

R U L E S

TO BE OBSERVED WHEN FORMING

SPIRITUAL CIRCLES.

By EMMA HARDINGE AND OTHERS.

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THE spirit-circle is the assembling of a number of persons for the purpose of communion with those who have passed from earth to the higher world of souls. The chief advantage of such an assembly is the mutual impartation and reception of the combined magnetisms of the assemblage. These in combination form a force stronger than that of an isolated subject: first, enabling spirits to commune with greater power; next, developing the latent gifts of mediumship in such members of the circle as are thus endowed; and, finally, promoting that harmonious and social spirit of fraternal intercourse among mankind on earth, which is one of the special aims of the spirit's mission.

The first conditions to be observed relate to the persons who compose the circle, who should

be, as far as possible, of opposite temperaments, as positive and negative in disposition, whether male or female; also of moral characters, pure minds, and not marked by repulsive physical or mental points. The physical temperaments should contrast with each other; but no person suffering from decidedly chronic disease, or of very debilitated *physique*, should be present at any circle, unless it is formed expressly for healing purposes. I would recommend the number of the circle to be not less than three, nor more than twelve.

The object of the association of differing temperaments is to form a battery on the principle of electricity or galvanism, composed of positive and negative elements, the sum of which should be unequal. No person of a very strongly positive temperament or disposition should be present, as any such magnetic sphere emanating from the circle will overpower that of the spirits, who must always be positive to the circle in order to produce phenomena. It is not desirable to have more than two well-developed mediums in a circle, mediums always absorbing the magnetism of the rest of the party; hence, when there are too many present, the force, being divided, cannot operate successfully with any.

OF TEMPERATURE.

Never let the apartment be overheated, or even close. As an unusual amount of magnetism is liberated at a circle, the room is always warmer than ordinary, and should be well ven-

tilated. *Avoid strong light*, which, by producing excessive motion in the atmosphere, disturbs the manifestations. A very subdued light is the most favorable for any manifestations of a magnetic character, especially for spiritual magnetism.

OF THE POSITIONS TO BE OBSERVED.

If the circle is one which meets together periodically, and is composed of the same persons, let them always occupy the same seats (unless changed under spiritual direction), and sit (as the most favorable of all positions) round a table, their hands laid on it, with palms downward. It is believed that the wood, when charged, becomes a conductor, without the necessity of holding or touching hands. I should always suggest the propriety of employing a table as a conductor, especially as all tables in household use are more or less magnetically charged. If flowers or fruit are in the room, see that they are freshly gathered, otherwise remove them; also avoid sitting in a room wherein are many minerals, metals or glasses. These all injuriously affect sensitives, of whom mediums are the type.

I recommend the séance to be opened either with prayer or music, vocal or instrumental; after which, subdued, quiet and harmonizing conversation is better than wearisome silence; but let the conversation be always directed toward the purpose of the gathering, and never diverge into discussion, or rise to emphasis; let it be gentle, quiet and spiritual, until phenom-

ena begin to be manifest. Always have a slate, or pen, pencil and paper on the table, so as not to be obliged to rise to procure them. Especially avoid all entering or quitting the room, moving about, irrelevant conversation, or disturbances within or without the circle-room, after the séance has once commenced.

The spirits are far more punctual to seasons, faithful to promise, and periodical in action, than mortals. Endeavor, then, to fix your circle at a convenient hour, when you will be least interrupted, and do not fail in your appointments. Do not admit unpunctual, late comers; nor, if possible, suffer the air of the room to be disturbed in *any way* after the sitting commences. Nothing but necessity, indisposition, or *impressions* (to be hereafter described) should warrant the least disturbance of the sitting. Let the séance always extend to at least one hour, even if no results are obtained: it sometimes requires that time for spirits to form their battery of the materials furnished. Let it be also remembered that all circles are experimental: hence no one should be discouraged if phenomena are not produced at the first few sittings. Stay with the same circle for six sittings: if no phenomena are then produced (provided all the above conditions are observed), you may be sure you are not rightly assimilated to each other, you do not form the requisite combinations, or neutralize each other. In that case, change one, two, or three persons of your circle for others, and so on until you succeed.

An humble, candid, inquiring spirit, unpreju-

diced, and receptive of truth, is the only proper frame of mind in which to sit for phenomena, the delicate magnetism of which is shaped, tempered, and made or marred as much by *mental* as physical conditions. When once any of the circle can communicate freely and conclusively with spirits, *the spirits* can and will take charge of and regulate the future movements of the circle.

OF IMPRESSIONS.

Impressions are the voices of spirits speaking to our spirits, or else the monitions of the spirit within us, and should always be respected and followed, unless (which is very rare) suggestive of actual wrong in act or word. At the opening of the circle, one or more of the members are often impressed to change seats with others; one or more impressed with the desire to withdraw, or a strong feeling of repulsion to some member of the circle, makes it painful to remain. Let any or all of these impressions be faithfully regarded, and, on commencing, pledge to each other the promise that no offense shall be taken from following out impressions.

If a strong impression to write, speak, sing, dance or gesticulate, possesses any mind present, follow it out faithfully; it has a meaning, if you cannot at first realize it. Never feel hurt in your own person, nor ridicule your neighbors, for any failures to express, or at first discover, the meaning of the spirit impressing you.

