

Benjamin Rush, in his "Thoughts Upon Female Education," stated that "An acquaintance with geography and some instruction in chronology will enable a young lady to ready history, biography, and travels, with advantage, and thereby qualify her not only for a general intercourse with the world but to be an agreeable companion for a sensible man." See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 29.

20. A reminiscing cousin of Eliza Whiting wrote before 1815 "in our day high learning was not so much in fashion as now for us poor females . . . we could put up with Rhyme if it did not altogether gingle so well but now in these bright days old Things are thrown aside as vulgar." Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.


23. John Coalter, age 18, in his 1787 autobiography described his education: "I had acquired a tolerable knowledge of Latin and Greek. Something of Geography, astronomy, Logic . . . Mathematics as far as Euclid's elements, Navigation, surveying—and was beginning to Learn French, but never had time and opportunity to pursue it . . . " Brown Coalter Tucker Papers.


28. Linda Kerber, in her recent work Women of the Republic, noted "These attacks on fiction, it is clear, were in large part attacks on emotion, on passion, and on sexuality." (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 241.

For an excellent background in novels and what may have been scandalous to an eighteenth-century audience, see Jean H. Hagstrum, Sex and Sensibility (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 160-85. Hagstrum outlined many works read in Virginia: Lucinda Lee Orr read Alexander Pope's Eloisa and Wilson Cary ordered Samuel Richardson's novels for a young female relative.


31. Hartless, Sarah Henry, p. 137. Benjamin Rush thought novels reflected European manners and society and were therefore inappropriate in America. See Rudolph, ed., Essays, p. 31.


40 Anne Blair to Mrs. Mary Braxton, 21 August 1764. Blair-Banister-Braxton Papers.


44 Elizabeth Foote Washington Diary 1779-1796. Washington Family Collection, Box 2, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Extracts were kindly provided by Pat Gibbs. The pages in this diary are unnumbered.


49. Poem, in the handwriting of James F. Armstrong, to St. George Tucker, June, 1781. It was signed by the various members of the Tucker household, and each verse was about a member of that household. Tucker-Coleman Collection.


CHAPTER II
PROPER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ATTITUDES

In the academic arena a young woman was not supposed to reveal her superior competence. However, certain non-academic areas of study, intended as subjects for serious study as well as personal amusement, provided a place where a young woman's hard work could be acknowledged and widely admired. These accomplishments did not threaten or infringe upon areas where men alone were supposed to excel. Unlike academic study (but like personal beauty), these skills were shown off to best advantage in social situations. Cultivation of these highly visible skills was universally encouraged. Thomas Jefferson wrote to his daughter in 1786, "I rest the happiness of my life on seeing you beloved by all the world, which you will be sure to be if to a good heart you join those accomplishments so particularly pleasing in your sex."¹ A description of Eleanor Parke Custis echoed the ideal. A Polish visitor, J. U. Niemcewicz, wrote in 1798 that "Her sweetness equals her beauty, and that is perfect. She has many accomplishments. She plays on the piano, she sings and designs better than the usual woman of America or even Europe."²

Musical training was a mandatory and an extremely showy adornment of a young woman's education. Young women
provided the entertainment for all but the most formal, state gatherings. The parent's wealth was reflected in the novelty, quality and cost of the instruments, and in the quality of musical instruction they provided their daughters. Thus displayed, young women were pushed into the musical spotlight. Eliza Parke Custis was encouraged to perform at an unusually early age. She recalled that in the early 1780s a guest at her father's house near Alexandria

... took delight in making me sing - I soon attain'd excellence in this science, & was always lifted on the dinner table to sing for my father's guests - I had a good memory, & learned many songs - my father and Dr. R taught me many very improper ones, and I can now remember standing on the table when not more than 3 or 4 years old, singing songs which I did not understand - while my father and other gentlemen were often rolling in their chairs with laughter - and I was animated to exert myself to give him delight... And I holding my head erect, would strut about the table, to receive the praises of the company, my mother remonstrated in vain - and her husband always said his little Bet could not be injured by what she did not understand that he had no Boy and she must make fun for him, untill he had...3

