

**A GENERAL RULE TO TEACH EVERY MAN THAT IS
WILLING TO LEARN TO SERVE A LORD OR MASTER IN
EVERYTHING TO HIS PLEASURE**

Ms. Addl. 37969
in the British Museum
15th Century

A Transliteration

By Douglas W. Strong

The **marshal** in the morning ought to come into the hall and see that it is clean of all manner of thing that may be found out of place therein: The trestle tables and the stools should be set in their own places at meals at the boards, and before and after meals in corners farthest from encumbrance: and all the cloths and wall hangings be put in their places and shaken and beaten with rods if need be: and that no hounds be abiding in the hall from morning to evening. And to perform these things aforesaid he shall charge the **usher** and the **groom** there with.

Also in winter time the said groom by the order of the usher shall bring into the room as much wood or coal as shall be used daily in the hall, and bear out the ashes and other filth of the hall. The said groom shall also keep count of the wood or coal and deliver it daily to the kitchen, hall and liveries. The said groom shall also continually be in the hall at the first meat or supper to bear away dishes and keep out hounds and fetch sauces and to obey all other commandments of the head officers, that is to say of **steward**, Marshal and Usher.

Also half an hour before the lord goes to meat or supper the marshal shall take the Rod in his hand and command the **pantler** and the **sewer** to cover and make ready for the lord and the household; and as soon as it is made ready the marshal shall command the sewer to await when the **cooks** are ready; and then shall the sewer go to the ewery and take a towel upon his shoulder and the marshal and he may go together and show the lord, so that he may know thereby that the meat is ready. And when the lord asks for water then shall the **squires** and the marshal and the sewer go by and by next to the lords basin to even with the lord. The sewer shall deliver the towel to the worthiest that is about him and go straight to the kitchen with all the men that shall serve.

The marshal shall uncover the basin if it be covered, hold it in his hands until the lord has washed, and then make a salutation and give it to the squire that brought it there, and he to bear it to the ewery, and anon command water for all that shall sit at the lord's board, and go with the lord to be seated and ask him how his board shall be set.

And the **yeomen** or grooms or **groom of the chamber** if he is there, or the usher shall set up boards and make ready the stool before the meat and have them ready at the setting of boards, and bring them ready to the marshal when he calls, and also after the meat bear away the boards, trestles and stools; and when the lord is set, and other boards in his presence. The marshal shall fetch in his courses with the sewer by and by; the marshal and the sewer shall make a salutation when they come almost at the board, and none other that bears the meat or drink at that time until be delivered of that which he bears.

And when all the lord's mess is served, then shall another esquire serve the other messes to those at the board or in his presence. And then the **almoner** shall bring in the alms dish and set it beneath the lords salt or else upon the cupboard if no room may be found on the board; and a little before the second course the almoner shall take from every standard or great meat that comes before the lord at the first course with the help of the **carver** and put it in the alms dish and send the empty dish to the kitchen. Meanwhile the marshal shall look both in the kitchen and in the hall to see that there is no other bread, ale, wine or meat there that ought to be served, and the sewer shall look to see that there is no sauce lacking in the lord's presence.

And when the second course is ready, the sewer shall come and warn the marshal, and the marshal, all the squires and the yeomen waiters, to go to the kitchen. And like the marshal and sewer did at the first course so shall they do for the second; and when the marshal says it's time, that is to say within three quarters of an hour after the last mess is set in the hall, the marshal shall command them to take up all of the broken meat and broken bread and cast it unto the alms vessel; and when it comes

to the **usher yeoman of the chamber** or gentlemen then the ewer should be there, ready for delivery to the groom of the hall or **man servant waiters** towels for those that shall wash, and some men to be there with voiders to take up trenchers and broken bread, and as soon as all have washed, the ewery should be borne away and the hall newly covered for a later meat.

And forthwith, the almoner shall send for voiders for the lord's board, and all other boards in his presence, and call all yeomen of the chamber and yeomen waiters to wait upon him, and he shall take up the lowest board in the same way that they were set down, and so for all of the other boards. And the said yeomen shall be ready at his hand to take them and bear them to the kitchen. And when the meat is up, the almoner shall give the voiders with the trenchers and broken bread and the cloth to one that is standing about him to bear it to the alms vessel. Then shall the almoner go to the lord's board and take of diverse meats that have been forborne and augment therewith the alms dish, and all this within the lord's presence. And when the lord decides to command them to take up, the said yeomen shall be ready to await the almoner to do in all ways as was said before. And forthwith, all the said meat is in the voiders that were set on the boards, the last before the lord. All squires then waiting to put in broken bread and trenchers or other meat, and then the alms dish is taken away with a salutation, and is sent to a sure house and forthwith is given to one person. Then shall the almoner take up fruit if any be there, and voiders after the pantler, cheese by itself and finally the salt, whole bread, whole trenchers, carving knives, spoons and napkins together.

Then shall the sewer, if it is a great day and a durmant lie under the cloth, the surnape run with a towel across the durmant. In a mean day festival the surnape and towels run upon the board. When the cloth is taken away on a simple day only the towels are upon the cloth, when it has been made free from crumbs. At all times the towels are to be double, if there is only one person at his own mess, otherwise not. And if there is a mess beneath him and another above him, the said towels are to be laid signally before them and turned in the air at either end of the table as far as people are sitting. And if the said towel is too short then put there two short towels to fill in the gaps, born in by the hands of two squires or yeomen of the chamber or waiters, and when the surnape is laid and the estate is mad before the lord, then all squires are to make a salutation at once and go back to the ewery, and there abide until grace is said.