Spirit-control is often deficient, and at first always imperfect; but, by often yielding to it,

your organism becomes more flexible and the spirit more experienced; and practice in control is absolutely necessary for spirits as well as mortals. If dark and evil-disposed spirits manifest to you, *never drive them away*, but always strive to elevate them, and treat them as you would mortals under similar circumstances. Do not always attribute falsehoods to "lying spirits" or deceiving mediums. Many mistakes occur in the communion of which you cannot always be aware.

Strive for truth, but rebuke error gently; and do not always attribute it to design, but rather to mistake in so difficult and experimental a stage of the communion as mortals at present enjoy with spirits.

Unless strictly charged by spirits to do otherwise, do not continue to hold sittings with the same parties for more than a twelvemonth. After that time, if not before, fresh elements of magnetism are absolutely essential. Some of the original circle should withdraw, and others take their place.

All persons are subject to spirit influence and spirit guidance and control; but not all can so externalize this power as to use it consciously, or be what is significantly called a medium; and, finally, let it ever be remembered that no medium can be influenced by spirits far beyond *his or her own normal* capacity in the matter of the intelligence rendered, which in every instance is more or less shaped by the capacity and idiosyncrasies of the medium. All spirit power is thus limited in expression by the or-

ganism through which it works; and though spirits may control, inspire and influence the human mind, they cannot change or re-create it.

REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. Evening is the best time to hold a circle, for the reason that the cares and duties of the day being past, the individuals composing it are, as a general thing, in their most passive condition, and all their surroundings in a quiet, subdued state, favorable to the efforts of their spirit friends to accomplish the purposes they have in view.

2. As many hours as possible previous to the time of holding the circle, its members should gain what repose they can from the fatigues of the day, and endeavor to attain an equable mental condition by disabusing their minds of all distracting thoughts of business or study. It is best to dispense with the evening meal until after the circle; or, if partaking of it, the food should be light, with no meats or strong tea or coffee.

3. The table employed should be of a size to comfortably seat the members of the circle uniformly around it, without any great distance between them; and no cloth or other article should be on it, except paper and pencils, ready for use should occasion require. An equal number of each sex is desirable, and these should be seated alternately; but if there is a preponderance of either, that of females is preferable to males, on account of their usual great passivity

and impressibility. Flowers in the room will be an assistance; and in the winter season potted plants will be a valuable auxiliary in the production of spirit phenomena.

4. The most perfect confidence in the firm integrity and honesty of purpose of every member should exist in the mind of each. This being established, the absence of light will not be objectionable to any, and will greatly facilitate the development of individual mediumship. However, if total darkness is in *the least degree* objectionable, a soft, much subdued light, so placed as not to throw its direct rays upon the table or the faces of the sitters, may be employed.

5. The first indication of spirit presence is likely to be the sensation as of a cool, gentle breeze passing over the hands or faces of the sitters, though it is possible some one or more may be so largely mediumistic that an involuntary movement of the hand may occur, in which case it may be advisable to place pencil and paper where they can be used by that person, if required; even the appearance of lights, the production of raps, a tipping of the table, partial or full entrancement with its accompanying phenomena, or other manifestations, may be the earliest evidence of success.

6. Should the manifestations take the form of raps or of tipping the table, the usual signals may be employed: one rap or one tip for *No*; two for *Doubtful*, or *Do not know*; three for *Yes*. When this is understood by spirits and mortals, questions relative to the proper conditions of

the circle for the best results will be first in order, such as: Are we seated right? Shall we sing? Shall we converse? and any other of like nature, bearing in mind that the question must be a simple and not a compound one; for instance, you can ask: "Shall we sing?" but not "Shall we sing or converse?" as the latter cannot be answered by a code of signals that indicate only Yes, No, and Doubtful. Names, dates and messages may be obtained by some one of the circle repeating aloud the letters of the alphabet and the numerals, and noting at which a rap or a tip of the table occurs. If neither raps nor tips can be produced, the letter or figure is sometimes indicated by an involuntary movement of the hand.

7. Communication having been established, the form of mediumship to which each person is best adapted will be made known by the spirits in control of the circle, and directions given for further development.

8. The length of time the sitting is to be held on each evening will depend, when communication with the spirits is impossible, upon the condition and disposition of the sitters; and when communication is possible, upon direction of spirits having the circle in charge. But in no case should it be continued after a sense of weariness is felt. This, however, should be distinguished from that of drowsiness, as spirit influence may be mistaken for the latter. Actual bodily fatigue from too long sitting exhausts all, and may, and most frequently does, neutralize all advance that has been made during the

evening; therefore when it appears, the sitting should terminate.

9. The chief qualifications for every one who investigates Spiritualism, either in a private circle of their own or in a public one, are: patience, perseverance, and a disposition to recognize a truth and freely admit it to be one when convinced that it is. The latter is of special importance and value, and does more to aid the spirit than we of earth can possibly realize; whereas, on the other hand, a stupid silence, or what might be termed a willful selfishness in this respect, dampens their ardor and retards their work.

10. The number of sittings to be held before satisfactory results are obtained is variable; the first, second or third may witness them, or it may be very many will be called for before their attainment. One thing must be borne in mind: the absence of visible results is no proof that no advance has been made. Often most is done when the least is evident to any of our senses. Much has to be done by the spirit operators—doubtless much severe toil engaged in by them—before the object of your meeting is accomplished. They are the workers; you simply wait to receive the inestimable blessings that through their labors are bestowed upon you. Therefore it is not unreasonable to ask that you bring to each session of your circle the requisites above mentioned: patience, perseverance and recognition.