While older girls were not called upon to discuss politics in the evenings, they were frequently called to entertain guests by singing or playing keyboard instruments. While in Petersburg in 1782, the Marquis de Chastellux received a full evening of music:

After dinner Miss Bolling played on the harpsichord and sang like an adept in music, although her voice was not agreeable. The descendant of Pocahontas (Mrs. Bolling) touched her guitar and sang like a person unskilled in music, but with a charming voice. At length I returned home, where I had still another concert,
Miss Saunders having consented to sing me some airs, accompanying herself, now on the harpsichord, now on the guitar.4

Tutor Philip Fithian gave a favorable review of seventeen-year-old Jenny Washington's musical proficiency in 1774 by writing, "She plays well on the harpsichord and spinet, understands the principles of music and therefore performs her tunes in perfect time, a Neglect of which always makes music intolerable, but it is a fault almost universal among young Ladies in the practice."5

Friends of the after-dinner-performers urged music students to practice diligently. "My Dear Polly," Mary Prescott wrote to her granddaughter in 1794, "I am truly concern'd in your not going on with your Musick. Time will not wait for you, and loosing it will not do."6

Another female friend wrote fourteen-year-old Maria Nourse (daughter of Joseph and the proficient letter-writer Maria) that

I hope you apply assidiously to your Music give but application and attention, to it and you will be the Conqueror Maria - I long to hear what improvements you make in every branch of your accomplishments ... you must know that I have pictured to myself that you will make an accomplished Charming girl by the time you are sixteen and what is still better and without which all other requirements are vain you will be good and virtuous which will give double lustre to all your charms ... 7

The Jefferson girls were urged to set aside time for music practice in their daily routines. The daughters of Robert Carter were likewise encouraged to give application and attention to their music. "The two eldest," wrote Fithian,
"are now learning music, one to play the Harpsichord; the other the guitar, in the practice of which they spend three days in the Week." Robert Carter frequently assigned keyboard pieces to his daughters himself.

A good deal of musical lesson-taking depended upon the availability of instructors. "Poor Fan has lost her music master," St. George Tucker lamented in 1787, "after receiving a single lesson from him." Wishing to take lessons, Maria Carter wrote her uncle Landon Carter in 1765 that "I flattered myself I could await on you and my Brother Carter to let me Learn half a Year to play on the Harpsichord. Mr. Stadler's price in twelve Pistoles a Year." Lelia Skipwith Carter Tucker arranged lessons for her daughter, Mary Walker Carter. In a dutiful letter to her step-father, St. George Tucker, Mary reported "I expect Mr. Basscrere here every moment to give me a music lesson. Mama thinks he has been the means of improving all the girls, and has engaged him to give me a lesson occasionally. I shall endeavour not to let my young friends become greater proficients than myself."

As Chastellux noted in the report of his evening musical marathon, singing often accompanied instrumental music. Pithian's description of Jenny Washington indicated "she sings likewise to her instrument, has a strong, full voice, & a well-judging Ear; but most of the Virginia-girls think it a labour quite sufficient to thump the Keys of a Harpsichord into the air of a tune mechanically, & think
it would be slavery to submit to the Drudgery of acquiring Vocal Music." Margaret (Polly) Davenport wrote her friend Elizabeth Pelham in 1791 "I have commenced Singer, and attend a singing Master with great pleasure every other afternoon – he has already a large school, and will I hope continue here sometime." Margaret was pleased to share the results of her lessons with Elizabeth about two weeks later when she reported that James Rind "is enchanted with 'Maria' – and when I have once sung it, begs me in the most expressive manner, 'to sing it again for him, just as I did before!'" Perhaps Mr. Rind's interest in the selection was partially due to the fact that his sister's name was "Maria!"

