

Maxims

Found in the Strong Box of the Duke of Burgundy,
The French King's Father at his Death.

(1)
Give God the Great Creator homage due;
Consider first your business then pursue;
Converse with honest men let such be near,
Let self-conceitedness in nought appear.

(2)
To others judgement due regard be shown;
Be ever modest to defend your own;
Those who address you, with attention hear,
Nor study how to make your wit severe.

(3)
Talk that to each, which each best understands,
Your tongue pronouncing what your heart commands;
Think ere you promise, but disclaim to evade
By subtle art, your promises when made.

(4)
Let speeches ever gently from you fall,
And in your looks, at least, be kind to all:
Let your whole air be disengaged and free,
Yet don't invite familiarity.

(5)
Give none by hasty judgements cause to grieve
Love without interest without fear forgive;
Respect, but never fawn upon the great,
Avoid contention, friendship cultivate.

(6)
Aim not to make your friend his thoughts reveal,
By seeming openness your own conceal:
Lend readily, if lending you propose,
He doubly gives, who gracefully bestows.

(7)
Weigh all your talents for the part you play,
Avoid extremes & choose the middle way:
Speak peace: Where discord reigns appease the flood,
And for revenge presist in doing good.

(8)
Let proper objects never want a tear;
Excuse mistakes, in friendship be sincere;
From peevish thoughts your cheerful mind defend,
Nor in rash words discharge them on a friend.

(9)
Reprove with gentleness, with truth commend;
Laugh at a jest but laugh not without end;
To each man's calling due respect be shown,
Nor e'er contrive to make your learning known.

(10)
Do favors privately; if you upbraid
Or publish first, the obligation's paid.
Prevent petitions where you see distress,
Nor let the manner make the gift the less.

(11)
If anger kindles, check the impetuous flame,
Nor let your tongue traduce an absent name;
Let not ingratitude your bosom stain,
Play for diversion, but despise the gain.

(12)
Scorn to deceive; think much, but little speak;
Preserve what's given for the giver's sake;
Forgive poor debtors; equal pleasure flows
To him who mercy sends, or mercy shows.

(13)
Be envy banish'd from your generous heart;
Blaze not the secrets which your friends impart;
In speaking of yourself nor praise nor blame;
And dread to be a slave to common fame.

Copied September 9th 1853, for Elder Sister Hannah Blake.

by p.r.