPS.

CHAPTER XXII. BAD COMPANY.—MISCHIEVOUSNESS.

CHAPTER XXIII. ON AMUSEMENTS.

CHAPTER XXIV. GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

RULES FOR GOVERNING THE TONGUE.

CHAPTER XXV. ON THE ART OF AGREEABLE AND  
PROFITABLE CONVERSATION.

RULES FOR CONVERSATION.

CHAPTER XXVI. INQUISITIVENESS.

CHAPTER XXVII. ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ABLE TO  
SAY NO.

CHAPTER XXVIII. ON BEING USEFUL.

CHAPTER XXIX. ON BEING CONTENTED.

CHAPTER XXX. UNION OF SERIOUS PIETY WITH HABITUAL  
CHEERFULNESS.

# PREFACE.

## [Table of Contents](#)

“Who reads a preface?” Many do not; but jump at once into the middle of a book. But it is well to know something about a book, before reading it; and who so likely to give you information respecting the contents of a book as the Author himself? I wish to see the youth of my country come forward upon the stage of life, models of excellence, with characters formed for the times in which they are to act. How much influence my book may have, in securing such a result, I cannot tell; but my design in writing it has been, to contribute something toward forming the character of some of those who are to be our future electors, legislators, governors, judges, ministers, lawyers, and physicians,—after the best model; and, from the kind reception of my former attempts to benefit American youth, I trust they will give a candid hearing to the few hints contained in the following pages. It is intended for boys,—or, if you please, for *young gentlemen*,—in early youth, from eight or ten to fifteen or sixteen years of age. It covers substantially the same ground occupied by a work for girls issued simultaneously with it; and some of the chapters are identical in the two books, while others are entirely different, and some partially so. It is the hope of the Author, that every one who reads it, will strive to *be a man*, in the highest sense of the term.

JANUARY, 1847.

---

# CHAPTER I. ON CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

## Table of Contents

In one sense, very young persons are apt to think too much of themselves—in another, not enough. When they think they know more than their parents and teachers, or other elderly people, and so set up to be *bold* and *smart*, then they think too much of themselves. It used to be said, when I was a boy, that “Young folks *think* old folks are fools; but old folks *know* young folks are fools.” Although I would be very far indeed from calling you *fools*, because you have already acquired much knowledge, and have the capacity for acquiring much more, yet, with reference to such knowledge as is acquired by *experience*, and in comparison with *what there is to be known*, there is “more truth than *poetry*,” in the old adage. But, when young people suppose it is of no consequence what they do, or how they behave, *because they are young*, then they do not think enough of themselves. Should you see a man riding with a little stick for a whip, you would not think his stick worth your notice at all; but the biggest tree that ever I saw grew from a little willow stick that a man rode home with, and then planted in his garden. You have sat under the beautiful shade of a great elm-tree; and when you have looked upon its tall, majestic trunk, and its great and strong branches, with their ten thousand little limbs waving gracefully before the wind, you have been filled with admiration and delight. “What a mighty tree!” you say; “I wonder how long it has been

growing." But the seed of that tree, when it was planted, many years ago, was no bigger than a mustard-seed; and if you had seen the little tiny sprout that your grandfather was tying up with so much care, when it was a few years old, you would have wondered that a man should think so much of such an insignificant twig. But, if he had let it grow up as it began, without any care, it never would have been the stately tree it is now. That was the most important period in its life, when it was a little twig. It began to lean over, and grow crooked and ugly. If it had not been trained up then, it would have continued to grow worse and worse; and, after it had grown to be a tree, it could not have been straightened at all. Now, you are, in some respects, like this little twig. You, too, have just begun to be; and now your character is pliable, like the young tree. But, unlike it, your being is to have no end. Instead of growing a few hundred years, like a great tree, you are to live forever. And every thing that you do now must have an influence in forming your character for your whole being. In this latter sense, you cannot think too much of yourself; for you are the *germ* of an immortal being.