The importance of dancing as an accomplishment was highlighted by the prominence it was given in formal and informal gatherings. Like music, dancing was a highly visible accomplishment; ineptness was immediately noticed by the company. Virginians directed young pupils of both sexes to the dance floor at an early age. "I suppose she will tell you to morrow is Dancing day," wrote Anne Blair regarding her ten-year-old niece's dancing enthusiasm, "for it is her thoughts by Day and her dreams by Night. Mr. Pearson was surprised to find she know so much of the Minuet step, and could not help asking if Miss had never been taught, so you find she is likely to make some progress that way . . . ." Eliza Parke Custis treasured her time at dance class, recalling that "we had one pleasure going two days a week to the dancing school . . . I kept to
first place at the dancing school - I not only danced well, but conducted myself properly, never interfered with others & treated my Master with respect (as) he was a genteel Man . . . ."16 Dancing instruction was taken seriously. "I observe in the course of the lessons, that Mr. Christian is punctual, and rigid in his discipline," noted Fithian in 1773, "so strict indeed that he struck two of the young Misses for a fault in the course of their performance, even in the presence of the Mother of one of them!"17 Charles Carter of Cleve thought dancing was so important that he directed in his 1762 will that his sons be sent to England for their education and his daughters be "brought up frugally and taught to dance."18 Amazed at the dedication to dancing, George Grieve, the eighteenth-century translator of Chastellux's Travels, marvelled that even in the Shenandoah Valley some young women went regularly three times a week a distance of seven miles to take lessons from a French dancing master.19

Practiced and polished, young people took to the dance floor for entertainment and to further acquaintance with members of the opposite sex. In a giddy report of a recent dance at Miss Hornsby's (which lasted until four in the morning), Margaret Davenport informed her friend Eliza that

Mr. Griffin too hon'd me with the offer of his hand, but tho' I cou'd not have the pleasure of dancing sett dances with him, yet we figur'd together in many reels, several Cotillons and Minuets too, I assure you, we had many ent- taining conversations, at least they were so
to me, which I make no doubt he guess'd, for their (sic) is a certain something inherent in me that irresististably impels me to appear pleas'd, when I am so . . . . 20

Despite the confines of the dancing steps, there was a freedom in dancing which accounted for part of its popularity. "The reels, cotillions, etc., you dance with anybody you please," Robert Hunter, a visitor twenty years of age remarked, "by which means you have an opportunity of making love to any lady you please." 21

Though not as socially visible or as vital to a young woman's education as music or dancing, proficiency and productivity in other areas was desirable as well. The Marquis de Chastellux remarked during his 1783 visit to Virginia that "A young lady, in her long moments of idleness, amuses herself by drawing; once a wife and mother, she still draws, that she may instruct her children." 22 Martha and Mary Jefferson studied drawing in more time than their "idle moments" but without great success. Their father regretted this situation. "I am sorry Mr. Clemitiere cannot attend you," he told them, "because it is probable that you will never have another opportunity of learning to draw, and it is a pretty and pleasing accomplishment." 23 A would-be drawing student, Mary Walker Carter, informed her parents "Mrs. Cooke expects very shortly a drawing master, and I wish to know, whether you, and Mama, would wish me to be taught. I should be very much pleased to go three months in the spring . . . ." 24 Eleanor Parke Custis was proficient in the subject because she presented
Niemcewicz with a "cipher composed of flowers prepared very
well by herself." 25

