

*New York Sunday Mercury*  
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***The Winner of the Medal***

*Those of our ambitious youths who have not the misfortune of being students at Princeton College may have some savage satisfaction in contemplating the probable merits of the winner of the Jerome-Gentleman Medal, as shown forth by that prince of humorous sightseers, Mark Twain, whose contributions to California light-literature have gained him a front-rank position among the sparkling wits of the Land of Gold.*

ED. T. T.—I had a dream last night, which has about it something of the air of a revelation. I dreamed that the year had drawn to a close, and that the graduating class of Princeton College had met together to determine which of their number should be awarded the gold medal instituted by Leonard Jerome for the graduate who should be declared by his fellows to be the first gentleman of his class.

The proceedings opened with a discussion concerning what constitutes a gentleman. It soon became apparent that there were two very distinctly marked opinions upon this subject, and that the strength of the class was nearly equally divided upon them. After the debate had continued for some time without any satisfactory result, it was resolved that inasmuch as there were but two candidates proposed for the medal, testimony should be at once taken as to their worthiness, and then submit the final decision of the matter to a ballot. John Wagner was summoned to testify on behalf of George L. Washington, the candidate of the Old Foggy party.

Q.—Do you believe George L. Washington to be the first gentleman of the graduating class?

A.—I do.

Q.—Has he got money?

A.—A bare competency.

Q.—Is he pious?

A.—He is.

Q.—Does he gamble?

A.—No.

Q.—Drink?

A.—No—except that he takes wine at dinner and in drawing rooms, and upon such occasions; but he is never overcome by it.

Q.—Does he chew tobacco?

A.—No.

Q.—Does he smoke?

A.—Not to excess. Not more than three cigars a day.

Q.—Does he play billiards?

A.—Occasionally.

Q.—Does he fight, drive fast horses, raise thunder, or run all night?

A.—I am not aware that he does such things.

Q.—Then what makes you think he is a gentleman?

A.—Because he lives comfortably yet not ostentatiously; dresses well, but plainly; abides by all laws, human and divine; is courteous and kindly toward all; is considerate of the feelings of others, and has charity for their weaknesses and their prejudices; it is seldom that he gets mad, but when he does, he gets mad all over—he redresses grievances then. He stands by his friend first, last and all the time. He is always taxing his time, his patience, and his purse, to make other people's lives happy. He never does a mean thing, and has only just enough small vices to breed in him a humane and liberal spirit when sitting in judgment upon the vices of his neighbors, and keep him from being too disagreeably good for a mere man of flesh and blood.

Other witnesses corroborated the above statements, and the Old Fogies rested their case.

Thomas Williamson was called to testify on behalf of William E. Fourth, the candidate of the Modern party.

Q.—What do you know of William E. Fourth?

A.—I know him to be in all respects a brick.

Q.—Has he got money?

A.—Rich as Croesus.

Q.—Is he pious?

A.—Well—I don't hardly—well, t'ain't—it ain't his strong suit, as you may say.

Q.—Does he ever go to church?

A.—Well, he—he don't go as much as he used to.

Q.—How often does he go?

A.—Well, you see, he don't get a chance much now. He don't get up till noon on Sundays, and he thinks it puts a kind of dampener on his appetite to go to church before breakfast.

Q.—You have not answered my question yet. How often does he go to church?

A.—To come down to the fine points of it, he only goes seldom. But he loves it—I know he loves it. I have known him to go to church in the hardest kind of a rain-storm. (Cheers.)

Q.—Did he have an umbrella?

A.—No; he didn't even have an umbrella. He would scorn it.

Q.—Was he away from home when he took the notion?

A.—I believe he was.

Q.—Now, no trifling—no prevarication! Answer strictly: What did he go in the church for?

A.—Well, he—he went in there to get out of the rain.

(Cheers from the other party.)

Q.—Does the candidate gamble?

A.—Him? Why he's the envy of the public. Take him at any gentlemanly amusement you can name, from faro for stocks of red checks, down to pitch seven-up for Limburger cheese and lager, and he is the prince of them all!

Q.—Does he drink?

A.—Oh, don't mention it! Why he's the pride of the village. He can banish more champagne and Jersey lightning than any man in the State, and still be the gayest of the gay.

Q.—Does he chew tobacco? -- or smoke?

A.—He does. He don't lack any gentlemanly accomplishment.

Q.—Does he dress well?

A.—Him! Why he sports the stunningest harness in America. The tightest legged pants, and the shortest-tailed coats, and the reddest cravats in the continent, and the most of them. He gives all the powers of his mind to it—and as a woman-killer there isn't his equal anywhere.

Q.—Is he convivial?

A.—He is the most companionable gentleman I know. When he turns out of a night to have a time, somebody's premises have got to suffer! he is a regular calamity to street-lamps and door-bells when he gets started; and if anybody objects, why, there's trouble, you know. And his team is the fastest.

Q.—Does he play billiards?

A.—He can beat the man that invented the game.

Q.—Does he pay his debts?

A.—Most regular man in the world. Always gives his note, and is always affable and polite when a body wants him to renew it.

Here the original discussion broke out again, but the Moderns seemed to have the best of the argument. They contended that their candidate was rich, convivial, fast, fashionable, a thorough man of the world, a breaker of female hearts, in a word, he was a shining example of the gentleman of the present day—he was the accepted type as found in drawing-rooms, clubs, and all the various ramifications of superior social life; while the other candidate belonged to a type that was obsolete—a type that men pleasantly contemplate in books, but which is no longer accepted in real life; and so, the Moderns demanded a vote with unflinching confidence.

The election closed with the first ballot, and in favor of the Moderns: George L. Washington, 13; William E. Fourth, 14. Amid the wildest enthusiasm on the part of the Modern party, William E. Fourth was declared the chosen recipient of the Leonard gold medal, as the first gentleman of the graduating class. (Sudden sensation outside; all turn towards the door.)

Enter William E. Fourth, in a state of hilarious excitement.—“I licked him, boys! (hic!) I don't know who he was, but I licked him, you bet you!”

All.—Hooray for the gold medal boy—never fails to whip his man! I want to vote for him again! Who was the man that tackled you? Show us the man! Who was he? Anyway, hooray!

Enter a graduate in dismay and says: “O, great Gemini, boys, it was Leonard Jerome!” (Sudden and impressive silence.)

My dream ended there. It was a curious one, but I was glad it was only a dream, because with the opportunity the Princeton collegiates will have of settling for good and all the vexed question of what it is that constitutes a gentleman, and of establishing, more particularly, a standard which can justly be received as a model combining in itself everything that an American gentleman should be, it is to be hoped that they will appreciate the real dignity of the trust committed to their hands, and render a decision which shall do honor to their judgment and credit to their own gentlemanly instincts.

MARK TWAIN.

*(Source: Twainquotes.com, "Mark Twain in the New York Sunday Mercury."*  
<http://www.twainquotes.com/mercury/Winner.html>