Did you ever stand by the shore of a placid lake or pond, in a calm, sunny day, and throw a little stone into its smooth, silvery waters? Did you observe how, first, a little ripple was formed around the place where it struck, and this was followed by a wave, and then, beyond, another, and another, till the whole surface of the water was disturbed? It was a very little thing that you did; and yet it agitated a great body of water. So it is with childhood and youth; the most insignificant action you perform, in its influence upon

your character, will reach through the whole period of your existence.

It will not do for you to say, "It is no matter how I behave now; I shall do differently when I am a man." "But would you have a little boy act like a man?" Not exactly. I would not have him affect the man, and appear as though he thought himself a full-grown gentleman. I would not have him imitate the *toad*, which undertook to swell to the size of an *ox*, and in the operation burst open. But, I would have him *manly* in his childishness. I would have him courageous, to meet difficulties, noble and generous in his feelings and actions, and courteous in his manners, always, in all companies, and in all places, behaving in a manner becoming a person of his age. A well-bred boy, who knows what is becoming and proper, and carries it out in his behavior, is already a *gentleman*. But the mischievous, rude, unmannerly lad, who pays no regard to propriety of conduct, will never be a gentleman. And a boy who has the courage to face difficulties, and the energy and perseverance to accomplish what he undertakes, is already *a man*; while the indolent, cowardly, "*I can't*" boy, will *never be a man*. It is my desire, in this book, to lead you to the formation of a solid, energetic, manly character, combined with true gentility of manners; and then you will be both a *man* and a *gentleman*.

Very young persons sometimes live in an *ideal world*. What they imagine in their plays seems real. They have a little fairy world in their minds, in which they live more, and take greater delight, than they do in what is real and true. To this I do not object, within certain bounds; but often it

becomes a *passion*, so that they lose all relish for sober, every-day life. For such creatures of fancy real life is too dull, and what concerns realities, too grave. Perhaps they will not like my book, because it treats of things true and real. But I beg them to consider that, through the whole of their being, they are to be concerned chiefly with *realities*; and therefore, to do them substantial good, we must speak to them of things real, and not of those airy things that belong to the fairy land. But real things are, truly, more interesting than the creations of fancy. The things of fancy interest you more only because they appear new and less common. A person who has always lived in the country, and is used to sitting under the wide-spreading, shady tree, would be more pleased with the *picture* of a tree than with a *tree itself*. But one brought up in the city would cast away the picture, and hasten to enjoy the cool shade of the beautiful tree. A castle in the air may please the fancy; but you want a *real house* to live in.

---

## CHAPTER II. NATURE AND OBJECTS OF EDUCATION.

### Table of Contents

Perhaps some of my readers, when they see the title of this chapter, will think only of confinement in school, of books, and of hard study, and so be inclined to pass over it, as a dry subject, which they have so much to do with, every day, that they have no wish to think of it in a moment of relaxation. But I beg them to stop a minute, and not throw me away, among the old school-books, till they have heard me through. I assure them that I use the term *education* in a far different sense. I think it means much more than going to school and studying books. This is only a small part of education. Mr. Walker defines education, "*The formation of manners in youth.*" But this is a very imperfect definition; and I am afraid there may be found some who would even doubt whether education has any thing to do with manners. Mr. Webster gives a better definition:—"Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations;"—all, in fact, that is necessary to make a *man* or a *woman*—a *gentleman* or a *lady*.

The original root, from which the word *education* is derived, means to *lead out*, to *conduct*, to *form*, to *fashion*, to *beat out*, to *forge*. It was used with reference to the forging of an instrument out of a piece of metal, or the

chiselling of a statue out of a block of marble. This furnishes a good illustration of my ideas of *education*. It is a process by which a character is formed out of rude or unwrought materials. It is not confined to mere school learning. A person may be very *learned*, and yet not half *educated*. There are many steps in the process. The ore must first be dug up by the miner; then smelted at the furnace, and the metal separated from the dross; then wrought into bars at the foundry; afterwards forged by the smith; and then, finally, polished by the finisher. The marble must first be quarried, or blasted out of the ledge; then cut into blocks; then transported; then wrought with the hammer and chisel; and finally, polished. This gives a good idea of education. It is not merely what is done to form the character in *school*; but it comprises all the influences which are exerted upon the young, in training them up and forming their characters. Education begins in the *family*. It is carried forward in the *school*. It is affected, for good or for evil, by the influence of public worship, lectures, books, amusements, scenery, companions, &c. In all places and circumstances, something is doing towards the formation of character.