Frances Baylor Hill was continually sewing clothing,
knitting, or creating pieces of fancy work. Her constant
application to the needle fulfilled the dictates of the
Rudiments of Taste, which proclaimed that needlework took
first place "Amongst the accomplishments necessary to female
character" because it had "so close a connection with
neatness, which is indisputably requisite to render you
comfortable to yourselves or amiable in the esteem of
others." 26 Frances attacked her needlework and other projects
with an industrious attitude much admired in Virginia society.
Her 1797 diary recorded that during the year she made
coats, gowns, aprons, caps, stockings and quilts. She
wound cotton, wove cloth, tape, and broad binding in
addition to regularly cooking special tarts and biscuits
and cutting her neighbor's hair. Again this fulfilled an
ideal specified by the Countess of Carlisle in the Rudiments
of Taste, that is, to "pass a youth of diligence and appli-
cation." 27 In some cases, industrious application to work
was enforced. "Patty and I were kept very strictly,"
Eliza Parke Custis recalled, "when released from Tracy
(the tutor) we were obliged to do a certain portion of
needle work, & often compelled to practice Lessons of
Music . . . ." 28 Eighteen-year-old Sarah Trebell Galt,
with a little envy and no doubt greater disgust, reported
"Sister has two sore fingers, which are very troublesome,
and prevent her working. I never had a sore finger in my life. I think they must be very agreeable, for are you then a lady, no work nary a thing to do 'But eat, and drink, and sleep: and what then sleep, and eat, and drink again." Thomas Jefferson tried to prod his daughters to industrious activity by querying them on their use of time. "How are you occupied? ... Tell me whether you see the sun rise every day?" he wrote Mary in 1790, "How many pages a day do you read in Don Quixot? How far are you advanced in Him? Whether you repeat a Grammar lesson every day? What else you read? How many hours a day you sew? Whether you have an opportunity of continuing your music? Whether you know how to make a pudding yet, to cut out a beef stake, to sow spinach or set a hen?" He urged Martha to similar activity by explaining that "Music, drawing, books, invention and exercises will be so many resources to you against ennui. But there are others which to this add that of utility. These are the needle and domestic oeconomy." Tutor John Harrower, perhaps reacting to feminine indolence he witnessed in Virginia, admonished his wife in Europe to accustom their daughter to useful activity. He directed his wife to "pray keep her tight to her seam & stockin, and any other Household affairs that her years are capable of and do not bring her up to Idleness or going about from house to house which is the first inlet in any of the sex to laziness and vice." These suggestions all favored industry over idleness, an attitude reflected in "The
"Idleness" slept all day while "Industry's"

Appetite is keen; her blood is pure and temperate, and her pulse beareth even. Her house is elegant, her handmaids are the daughters of neatness, and plenty smileth at her table. She saunters not; neither stretches herself out on the couch of indolence. She crieth not, What have I to do? but the work of her hands is the thought of a moment. She listeth not to the gossip's tale, she sippeth her tea not in scandal; but employment is the matter of her discourse.\(^{32}\)

"The young ladies," wrote Ferdinand-Marie Bayard of the industrious Virginia women, "love to be praised for their useful talents which will make them good mothers and diligent wives. They distain anything said about the beauty of their features; desirous of more flattering praises. They have the noble ambition to conquer with arms what chance does not give."\(^{33}\) While beauty was not, and indeed could not be, required of every young woman, the Countess of Carlisle commented that "It is no inconsiderable trait in the character of an amiable young lady, that she knows how to support a genteel appearance."\(^{34}\) Alice Lee Shippen, who grew up at Stratford Hall in Virginia before her marriage to Thomas Shippen of Philadelphia, inquired into her fourteen-year-old daughter's progress in 1777. Her questions probably reflect values learned during her Virginia upbringing. Nancy Shippen was away at school when her mother wished to know "how you have improved in holding your head and shoulders, in making a curtsy, in going out or coming into a room, in giving and receiving, holding your knife and fork, walking and setting. These things contribute so much
to a good appearance that they are of great consequence.\footnote{35}

Thomas Jefferson encouraged both his daughters, at tender ages, to pay attention to their potentially-genteel appearance. One comment to seven-year-old Mary commanded bluntly: "Remember too as a constant charge not to go out without your bonnet because it will make you very ugly and then we should not love you so much." Eleven-year-old Martha received more complicated instructions. In 1783, Jefferson wrote

\ldots to advise you on the subject of dress, which I know you are a little apt to neglect. I do not wish you to be gayly clothed at this time of life, but that what you wear should be fine of its kind; but above all things and at all times let your clothes be clean, whole, and properly put on. Do not fancy you must wear them till the dirt is visible to the eye. You will be the last who will be sensible to this. Some ladies think they may under the privileges of dishabille be loose and negligent of their dress in the morning. But be you from the moment you rise till you go to bed as cleanly and properly dressed as at the hours of dinner or tea. A lady who has been seen as a sloven or slut in the morning will never efface the impression she then made with all the dress and pageantry she can afterwards involve herself in. Nothing is so disgusting to our sex as a want of cleanliness and delicacy in yours. I hope therefore the moment you rise from your bed, your first work will be to dress yourself in such a stile as that you may be seen by any gentleman without his being able to discover a pin amiss, or another circumstances of neatness wanting.\footnote{36}

