As I was sitting last evening, thinking what should be the subject of my composition some one asked me the questions of public opinion should be a guide to our actions, so I thought it would be a very good subject for a composition. We are all much inclined to be led by public opinion in the various actions of our lives. Indeed many appear to be led actuated entirely by the public voice without consulting their own feelings in the least degree— their sentiments, their conduct, manner and appearance must all be in accord with the world or rather with that little circle which surrounds them and which they denominate the world. These few persons assume the right of deciding whether any occurrence is proper or improper, right or wrong, and though we ourselves as individuals rank among the number of those who take the liberty of speaking upon the appearance of those around us, still we are and...
often induced to hesitate in our own actions and suffer a conflict between our inclinations and the thought what will the world say. Altho' it shows weakness of mind and great want of decision of character to be actuated entirely by the opinion of the world, yet it is far from our evidence of a great mind to pretend to rise entirely above the public opinion and to our regard of it entirely.

Fashion which respects dress and appearance ought not by any means to be disregarded or unnoticed. Indeed it is advisable to comply with the rules of fashion so far as they are proper but when our feelings convince us that there is an unreasonable extravagance, then we ought to rise superior to them and follow our own inclination and taste.

H. M. Whitlocke, 1833

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