Yet there is one important respect in which *education*, or *the formation of character*, differs essentially from the process described in this illustration. The block of marble, or the piece of metal, is *passive*; the whole process is performed upon it by another. But no person can be educated in this way; every one that is educated must be *active*. You may be drilled through all the schools, and have every advantage at home and in society; and yet, without your own active coöperation, you can never be educated.

But, if you are determined to be educated, you will turn every thing to some account. Every thing will be a school to you; for you will make contributions to your stock of knowledge from every object you see; and by seeking to act discreetly, wisely, and correctly, in every place, you will be constantly forming good habits. Like the little busy bee, you will suck honey from every flower. You will commune with your own heart upon your bed, and exercise your powers of thought in useful meditation. You will converse with God in your secret place, and seek wisdom of Him who has promised to give liberally to those that ask. In company, you will be more ready to hear than to speak; and you will never meet with any so ignorant but you may learn from them some useful lessons. You will exercise your mind upon every person and object you meet. You will study philosophy in the fields, by the brooks, on the hills, in the valleys, and upon the broad canopy of heaven. It has been well observed, that the difference between a wise man and a fool is, that one goes through the world with his eyes wide open, while the other keeps them shut.

You will perceive, then, that your education is continually going on, whether you think of it or not. Your character is constantly forming. It is your business to keep out of the way of bad influences, and submit yourself to the moulding of the good. Keep in mind the great truth that you are forming a character for eternity. Some years ago, there were found on the banks of the Mississippi River the tracks of a human being, deeply imprinted in the solid rock. These tracks were made in the soft clay, which in time became hardened, and formed into stone;—now, the impression is

immovable. You now resemble this soft clay. Every thing with which you come in contact makes an impression. But, as you grow older, your character acquires solidity, and is less and less affected by these influences, till at length it will be like the hard stone, and the impressions made upon you at this season will become confirmed habits.

All the impressions made upon your character ought to be such as will not need to be removed. Washington Allston, the great painter, had been a long time at work on a most magnificent painting. He had nearly completed it, when his keen eye discovered some defects in a portion of the piece. He hastily drew his rough brush over that portion of the picture, intending to paint it anew. But in the midst of his plans, death seized him, and his painting remains, just as he left it. No other person can carry out the conception that was in his mind. If you allow wrong impressions to be made upon your forming character, death may meet you with his stern mandate, and fix them forever, as immovable as it left the rough print of the coarse brush upon Allston's canvass.

---

# **CHAPTER III.**

## **PIETY, AS THE SPRING OF ACTION, AND REGULATOR OF THE SOUL.**

### **Table of Contents**

A watch, to one who had never seen such a piece of mechanism before, would be a great wonder. It is an object of much curiosity to the natives of savage and barbarous tribes, visited by the missionaries. It seems to speak and move, as though instinct with life. I have read, somewhere, of a poor savage, who, seeing a white man's watch lying on the ground, and hearing it tick, supposed it to be some venomous reptile, and, with a stone, dashed it in pieces. A watch is an object of no less wonder to a child. Children are full of curiosity, as my readers well know. They wish to examine every thing they see—to take it in pieces, and see how it is made. I dare say my readers remember the time when they sat on their father's knee, and modestly requested him to show them the little wheels of his watch.