Then bring the water before the lord as was done before, except without the towel. And if there sit as the lord's mess one or more equal in estate with the lord, then make the estate before each of them, and bring them a basin or basins if there is need for more than one. And if there sit other persons at his mess equal to his estate, then bring a basin or basins uncovered and set these before them when the lord's basin is set before him, and set the ewer in the middle of the basin until the lord has washed; and when the lord has washed then let the squire that brought the basin kneel still until all the board has washed, then the squire shall bear the basin to the ewery and all the other basins shall follow him. And without any tarrying the cupboard cloth and the ewery shall be taken away and anon the towels and the surnape shall be **stretched**; and the marshal, beginning at the lower end and ending at the high end, shall bring all that lays on the board before the lord and there take it up with a salutation. Then shall the yeomen of the chamber or the yeomen waiters if they are not in the hall, take away the stools and the boards and the trestles and set them in their proper places, and the marshal shall clean the lords lap.

All such rules and commandments that the marshal made at the first mete, while the lord sat, the usher shall make at the second meat when the marshal shall sit, unless it is countermanded by the steward or the marshal.

Note: as all of these said servants and officers have done at meat, so will they do at supper; and in the same way the sewer that stood shall do as the sewer that knelt except the kneeling and the assay. That is to say, he shall take the dishes from them that brought them and uncover every dish even before the greatest at the board, except potages and sauces that shall be set before other persons, cover them all and set them in their proper places, never a dish on top of another and always place them next to the lord that he may have the first in the manner they were served. No sauces should come in with courses except mustard, but after set in by the sewer and esquire waiters with every meat as needed, or else all of the sauces together before the courses; all squire waiters or yeomen should be attendant to the commandments of the marshal in all things of the carver, in fetching empty dishes or wine for sauce of capons and of all things of the sewer in fetching sauce or all that sauce is made of.

Also the **marshal sewer** or squire waiters at meal times should make honest cheer with soft speech to strangers sitting at the lord's board or in his presence, as they might come to him if they find the time. Also that in the lord's presence such silence should be kept and that there be no loud speech except that which the lord and his guests make. And that such low noise be made that the head officer's voice may be heard by all the other officers; and that no grooms head be covered while serving at meals nor should the heads of yeomen, yeomen gentlemen, gentlemen or the steward; also that gentlemen and yeomen serve all who are in the lord's presence; and out of the lord's presence yeomen should serve gentlemen and then the yeomen sit down and the grooms serve them and the pages serve the grooms.

The marshal in a lord's house is a gentleman there born and the usher is a yeoman of the same. The usher of the chamber if there is one, or the yeoman of the chamber in his absence should take up lodging for his lord and for himself in his own manor or other place, the marshal or the usher in his stead shall assign all other men lodgings as well as strangers and men of household; and he shall also assign them bread, ale, wine, wax, tallow and fuel for their lodgings according to the season of the year, and the temperature and record it daily and weekly in the lord's books.

Also the marshal has the power to correct all that commit offenses within the house or without such as fighting, horrible chiding, making debates, drawing of knives steeling and others: to put them into the porters care or in the stocks or other punishments as seem fair to the steward, except for putting them out of the house. And in all these points the usher has the same power in the marshal's absence; all of this is to be understood thusly, the steward above all the gentlemen, the marshal above the yeomen and the usher above the grooms and pages.

Also at all times of the day the marshal shall have his commandments fulfilled in every office of the house, and the usher in the same way; unless they are countermanded or restrained by the lord for their waste or recklessness.

Each time the lord commands drink, the marshal or the usher shall tell the squires or yeomen to wait upon him, and they shall go with him and command it at every office. And incase there are so many lords and strangers that there shall be a need of pots with wine, then shall the marshal call every lord's squire or assign other squires of his own lord for them, and deliver cups to the said squires for the said lords, covered or uncovered, as the case requires at the cellar door; and he himself shall take as many empty cups each within the other with both his hands and his rod as he supposes necessary to serve the remanent of the house, and so shall he go; all of the other cup bearers, except the chief lord's follow, and last in line will be the **Butler** with the cupboard cloth on his shoulder and bottles of wine in his hands, and when they come into the lord's presence, the marshal, carver and the cup bearers shall make a salutation and go straight to a bay window or a cupboard at the lower end of the house if there

is one and stand there in the order they were in at the cellar door, until the cups are filled. Then shall the butler lay down his cupboard cloth and set the pots thereon, and the marshal shall set all the cups that he as borne likewise. Then shall the marshal call the squires with the cups, and fill them in the order of their estate, and when all the cups are filled he shall command them to go forth to the lords, and forthwith he shall call other gentlemen or yeomen of the chamber or waiters and give them the cups that he brought, as many as he supposes will serve the house and tell them where they will serve; and when they have all drank the marshal shall take away all the cups that he brought himself, putting the wine left in them if there is any in a void pot that the bulter brought. And when he has again all the cups he shall take them away in the order that he brought them, and the butler shall put his towel again on his shoulder and take the pots in his hands, and forthwith the marshal shall give warning to the carver and cupbearers and all together they shall make a salutation and therewith depart, the carver first, the cupbearers next the marshal with the cups after them, and last of all the butler with the pots of wine.