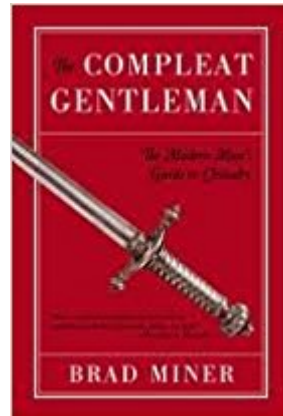




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The Compleat Gentleman



Synopsis

In these days of astonishing confusion about what it means to be a man, Brad Miner has gone back into the riches of our Western cultural heritage to recover the oldest and best ideal of manhood: the gentleman. In *The Compleat Gentleman*, he revives a thousand-year tradition of chivalry, honor, and heroism, providing a model for modern masculinity that our fractious culture needs more than ever. Miner explains that contrary to fashionable feminizing psychobabble, real manhood is not complicated. It is, in fact, an ancient ideal based on service to God, country, family, and friends. It's simple to state, yes, but not so easy to attain -- and worthy of a lifetime of struggle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With the large number of books being published these days, one might think there are ample books already available on any given subject. The subject of the Gentleman may be a counter-example to that idea. Brad Miner's book, *The Compleat Gentleman*, attempts to fill the void of books describing and defending the virtues of a gentleman. Most of the first chapter centers on the actions of the men onboard the sinking Titanic, both the hit motion picture and the true history. While watching the movie in the theater with his son, the laughter of some teenagers behind him at the words of a gentleman made him realize what constituted chivalry in the early 1900s have been lost on the current culture. In this chapter he uses the men of the Titanic to define some elements of the gentleman and set up the rest of the book. Chapter 2 begins Mr. Miner's deep plunge into the history of chivalrous tradition. The natural starting point is Arthurian legend since "King Arthur is the lightning rod of the chivalric imagination." Two threads are developed in this chapter that are often interwoven: the literary history of chivalrous tradition and historical information on the training and activities of knights. He not only discusses the chivalric elements of Arthurian legend but also the

issues of historical reliability of the traditions. He continues on to training of the page, squire, and the knight, which leads historically to the Knights Templar. The position of the knight faded away, but the code of chivalric conduct remained. "The model of the true knight was gradually supplanted by the beau ideal of the complete gentlemen, which-arguably-reached its zenith during the long reign of England's Queen Victoria.

What does it mean to be a gentleman? That is the concept that Miner seeks to explore and does so by examining history, delving into the great concept of chivalry and the time-honored traditions that have transcended generations and cultures to give a foundational view of the concept of a gentleman. While some cultures in some eras associated the concept of the gentleman with social status, title, wealth or birth; Miner argues that the concept is better represented by the concepts of true nobility - character, dignity, restraint and discernment. Miner is a lover of history and traces the concept of manliness from the days of the knights and the proverbial Round Table to the "women and children first" mentality found on the sinking Titanic. He writes that three masculine archetypes emerge - the warrior, the lover, and the monk - to combine in the character that Miner calls "the compleat gentleman." Miner's warrior is a man who has something to live for - and is willing to sacrifice his life either to protect it or even to further it. The warrior is not necessarily a man of war, but a man prepared to do battle for that which he loves. His life is marked by preparation for something great and then is lived out pursuing those ideals to which he is called. One great line Miner uses to explain his warrior is from the writings of the great philosopher Epictetus who said, "For it is better to die of hunger, exempt from fear and guilt, than to live in affluence with perturbation." If Miner's gentleman is willing to die for something he loves, it is because he loves deeply and with great passion. While romantic love definitely makes the list, it is not the sole occupant - love of God, country, and cause are also worthy objects of a gentleman's passions.

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