Jefferson's comments sounded strikingly like Dr. Gregory's advice on the same subject: "Accustom yourselves to an habitual neatness," he wrote in A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, "You will not easily believe how much we consider your dress as expressive of your characters. Vanity,
levity, slovenliness, folly, appear through it."\textsuperscript{37}

Despite the "unprofitable condition of Virginia estates" in 1798, Jefferson advised his recently married daughter Mary that "The article of dress is perhaps that in which economy is the least to be recommended. It is so important to continue to please the other . . . ."\textsuperscript{38} Dr. Gregory rationalized this expense by writing that "The love of dress is natural to you, and therefore it is proper and reasonable . . . ."\textsuperscript{39} Perhaps the Marquis de Chastellux stated the imperative to maintain a genteel appearance most eloquently: "But, you will say, is by dress and by exterior charms that they (young women) must establish their empire?" he asked in 1783, "Yes, sir, every woman should seek to please; this is the weapon confurred on her by Nature to compensate for the weakness of her sex. Without this she is a slave, and can a slave have virtues? Remember the word \textit{decus}, from which we have derived \textit{decency}; its original meaning is ornament. A dirty and negligent woman is not decent, she cannot inspire respect."\textsuperscript{40}

Displeasing personal habits could be remarked upon in a number of ways. Jefferson's comments expressed concern that bad habits not develop. John Coalter, tutor in the St. George Tucker household, sent personal articles - a tooth pick and a tooth brush - to his future wife Maria Rind in 1790. Flowery poems such as "On Sending Her a Tooth Pick" accompanied and commemorated the gifts.\textsuperscript{41} This method of correction or suggestion was combined with
compliments. Occasionally lack of propriety in personal habits made a young woman the unfortunate center of conversation. In 1780, Martha Dangerfield Bland made several comments about the follies of current fashion and excessive makeup. St. George Tucker may well have enjoyed receiving her tea-table farce:

"Land Ma'ma did you see Miss V-g today? she had an unusual quantity of white and red" "Tis a pity Ma'ma that people dont consult the natural display of health and then perhaps they would not be so liable to discovery" "Oh! Ma'ma Miss V-g is the most Generous creature alive. she encourages every art . . ."

"Good Sirs! is it possible, that Miss V- is beholden to art for all those attractions she seems to possess? For in my life, I never saw finer hair, finer teeth, nor a more lovely complexion." "Land! Ma'ma I am utterly astonished at you, why she is a miserable plasterer. her hair looks for all the world, as if twas stuck on with birdline, her teeth are ready to fall out, the wine is quick boon, & Miss V-s pocket (you know Ma'ma) is not loaded with Continental Bond."

Land! what a world we live in! This common place chat the sum total of a tea . . . I leave you to Judge how agreeably I can fill a letter . . .

Later comments indicated that the unfortunate Miss V-g had strong British sympathies, which added, no doubt, to her discredit in other areas. A contrasting description of Miss Betsy Lee, given by Fithian in 1774, indicated that she met the standards of a genteel appearance for "she sits very erect, places her feet with great propriety, her hands She lays carelessly in her lap, and never moves them but when she has occasion to adjust some article of her dress or to perform some exercise of the Fan . . . When She has a Bonnet on & Walks, She is truly elegant; her
carriage is neat & graceful, & her presence soft and beautiful ... ."43

"The Whole Duty of a Woman" explained in 1753 that "As the elegance of dress adds grace to beauty itself, so delicacy in behavior is the ornament of the most beautiful mind."44 Young women, following prescriptive patterns of education, scholarly modesty, industry and correct appearance, were also required to adopt an unassuming, affable and conciliatory behavior. Representing most eighteenth-century attitudes, Dr. Gregory wrote that "there arises a certain propriety of conduct peculiar to your sex."45 The outline of proper female behavior was usually prefaced by the rationalization behind the differences in ideal male and female conduct. Lord Halifax, in his popular book The Lady's New Year's Gift, or, Advice to a Daughter, explained that

