

A Fifteenth-Century Courtesy Book and Two Franciscan Rules. Edited by Walter Seaton.
Pages 11- 17

A General Rule

To Teach every man to serve a Lord or Master

A general Rule to teach every man that is willing for to learn to serve a lord or master in every thing to his pleasure.

The Marshall in the morning out to come into the hall and see that it be clean of all manner thing that may be found dishonest there in; the stools trestles or else *fomrys* if any be, that they be set in their own places at meals at the board, and afore and after meals in corners farthest from encumbrances : and all the *hallynges* and *costers* dressed in their kind places and shaken or beaten with rods in need be : and that no hounds be abiding in the hall from morn to evening. And to perform these things said afore he shall charge the usher and the groom of the hall there with.

Also in winter time the said groom by the oversight of the usher ...end ; the said groom shall also continually be in the hall at the first meal or supper to bear away dishes and keep out hounds and fetch sauces and to obey all other commands of the head officers, that is to say of steward, marshal and usher.

Also half an hour before the lord go to meal or supper the marshal shall take the Rod in his hand and command the panter (bread-guy) and server to cover and make ready for the lord and for the household ; and as soon as it is made ready the marshal shall command the server to await when the cooks are ready; and then the server go to the servery and take a towel upon his shoulder and the marshal and he to go together and show before the lord, so that he may know there by when his meal is ready. And when it pleases the lord to ask [for] water then shall the esquires and the marshal and server go by and by next the lord's basin and even at the lord ; the sewer shall deliver the towel to be the worthiest that be there about him and go straight to the kitchen with all the men that shall serve.

The marshal then that uncover the basin if it be covered and hold it in his hands also unto the lord have washed, and then make a salutation and take it to the squire that brought it thither, and he to bear it to the servery, and anon command water for all of them that shall sit at the lord's board, and go with the lord to be set, and there ask him how his lord shall be set.

And the yeomen and grooms or groom of the chamber if it be there, or the usher or grooms or groom if it be there, shall set up boards and make ready the stools afore meals and have them ready at the setting of the boards [tables], and bring them ready to the marshal when he calls, and also after meals bear away the boards, trestles, and stools ; and when the lord is set, and the other boards in his presence, the marshal shall fetch in his courses with the server by and by : the marshal and the server shall make a salutation when they come almost at the board, and no other that bear the meat or drink at that time, to be delivered or that that he bears.

And when all the lords mess is served, then shall another esquire next the hand serve the other messes at the board or in his presence. And anon forthwith the almoner shall bring in the alms dish with a loaf there in and set it beneath the lords salt or else upon the cupboard if no Room be upon the board ; and a little afore the second course the almoner

shall take of every standard or great meat that comes before the lord at the first course a certainty, with the help of the carver, and put it in the alms dish and send the void dishes to the kitchen. And all this meanwhile the marshal shall look both in the chamber and hall that there lack neither bread, ale, wine nor meat there as it ought to be served, and the server shall look at there lack no sauce in the lords presence.

And when the second course is ready, the server shall come and warn the marshal, and the marshal all esquires and yeomen waiters, to go to the kitchen. And like as the marshal and server did at the first course so shall they do at the second; and when the marshal says time, that is to say within iii quarters of an hour that the last mess be set in the hall, the marshal shall command to take up and all the broken meat and broken breads to be cast into the alms vessel ; and when it comes to the usher yeomen of the chamber or gentlemen Then the server to the there, ready for to deliver to the groom of the hall or men servants waiters towels for them that wash, and some men to be there ready with voiders for to take up trenchers and broken bread, and as soon s they have wash that the ewer be born away and the hall new covered for the later meal.

And forth with all, 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 for to await upon, and he shall take up at the lowest board in the same way that it was set down, and so to all the other boards. And the said yeomen shall be ready at his hand there to take at him and bear them to the kitchen. And when the meal is up the almoner shall take the voiders with the trenchers and broken bread and the cloth also and take it to one that stands about him for to bear it to the alms vessel. Then shall the almoner go to the lord's board and take of diverse meats as it may goodly be forborne and augment there with the alms dish, and all this in the lord's presence. And when it pleases the lord to command to take up, the said yeomen shall be ready to await upon the almoner to do in all ways as it is said afore. And forthwith all as the said meat is up the voiders to be set upon the board, the last afore the lord. All esquires then awaiting to put in broken bread and trenchers or other meat, and then the alms dish to be taken away with a salutation, and set up into a sure house and after *yevyn* to one person. Then shall the almoner take up fruit if any be, and the voiders after the panter, cheese by it self and forth with after the salt, whole bread, whole trenchers, carving knives, spoons and napkins together.

Then shall the server, if it be a great day and a *durmant* lie under the cloth, let the surnap with the towel Run upon the *durmant*. In a mean day festival the surnap and towel run upon the board. When the cloth is take away in s simple day the towels only upon the cloth, when it is made ready from crumbs. At all times the towels to be doubled, if there sit only one body before him at his own mess, and else not. And if there be a mess beneath him and another above, Then the said towels to be laid single afore him self and turned In also at either end of the table as fair (together?) as the persons sit afore. And if the said towel be too short, then that there be ii short towels to fulfill the defaults bore in the hands of ii squires or yeomen of the chamber or waiters, and when the surnape is laid and the estate is made afore the lord, Then all the esquires to make a salutation at once and go back to the servery and there abide until graces is said.

