

WHAT'S GOOD FORM WHEN RECEIVING GHOSTS?

GLANCING over the morning mail in the breakfast room last Wednesday we discovered a most unusual communication. It was written on pale white stationery. The postmark was Patchogue.

"Dear Madam," thus it ran, "can you throw some light on a matter which has a vital bearing on our social position in this community? One must be psychic to be really smart these days. So I would like some information on the proper method of addressing ghosts. Every third Thursday I am at home to a few expert table-tippers. Phillips Brooks, William James and others have already given us afternoons. But there are a number of points on which I need guidance. For instance, what is the correct method of salutation for disembodied spirits? Should the hostess stand while receiving her guests? If the visitors from the other world appear in negligee, should the hostess wear full dress? Should masculine spirits be invited to informal afternoon affairs? What is the really correct thing to say when ghosts are leaving?"

"Is it good form to count the raps out loud? How many spirits can be invited to one sitting without crowding? Which is more stylish—direct or indirect lighting?"

"If a ghost leaves unexpectedly in high dudgeon, how can it be brought back?"

"Should the most illustrious shades be entertained a deux or ensemble?"

"Your opinion is anxiously awaited."

It is only natural that we should feel some reticence about assuming this rôle of Beatrice Fairfax to the ghost fans. But, as our correspondent says, some light should be thrown on the subject at once. Correct social usage in relation to the spirit world is the question of the hour. And although it is rumored that an encyclopedia of ghostly etiquette, containing a complete course of instruction in good form, style and deportment, is even now on its way to the printer, we have not heard the date of publication.

Unfortunately, we are unable at this time to give the lady in Patchogue authentic views of our greatest living psychic researchers on the subject. An unreasonable prejudice toward the light-headed press seems to prevail in certain quarters. After some weeks of diligent research we are, however, able to quote precedents from the weightiest classics of psychic literature.

The following random hints and don'ts are therefore presented as reliable:

Always speak to a ghost when it calls. Never permit it to stand willy-nilly on the doorkill for any length of time. This little courtesy is only its due. The oldest traditions of the spirit world demand it.

Make your salutation perfectly natural. Otherwise your visitor may feel gauche and ill at ease. Act as if you had an appointment and the ghost had kept it to the minute. Say carelessly and sort of offhand: "Hello, old man! What can I do for you?" Or, if the spectre is a lady: "So sweet of you, dear, to come." This will start things off pleasantly and open the way for confidences. You will soon find out what the call is all about, anyway.

Our favorite authority on psychic matters, Hereward Carrington, writes in True Ghost Stories:

"Some of them (ghosts) prove helpful; others seem to wish to right a wrong; some even seem to have a sense of humor! So there are all sorts of ghosts, just as there are all sorts of people, and the variety is as great in one case as another."

You see how it is. Some ghosts, we fear, will remain mysterious to the end, like Colonel House. After only a few minutes conversation with others you are ready to burst out with:

"Why, I feel as if I had known you always." That's the way it goes.

If you begin correctly, the ghost will follow your lead, usually, and make its wishes known. Particularly is this true when it is of the tearful or helpful variety. If the message is of importance, you must conduct yourself accordingly and listen with an absorbed expression.

Purely helpful ghosts are often as harmless as the worthy ladies who urge you to wear a campher ball right through the winter as a preventive for colds, or to make yourself unpopular with your favorite beau by advising him to give up smoking. Treat them with the same gentle forbearance. When convenient, change the subject.

By all means retain your mental and

A Branch of Deportment, Long Neglected, Becomes Suddenly of Paramount Importance. This Week Will Be Held the First International Congress for Psychical Research and Much Valuable Testimony May Be Lost to the World Through Mortal Ignorance of Spiritland Etiquette

By SUSIE SEXTON

Spirit Illustrations by RALPH BARTON



Never turn your back on a ghost while it is in the room. If it calls at midnight, after you have retired, never, under any circumstances, push an electric switch. Your experience will be valueless if you do

physical poise when a ghost is calling. One of the reasons for the meager data available on ghost etiquette is the fact that so many persons favored with apparitions have quite forgotten themselves. They act exactly like the fabled bull in a china shop. Much valuable data has thus been lost to posterity.

This is well illustrated by the experience of a successful banker who has a country estate in Jersey. He was visited one day by the spirit of the best cook he ever had. She had left in a huff some months before. Her astral body did not seem to harbor a grudge, however. Doubtless she just wanted to see how things were coming. The banker had been accustomed all his life to meeting only the best people. But on this occasion he quite forgot himself. He rushed first for the door. It was locked. Then for the window. It was locked. The ghost meanwhile developed hysteria and rushed off somewhere herself.