If I could sit down with my young friends, and take my watch in pieces, I would teach them a useful lesson. I would show them how a watch resembles a human being. There is the *case*, which may be taken off, and put by itself, and still the watch will go as well as ever. In this respect, it is like the human body. Death separates it from the soul, and yet the soul remains, with all its active powers. It still lives. The inside of the watch, too, resembles the soul. It has a great many different parts, all working together in harmony—a

great many wheels, all moving in concert. So the soul has a great many different powers or faculties, all designed to operate in concert with each other, as the *understanding*, the *judgment*, the *conscience*, the *will*, the *affections*, the *memory*, the *passions*, *desires*, &c.; and each one of these has a part to act, as important for the man as the several wheels and springs of the watch. If every part of the watch is in order, and in its proper place, it will keep exact time; but, if one wheel gets disordered, it will derange the whole. The secret power that moves the watch is unperceived. If you examine, you will see a large wheel, with a smooth surface, round which is wound a long chain, attached to another wheel, with ridges for the chain to run upon. Inside of the first-named wheel is the *main-spring*, which, by means of the chain, moves the whole machinery. The WILL is the main-spring of the soul. By a mysterious, invisible chain, it holds all the powers of the soul and body at its command. Not only the operations of the mind, but the motions of the body are controlled by the will.

But, if there were no check upon the main-spring of the watch, it would not give the time of day. It would set all the wheels in rapid motion, and in a few moments the watch would run down. To prevent this, there is a *balance-wheel*, which turns backwards and forwards, by means of a fine spring, called the *hair-spring*, and so keeps the whole machinery in a regular motion. To this is attached a little lever, called the *regulator*, which, by a gentle touch, works on this delicate spring, so as to move the balance-wheel faster or slower, as the case may be, to make the movement exact and regular.

Now, if there were no checks on the will, it would run on impetuously in its course, without regard to consequences. And this we often see in persons called *wilful*, *self-willed*, *headstrong*. Children are often so; if let alone, their stubborn will would lead them to rush on headlong to their own destruction. Without meaning to be very accurate in these illustrations, I shall call *judgment* the *balance-wheel*. This is the faculty which perceives, compares, and decides, keeps the mind balanced, and prevents its running to extremes either way.

The *hair-spring* and *regulator* of the watch I shall compare with *conscience*. A very slight touch of the regulator moves the hair-spring, and gives a quicker or a slower motion to the balance-wheel. But, if the watch is out of order, oftentimes the movement of the regulator has no effect upon it. So, when the soul is *in order*, a very slight touch of conscience will affect the judgment and regulate the will. But often, the soul is so much *out of order*, that conscience will have no effect upon it.

But who touches the regulator of the watch? There is nothing in the watch itself to do this. The power that moves the regulator *is applied to it*. So, the conscience is moved. The *Word of God* enlightens the conscience, and the *Spirit of God* applies the word. And this brings me to the point which I had in my mind when I began this chapter. What a poor thing a watch is, when it is out of order. It is of no use. A watch is made to keep the time of day; but, when it is out of order, it will keep no time. Or, if it is in order, and yet not regulated, it will not keep the right time.

Now until the heart is changed by the grace of God, the *soul is out of order*. It does not answer the purpose for which it was made. The *will* is wrong; the *judgment* is wrong; the *conscience* is wrong. And, whatever cultivation may be bestowed upon the mind, it will not act aright. In the very beginning, then, you want *piety*, as the *main-spring* of action, and the *regulator* of the soul. Without this, you are not prepared to begin any thing aright. Indeed, without it, you have no sufficient motive to action. You seem to be toiling and laboring and wearying yourself for nothing. But *piety towards God* gives a new impulse to the mind. When you set out to improve your mind, if you have no piety, the object to be gained by it is very small. It can secure to you no more than, perhaps, a little additional enjoyment, for the brief space you are to continue in this world. But piety opens to you a wide field of usefulness in this life, and the prospect of going forward in the improvement of your mind as long as eternity endures. It must, therefore, give a new spring and vigor to all the faculties of the soul. It does more. It *regulates* the powers of the mind, and the affections of the heart, and gives a right direction to them all.

I would persuade you, then, as the first and great thing, to *seek God*. Remember what Christ has said,—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Here is the promise that you shall have all else that is needful, if you seek God first. Yield your heart to him, and have his kingdom set up there. Let him rule in your heart, and devote yourself to his service, and he will supply all your need. This, also, will give a right direction to all your faculties, and lay a good