

CHAPTER 7 - Worldly Color-Blindness

Chapter 7 of "The Ways of Men," entitled "Worldly Color-Blindness," draws a parallel between the literal inability to discern colors and tones and a metaphorical lack of discernment in social settings. The author presents a critical view of those who, despite good intentions, fail to understand the subtleties of social gatherings, resulting in uncomfortable and unenjoyable events.

The text opens with an analogy to physical color-blindness and tone-deafness, mentioning individuals who, despite these limitations, have made their marks in fields like painting and music. However, the primary concern is with "social color-blindness," a condition where individuals are oblivious to the nuances required to host enjoyable social events. This lack of awareness affects all strata of society, especially noticeable among the well-born and supposedly well-mannered, leading to dull and unsatisfactory gatherings.

A significant portion of the chapter critiques the motivations behind entertaining, portraying it as often driven by ostentation, social obligation, or clerical meticulousness rather than genuine enjoyment or connection. The author humorously describes the strategic maneuverings of hosts to fulfill social obligations with minimal effort, including throwing poorly timed parties to ensure a high rate of declinations.

The critique extends to various types of hosts, including those who, out of a misplaced sense of charity, invite disreputable or mismatched guests, making their events seem like gatherings of the "morally lame, halt, and blind." This misguided attempt at inclusivity only serves to dilute the quality of social interaction, making the events strenuous rather than enjoyable for the guests.

The author bemoans the lack of tact, discernment, and genuine sociability in hosting, pointing out the common pitfalls of hospitality, such as inappropriate guest pairings and indiscriminate invitations. The critique culminates in a call for awareness and restraint, suggesting that those who are "socially color-blind" should abstain from hosting, to prevent the myriad social faux pas they inadvertently commit.

In summary, Chapter 7 humorously yet pointedly critiques the social ineptitude that pervades the realm of hospitality, where a lack of discretion and empathy leads to unfulfilling social interactions. The chapter serves as a satirical commentary on the superficiality and transactional nature of social gatherings, urging a more thoughtful and genuine approach to hospitality.