When the debris was cleared away next morning it was discovered he had smashed a cloisonne vase, spilled a whole bottle of ink on a real filet scarf and broken a window pane. As his wife pointed out, if he had only observed the most elementary rules of banking decorum he might have found out

how to make the peach cobbler, which was such a favorite of his.

Such conduct shows lack of breeding and experience. We cannot urge you too strongly to appear perfectly natural when receiving a ghost. If you are seated remain so. You won't gain anything by standing up. When reading you may lay aside your book if you wish. Or if you are very nervous you may walk across the room and flick your cigarette ashes off in the tray. This will conceal your embarrassment for the time being.

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It is really amusing to note what marked social distinctions there are in ghostly society. The gulf between the boisterous frequenter of Coney Island and the suave patron of Delmonico's is not more deep than some of these ghostly chasms.

Democracy, it would seem, has not as yet attained a wide vogue from the astral standpoint. Royal shades in some cases must be addressed with as much ceremonial as when they held court on earth. Only a short time ago a young Celtic enthusiast became all worked up over Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria. There were some passages about which he disagreed strongly with the writer. He rushed up to a medium who lives near Columbus Circle and asked for an audience with the departed ruler. The late Queen appeared, lace cap and all. She answered questions more or less intelligently. As he was leaving the young man started to shake hands. He wished he hadn't. He felt a rubber glove dipped in slaked lime.

Our court etiquette may be a little rusty, but we believe the proper method would have been to touch her fingers tips with his lips. Shaking hands may have seemed a bit ambitious.

Lighting effects, we admit, have much to do with the most finished formal introductions to ghosts. This is markedly so at table-tipping soirées. Some like it light; others dark. It is all a matter of taste, really. Personally, we have often remarked that the most astounding phenomena occur in the most complete darkness. It may be only our imagination.

Then again, there is the question of flowers. Many experts contend that it is best not to speak to a ghost unless you have flowers in your hand. Here, too, one must exercise discretion. It is obvious folly to waste orchids on a spirit which recognizes nothing but dandelions.

Proper arrangement of ghosts means much in a social way. Never seat a literary spirit, who is inclined to be a bit set-up about his accomplishments, next to an out-and-out low-brow, who imagines that the complex is a new-fangled kind of fancy work. It is also suicidal

to bring the ghost of a lady who was always braggart about her virtues as a wife and mother into immediate contact with the spirit form of a notorious flirt.

Either way you are apt to find yourself marooned in a conversational vacuum as far as the spirit world is concerned.

I recall the experience of a deep student of the psychic who lives in Bronxville. He has been in the habit of having one or two sociable ghosts drop in now and then to spend the evening. Those who responded most often and most eagerly to his table-tapped invitations were the wraith of a bootlegger and the shade of Plato.

Last Saturday night they dropped in together. It was most unfortunate. Plato's answers seemed plainly to belie his reputation as a scholar. Strangely enough, in his ghostly form he seemed much more interested in the available supply of El Bart than the cosmic relations. Once or twice he yawned audibly. Apparently he was having a thin time, even for a ghost. But the discussion was on molecular telepsychic telekinesis. One can hardly blame him. The bootlegger had a sorry mentality, anyway. He persisted in referring to the "unconscious molecular" which he knew nothing about. Presently the philosopher slipped quietly away.

A few hours later the Bronxville student strolled out on the veranda. There sat Plato in the moonlight. He was strumming, "Ain't We Got Fun?" on the ukelele. He looked positively radiant.

Is this really so surprising? Given the vision, might we not this very day discover the shades of Nero and Julius Caesar playing "put and take" in the corner of some exclusive club on Fifth Avenue? Or the disembodied forms of Socrates and Diogenes taking a fling at the "scandal" in the ballroom of a summer hotel on warm evenings this season?

Domestic rules of etiquette for receiving ghosts antedate telekinesis and the toddle. Even in pagan times they were in vogue on occasions when the ghost of a husband or wife dropped in at a former home for a friendly call. Husbands were often obliged to observe various little courtesies before their spirit wives could converse with them on the most trivial and routine family matters.

No married man should cherish the fatuous belief that a woman's interest in clothes ends at the grave. To the ghosts of deceased ladies in ancient times dress was more important. It caused them many an anxious moment when they were invited to visit the mortal sphere.

In fact, there is actual evidence to prove that many a wifely ghost, true to her material self, absolutely refused to answer questions or appear in public because she hadn't a "decent stitch to wear." Can you doubt that it is even so with the gentler shades to-day?

For the enlightenment of all husbands we

without any difficulty. Fancy how many husbands will henceforth invoke the shade of Periander! Doubtless he could give them many another valuable tip if he only would.

Every established rule for receiving ghosts demands that they be humored in any such whims as that of Periander's wife.