Then bring in the water in all ways before the lord as they did before meat, save the towel, And if there sit at the lord's mess one or more that be equal in estate with the lord, then make the estate before each of them, and bring them a basin of basins if there be need of more than one. And if there sit other persons at his mess then of his estate, then

let bring a basin or else basins uncovered and set afore them when the lord's basin be set afore him, and set the ewer in the middle of the basin till the lord have washed ; and when the lord has washed then let the squire that brings the basin kneel still till all the board has watched, then the said esquire shall bear the basin to the servery and the other basins shall then follow him. And with out any tarrying the cupboard cloth and the ewers shall be taken away and anon the surpape and the towels shall be stretched; and the marshal beginning at the lower end and after at the higher end shall bring all that lays upon the board before the lord and there take it up with a salutation. Then shall be there ready yeomen of the chamber if it be there, yeomen waiters if it be in the hall, to take away stools and boards and trestles, and set them in their right places, and the marshal shall shake the lord's *lape*.

All such power, rule, and commandments as the marshal had at the first meal, while the lord sat, the usher shall have at the second meat when that the marshal sits, without that it be countermanded by the steward or marshal.

Note: as all these said servants and officers have done at meat so to do at supper; and in the same ways the server that stands shall do as server that kneels except the kneeling and the testing. That is to say, he shall take the dishes from them that bring them and uncover every dish even before the greatest at the board, except pottages and sauces that shall be set afore other persons, and cover them again and set them afterward in their right places never a dish above another and ever that net the lord that he shall test of first after the manner as it was served. And that no sauces come in with the courses except mustard, but after set in with the sever and esquires waiters to every meal s needed, or else all sauces afore the courses; and that all esquires waiters or yeomen if esquires like be attendant in the meal times upon the commandments of the marshal in all things of the carver, in fetching void dishes or wine for sauce of capons of the server, in fetching of sauce or all that sauce shall be made of.

Also that the marshal sever or esquires waiters at meal times make honest cheer with soft speech to strangers sitting at the lords board or in his presence, if they may goodly come to them, and as they see time. Also that in the lords presence such silence be kept that there be no loud speech save only of the lord and such as he speaks to. And in the hall such low communication be had that the head officers voice be heard unto all other officers; and that no grooms head be covered serving at meals yeomen, nor yeomen gentlemen, nor gentlemen the steward; also that the gentlemen and yeomen serve Gentlemen and set down yeomen and grooms serve them, set grooms and pages serve them.

Then the marshal in a lord's house is ...

Also at every time that the lord commands drink, the marshal or usher shall warn the esquires or yeomen to await thereon, and they shall go with him and command it at every office; and In case there be so many lords and strangers that there shall need pots with wine, then shall the marshal call every lord's squire or assign other squires of his own lords for them, and then deliver cups to the said squires for the said lords, covered or uncovered, as that the case requires ay the cellar door; and he him self shall take as many cups void each within other by twix his hands with his rod as be supposes to server the remnant of the house, and so shall be go afore; all the other cups, void save the chief lord's, follow him, and last of all the butler with the cupboard cloth on his shoulder and pots of wine in his hands; and when they come into the place there as the lords be, the

marshal, carver, cupbearers shall make a salutation and go straight to a bay window, a form or cupboard at the lower end of the house if only be there, and stand there in order like as they were delivered at the cellar door, till the cups be filled. Then shall the butler lay down his cupboard cloth and set the pots thereon, and the marshal all the cups that he bears in like ways. Then shall the marshal call the squires with the cups, and do fill them by order after there estates, and when all the cups be filled he shall command them to go forth to the lords, and forthwith he shall call other gentlemen or yeomen of the chamber of waiters and deliver them cups such as he brought, as many as he supposes will serve the house and tell them where they shall serve; and when the have all drunk the marshal shall take again all the cups that he brought himself, putting the wine left in them, if any be, in a void pot of such as the butler brought. And when he has again all the said cups, he shall take them in like ways as be brought them, and the butler caste his cloth again upon his shoulder and take the pots in his hands, and forthwith the marshal shall give warning to the carver and cupbearers and all together 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.

A general rule of all manner of fishes, as they shall be served in order and course of serving.

The first sprats, red herring and white ling, dogdrawght, green fish, salt salmon, salt eels, salt sturgeon, and salt lamprey. Then all manner of cold meats, that is cold of salt fishes or powdered; then, following these cold meats, all manner of sea fishes both red, round and flat; and following them all river fish after as they both toothed and in greatness; next following all manner of pole fish and then all manner of roasted fish, what so ever they be; and then all manner of shell fish; and following them all manner of baked meats, be it fish or doucetes; least then you have many of them that you want to depart some to the first course, some to the second, and so to the third; and last of all, all manner of leche [sweet] meats and meats of milk.

A general Rule to every Gentleman that is a carver to any manner lord

The towel must be laid upon his shoulder when he shall bring his lord bread, and if he bring fruit his towel to be folded and laid upon his arm, what manner of fruit so ever it be; and the sauce is that the towel ought to be spread under the dish of piece of what so that you bring it in ; and ever if that the estate that you serve stand, then after your obedience you may stand, and if he sit you must kneel, and keep your dish or piece that you bear in your hands, etc.

Explicit a good teaching.