You must first lay it down for a Foundation in general, That there is Inequality in the Sexes, and that for the better Oeconomy of the World, the Men, who were to be the Law Givers, had the better share of Reason bestow'd upon them; by which means your Sex is the better prepar'd for the Compliance that is necessary for the better performance of those Duties which seem to be most properly assigned to it.46

"Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex," echoed James Fordyce in Sermons to Young Women, "for the most part, with less vigor than those of ours, observing the same distinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies ... ." He elaborated
... you yourselves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy, and all the abstrusser sciences, are most properly the province of men... those masculine women that would plead for your sharing any part of this province equally with us, do not understand your true interests. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wish you ever to possess; I mean that which the heart has for its object and is secured by meekness, by soft attraction, and virtuous love.47

Virginians took these charges seriously. After listing the expenses of a trip to Baltimore, Mary Ambler wrote in 1770

From Mr. Fordyce’s Sermons to Young Woman. This Paragraph is transcribed for the use of the Copiest & she begs her Daug’t to observe it well all her life - If to your natural softness you join that christian meekness, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the assistance of proper reflection and friendly advice, to accomplish you in the best and truest kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting your-selves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of asserting positively, or debating obstinately, or affecting a superiority to any present, of engrossing the discourse, of listening to yourselves with apparent satisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without necessity.48

The result of this behavior implied that "all the world will love you," as Thomas Jefferson advised upon the news of Mary’s engagement, "If you continue good humored, prudent and attentive to everybody, as I am sure you will do from temper as well as reflection."49 Nelly Custis Lewis was described in glowing terms by Eliza Ambler Carrington, who commented "Though she has only been ten months a wife, lovely as nature could form her, improved in every female accomplish- ment and what is still more interesting, charming and obliging in every department that makes a woman most
charming, particularly in her conduct . . . "50 Alice Lee Shippen passed several suggestions about proper behavior to her daughter. She urged fourteen-year-old Nancy "do remember my dear how much of the beauty and usefulness of life depends on a proper conduct in the several relations in life, and the sweet peace that flows from the consideration of doing our duty to all with whom we are connected."51

Two months later, Alice Lee Shippen requested a report of her daughter's progress. After inquiring about writing, drawing and the "graces," she remarked "These are absolutely necessary to make you shine, but above all let me know how you improve in humility, patience and love, these will make my dear Girl shine to all eternity. These are the inheritance that fadeth not away."52 Few prescriptive sources from Virginia incorporate piety or religious reverence as desirable facets of a polite young woman's personality.53 Written for a daughter's instruction, Elizabeth Foote Washington's journal is unusual for its devotional writings. Regarding her young daughter Lucinda in 1788, she wrote

... should I heave my dear child before she arrives to the years of discresition (sic)
- I hope she will read this manuscript more than once . . . & let me tell my dear child - that there is no real happiness without religion,
- a religion that effectually touches the heart and I sincerely hope my Child - should she live, will make it her study to walk well pleasing in the eyes of her Saviour - never be ashamed of being religious . . . .54

Upon eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Prentis's death in 1770, the Virginia Gazette eulogy stressed her exceptional piety:
Providence, whose blessings are sparingly, but wisely distributed, lent her to the world as a pattern for imitation. At a time of life when few pay more attention to religion than by conforming to its fashion, she well knew and practised its principles. . . The pious care of her amiable parents had formed her for every pleasing social intercourse of life; and whilst she held in its utmost purity and mild and pleasing conduct of a virgin, she possessed a superiority of soul which would have adorned or dignified either sex, or any station. 

Eliza's untimely death may have heightened the public impression of her religious nature.