Housewives in their astral form have often been known to worry over unpaid laundry bills. If you ever meet a ghost with worries like this one, pay the bill for her. It will be to your credit. A woman of Perth, who died in 1838, left a grocery bill of three shillings and ten pence. She kept appearing for days until some one wiped out the indebtedness.

Many a student of the psychic is at a loss to know how to act when a ghost has been offended. Such instances have occurred and are really quite embarrassing.

We recall the delightfully polished manner of that ghost Emperor. He belonged to the very highest tier of ghostly society. And a gentlemanly shade he was, if ever one returned to earth. No Walter Raleigh had more courtliness or charm.

Henry Holt, writer of ghost classics, quotes passages from an accepted authority to show that Emperor once absented himself from a certain meeting at which spirit messages were received. It was plainly a case of pique. A certain Doctor Speer had offended him. Later Emperor, having somewhat recovered his social balance, attended another meeting. He was questioned about his previous absence. Very readily he admitted that he had stayed away because he was deeply offended. Dr. Speer again apologized. This time Emperor showed that he was a thoroughly well bred ghost. The original text reads that he received this apology with "a series of stately raps suggestive of bows."

A little group of earnest thinkers and table-tippers in New York is seriously considering the question of referring this entire question of the proper method of addressing ghosts to the First International Congress for Psychical Research, which will be held in Copenhagen August 26 to September 2, inclusive. Invitations to attend the meeting have been sent to all of the greatest psychical researchers in the world. Their opinion on this matter would be invaluable.

At present the program for discussion at the congress contains the following: (1) The Relation of Soul and Body; (2) The Nature of Telepathy; (3) Mediumity, Conscious and Unconscious; (4) Origin and Nature of Psychical Phenomena, Levitation, Telekinesis, Dowling Rod, Materialization, etc.; (5) Nature of Hypnotism, Whether of Origin Psychological or Physiological; (6) The Question of the So-Called Human Aura.

The committee will also debate the possibility of prohibiting public shows of hypnotism, etc., and the foundation of a permanent international office in Copenhagen for the collection and distribution of results of modern experimental psychical research.

Walter F. Prince, director of psychical research and editor of The American Society for Psychical Research, will go from New York to attend the conference and will speak on "Telepathy vs. Spiritism as an Explanation of Evidential Mediumistic Phenomena." Mr. Prince is one of the newly elected executive officers of the American society. The complete list includes William McDougall, president; William C. Peyton, vice-president; Mr. Prince, acting director of research and editor; Eric J. Dingwall, director of department of psychical phenomena; Lawson Purdy, treasurer; and Gertrude O. Tubby, secretary.

Next week we expect to be flooded with telepathic communications about the levity of this article. They will be full of big words such as "mendacious" and "flippant." But what can one do if the scientists refuse to take one seriously? Only remember Columbus and Robert Fulton.

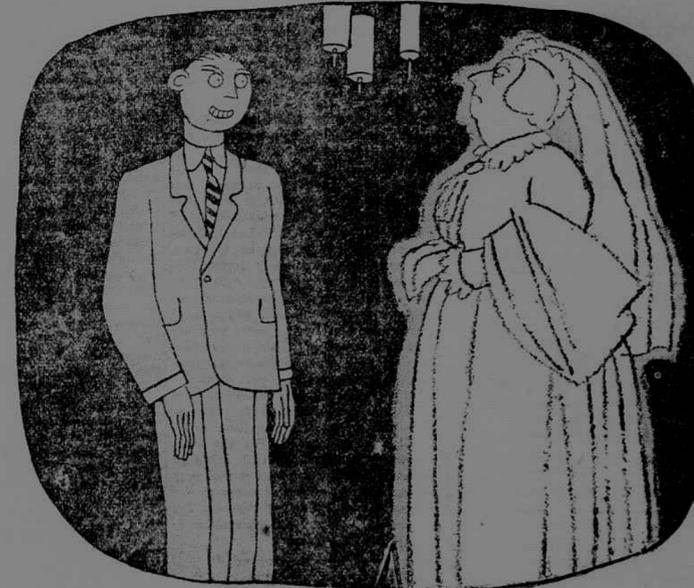
If the criticism becomes more than we can bear we intend to organize a personally conducted party for jovial ghosts and go out to Mr. Tilyou's Steeplechase Park. We would like to see the shade of Lady Macbeth walk across the stage. A facetious friend adds that Hamlet's ghost might forget its soliloquy if it ever tried the human pool table.

Be that as it may, ten years from now we firmly believe we will be buying a "best seller" entitled How to Meet a Ghost: What to Do, What to Say, and How to Say It. On the fly leaf we will read that it was compiled by sixteen eminent authors.

In the interests of science, copyright privileges are waived.



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