

A collection of my favorite passages from Mansfield Park (the Signet Classic edition, for page numbers).

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[Tom Bertram] "I made my bow in form, and as Mrs. Sneyd was surrounded by men, attached myself to one of her daughters, walked by her side all the way home, and made myself as agreeable as I could; the young lady perfectly easy in her manners, and as ready to talk as to listen. I had not a suspicion that I could be doing anything wrong. They looked just the same; both well dressed, with veils and parasols like the other girls; but I afterwards found that I had been giving all my attention to the youngest, who was not 'out', and had most excessively offended the eldest. Miss Augusta ought not to have been noticed for the next six months, and Miss Sneyd, I believe, has never forgiven me."

... "No," replied Edmund, "I do not think [Fanny] has ever been to a ball. My mother seldom goes into company herself, and dines nowhere but with Mrs. Grant, and Fanny stays at home with her."

[Ms. Crawford] "Oh! Then the point is clear. Miss Price is not out."

-----> COMMENTARY: 'out' in this case refers to whether someone is eligible for marriage. It's closely related to the eligibility of someone for being seen in society. There's a lot of talk of seeing and being seen in Mansfield Park.

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The politeness which [Julia] had been brought up to practice as a duty, made it impossible for her to escape; while the want of that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart, that principle of right which had not formed any essential part of her education, made her miserable under it.

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[Ms. Crawford (C)] "But why are you to be a clergyman? I thought that was always the lot of the youngest, where there were many to choose before him."

[Edmund (E)] "Do you think the church itself never chosen then?"

[C] "Never is a black word. But yes, in the 'never' of conversation which means 'not very often', I do think it. For what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines, distinction may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing."

[E] "The 'nothing' of conversation has its gradations, I hope, as well as the 'never.' A clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion. He must not head mobs, or set the ton in dress. But I cannot call that situation nothing, which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally--which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence. No one here can call the 'office' nothing. If the man who holds it is so, it is by the neglect of his duty, by foregoing its just importance, and stepping out of his place to appear what he ought not to appear."

[C] "You assign greater consequence to the clergyman than one has been used to hear given, or than I can quite comprehend. One does not see much of this influence and importance in society, and how can it be acquired where they are so seldom seen themselves? How can two sermons a week, even supposing them worth hearing, supposing the preacher to have the sense to prefer Blair's to his own, do all that you speak of? Govern the conduct and fashion the manners of a large congregation for the rest of the week? One scarcely sees a clergyman out of his pulpit."

[E] "You are speaking of London, I am speaking of the nation at large."

[C] "The metropolis, I imagine, is a pretty fair sample of the rest."

[E] "Not, I should hope, of the proportion of virtue to vice throughout the kingdom. We do not look in great cities for our best morality. It is not there, that respectable people of any denomination can do most good and it certainly is not there, that the influence of the clergy can be most felt. A fine preacher is followed and admired; but it is not in fine preaching only that a good clergyman will be useful in his parish and his neighborhood, where the parish and the neighborhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct, which in London can rarely be the case. The clergy are lost there in the crowds of their parishioners. They are known to the largest part only as preachers. And with regard to their influencing public manners, Miss Crawford must not misunderstand me, or suppose I mean to call them the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and courtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life. The 'manners' I speak of, might rather be called 'conduct,' perhaps, the result of good principles; the effect, in short, of those

doctrines which it is their duty to teach and recommend; and it will, I believe, be everywhere found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they out to be, so are the rest of the nation."

"Certainly," said Fanny, with gentle earnestness.

"There," cried Miss Crawford, "you have quite convinced Miss Price already."

[E] "I wish I could convince Miss Crawford too."

[C] "I do not think you ever will," said she with an arch smile; "I am just as much surprised now as I was at first that you should intend to take orders. You really are fit for something better. Come, do change your mind. It is not too late. Go in the law."

[E] "Go into the law! With as much ease as I was told to go into this wilderness."

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Mr. Rushworth could hardly be more impatient for the marriage than herself [Maria]. In all the important preparations of the mind she was complete; being prepared for matrimony by an hatred of home, restraint, and tranquillity; by the misery of disappointed affection, and contempt of the man she was to marry. The rest might wait. The preparations of new carriages and furniture might wait for London and spring, when her own taste could have fairer play.

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There was a pointedness in his [Mr. Crawford's] manner of asking her [Fanny], which she did not like, and she saw his eye glancing for a moment at her necklace--with a smile--she thought there was a smile--which made her blush and feel wretched. And though there was no second glance to disturb her, though his object seemed then to be only quietly agreeable, she could not get the better of her embarrassment, heightened as it was by the idea of his perceiving it, and had no composure till he turned away to some one else.

-----> COMMENTARY: again, we see the theme of seeing and being seen, or perception.

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...the woman [Ms. Crawford] whom, two moments before, he [Edmund] had been thinking of as seventy miles off, and as farther, much farther from him in inclination than any distance could express.

-----> COMMENTARY: I think this is a cool use of language.