The "mild and pleasing conduct of a virgin" implied that a woman's inherent secondary and dependent position called for yielding, pleasant, unabrasive, and, most importantly, unassertive behavior. Margaret Davenport relayed a compliment to a friend who possessed these qualities by writing that Mr. Calloway "says your countenance is the most interesting and the sweetest picture of artless innocence he ever beheld . . ." Jenny Washington's "easy winning Behavior" was complimented by Pithian, who wrote "She is not forward to begin a conversation, yet when spoken to she is extremely affable, without assuming any Girlish affectation, or pretending to be overcharg'd with Wit." "One of the chief beauties in a female character, is modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration . . ." wrote Dr. Gregory, "This modesty, which I think so essential to your sex, will naturally dispose you to be rather silent in company, especially a
large one.\textsuperscript{58} Reasoning from these assumptions, Richard Henry Lee replied to his sister Hannah Lee Corbin's demand as to why widows and spinsters could not vote on property matters by saying "Perhaps 'twas thought rather out of character for women to press into those tumultuous assemblages of men where the business of choosing representatives is conducted."\textsuperscript{59}

A modest female character not only avoided the public eye, she also needed to avoid boisterous behavior and any discussion of indecent subjects. Even excessive laughter was frowned upon. Emma Claiborne wrote a scalding letter "to the Young Ladies of Williamsburg" in 1809. While observing the young women at a party, Emma noted their pleasing appearance and behavior until "a loud noise rous'd me from my Reverie, and on turning to the Group before me what was my Supprize and consternation on beholding those angelic faces and Forms, which I have just described, agitated by the most boisterous and violent bursts of Laughter, writ(h)ing on their seats and distorting their countenances in the most frightful manner . . . ." After her livid description she explained the reasons for her disgust:

\ldots so boisterous an Exposition of Mirth, is a departure from that feminine grace and dignity of which they ought never to lose sight; that tho a smile constitutes one of their principal charms, a loud laugh should be avoided as unbecoming and disfiguring. It is delightful to see the ruby lips expanding so as parcially to discover the Rows of Pearl, which they enclose; but widely extend'd Jaws and distorting Features excite the most disagreeable Ideas . . . Gold-
smith says, that the loud laugh bespeaks the vacant mind; and I would recommend the Ladies to avoid it, for fear of incurring such an imputation.\textsuperscript{60}

Besides this example of obvious rudeness in company, Dr. Gregory outlined other types of behavior guaranteed to produce disgust. "We so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitution, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigues, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of."\textsuperscript{61} A young woman should therefore "Assume no masculine airs. To support necessary fatigue is meritorious; but real robustness, and superior force, is denied you by nature - its semblance, denied you by the laws of decency."\textsuperscript{62} According to this logic, laws of nature translated into prescribed laws of decency. Physical differences were thus responsible for differences in behavior.

When subdued behavior was the prescriptive ideal, innocence and natural reserve could degenerate into hypocritical affectation. Dr. Gregory prohibited yet another topic of discussion: "Consider every species of indelicacy in conversation as shameful in itself and as highly disgusting to us."\textsuperscript{63} Such prohibitions could produce a situation similar to the one witnessed by Ferdinand-Marie Bayard in 1791. While in Frederick, Virginia, he observed

An American woman would blush if she were surprised mending the trousers of her brother, or
those of her husband. Even the name of this part of the clothing is not pronounced, and all the women use a circumlocution to refer to it. The words shirt, foot, thigh, and belly are likewise erased from the dictionary of the ladies... with all this reserve, somewhat affected, they are very unrestrained, among themselves... I was assured that in the ladies' parties, the English language was spoken... Mrs. Chapone, while supporting subdued behavior in her Letters, warned "Let a vain young woman be told that tender-ness and softness is the peculiar charm of the sex - that even their weakness is lovely and their fears becoming - and you will presently observe her grow so tender as to be ready to weep for a fly... " James Rind was glad that a young woman of his acquaintance had retained an unaffected behavior. Although Eliza Fairfax was employed in the Tucker household, Rind confessed to his sister Maria "I feel happy at her seclusion from what is called the polite part of the world hither to, because, possibly, it might have destroyed that natural gentleness of temper and of manners which is far more pleasing to your brother than the affected softness and effemancancy of the young women of the present times." With such limitations placed on a young woman's proper behavior, she could be reproached for adopting improper conduct, just as she could be reproached for carrying proper conduct to the extreme.