



1. Joan Crawford's bridal gown is wrong on either of two counts

2. Joan's hostess was at fault here, says Mrs. Post

3. Connie should have told a white lie

EMILY POST TELLS WHAT'S WRONG WITH

Movie Manners



From our foremost authority on etiquette—a fascinating analysis of Hollywood's social blunders

BY NANETTE KUTNER

ARE movie manners mostly wrong? I never thought so, but, after listening to Emily Post, foremost arbiter of good taste, whose blue book of "Etiquette" in 1938, its sixteenth year, has sold over eighty thousand copies, I have definitely changed my mind.

Because Hollywood has become, more and more, the model which America uses as the pattern for its own behavior, PHOTOPLAY persuaded Mrs. Post to give us a few much-needed pointers, by explaining how Hollywood and its pictures err in the matter of good manners.

Mrs. Post rightly feels that, during the past ten years, motion pictures have vastly improved. "In sound effects, in photography, in stories and dialogue and acting, but," she observes, "the ac-

curacy of the society snobs often appears to be neglected. We see drawing rooms so ridiculously large they can only be likened to the Grand Central Terminal. We hear conversation that no one to the 'manor' born would dream of using."

According to Mrs. Post, the worst offense committed against good manners is that of pretentiousness. She says, "Good manners are the outward expression of an inward grace. You can't get them any other way. Probably that is why Shirley Temple, in that very first feature picture of hers, had charm that few can equal."

Sometimes the mistakes Hollywood makes are not too serious, but usually they are ludicrous, and far too often they set bad examples for millions of ardent movie-goers. So, whether or not you think that your own manners or those of Hollywood could stand some improvement, we think it will pay you to hear what Mrs. Post has to say.

"FOR example, in 'The Cowboy and the Lady,' someone talks about the 'second butler.' Evidently the dialogue writers didn't stop to think that a butler is like the captain of a ship. There can be only one captain; likewise, there can be only one butler. You can have as many footmen as you wish, but only one butler.

"Incidentally, I think the best screen butlers are those played by Eric Blare and Alan Mowbray. And, granting due respect to William Powell, whom I consider a fine actor, no persons of position could employ a mustachioed butler.

"Nor does a maid, like the one Loreta Young plays in 'Private Numbers,' wear her curls flying. She keeps her hair very short, smooth, neat. Besides, no lady's maid ever wears a cap and, unless she is obviously English, no waitress or parlor maid wears one."

Mrs. Post paused for breath and I handed her a batch of stills and candid shots chosen at random from the files of PHOTOPLAY. She studied each, in turn. These were her criticisms.

Number One was the wedding scene from "The Shining Hour." Mrs. Post said that Joan Crawford's bridal gown was wrong on either of two counts.

"If this is her first marriage she ought not to be wearing colored flowers; a maiden should be dressed in pure white. On the other hand, if this is her second marriage, the colored flowers are appropriate, but her veil is out of place. Only at her first wedding may a bride wear a veil."

Number Two, also from "The Shining Hour," shows Miss Crawford drinking tea and balancing a plate of cake upon her lap.

Says Mrs. Post, "This is not the fault of Miss Crawford. When serving afternoon tea little individual tables should be placed next to the guests to hold plates or ash trays. The hostess who expects her guest to balance things on her knees should choose her friends in the circus rather than in society! Also, Miss Crawford was certainly made to appear inordinately hungry by the huge chunk of cake wiped upon her. At tea time a hostess serves only the daintiest of sandwiches and cakes."

Mrs. Post considers Constance Bennett one of the best-dressed women on the screen.



13. Another reprehensible Hollywood custom

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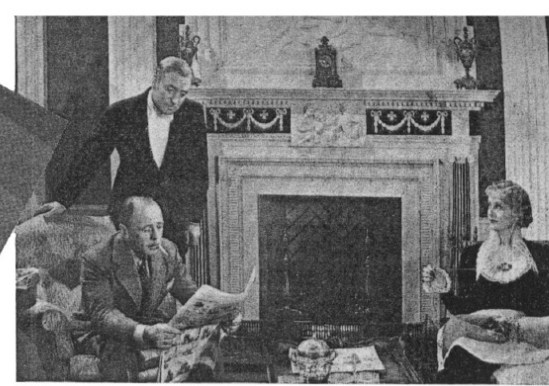
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4. Mrs. Zanuck commits a faux pas



5. A social pariah—that stick



6. Either Alan Mowbray or Roland Young is wrong here

"When she plays an actress she looks like an actress and when she plays a lady, she looks the part. But," emphasized Mrs. Post, "rather than seem as bored as she appears in Picture Number Three (see illustration), Miss Bennett would be far less rude if she composed a white lie and told her partner that she couldn't dance because she'd hurt her neck!"

Number Four was a candid shot of Mr. and Mrs. Darryl Zanuck going to a preview. The spectators are dressed for midsummer weather and so is Mr. Zanuck; but Mrs. Zanuck, in contrast to her light dress and open-toed sandals (which, Mrs. Post claims, are only suitable at a beach) is wearing a heavy white cape.

"If the weather is hot," Mrs. Post said, "heavy furs lose their beauty because of their distressing unsuitability.

"Vulgar clothes are always those that are too elaborate for the occasion. I am told that at a California tennis tournament one important star wore ermine and another, a silver fox coat, while the general display of jewels would have dimmed those in the windows of Cartier. The well-bred woman does not wear too many jewels in public places, not only because public display is considered bad taste, but it is also an unfair temptation to a potential thief.

"Riding habits, no matter whose, both on the screen and off, are always the test of tests. There is no halfway about them: they are right or they, like spelling, are completely wrong. Anything suggesting slant pockets, or eccentric cuffs or lapels, or a pinched-in waist is taboo.



7. A social error many men are guilty of...



8. Hat off when you kiss your mother-in-law, Gene

12. Wrong for a "formal table"

11. The informality of this scene makes it okay



10. "Typically Hollywood"

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Emily Post Tells What's Wrong with Movie Manners

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A woman's habit should resemble men's clothes, those of the conservative Bond Street variety.

"When it comes to riding boots, Hollywood and a great many other places go haywire. They should be low-heeled, with a straight line from the heel to the back of the top. They should not be fancy in shape. There should be nothing Mexican or Spanish about them. Hollywood should remember that correct riding clothes are not fashion but form.

"Even worse than the boots is the tendency of women to wear curls flying over their faces. Not a vestige of hair should be brought over on the cheeks. In fact, a hunting hair net should be worn. If a woman feels she has to wear curls, she can sit in a boat, but she must stay off a horse!

"My favorite dancer is Fred Astaire. His clothes, off the screen, are, I've heard, correct. So why, in Picture Five, does he permit someone to present him carrying that social pariah... an ebony stick with an ivory top. After all, he is meant to represent a gentleman. His stick should have been plain Malacca.

"In Picture Six, from 'Topper,' the clock on the mantel points to twenty-five minutes past ten. If this means morning, then Alan Mowbray is wrong. In the early morning a butler wears an ordinary sack suit with a dark, inconspicuous tie. For luncheon, or earlier, if he is on duty at the door, he wears black trousers with gray stripes, a double-breasted high-cut black waistcoat and black swallow-tailed coat without satin on the revers, a white stiff-bosomed shirt with standing collar and a black four-in-hand tie. However, if this is at night, then Roland Young is wrong, for he wears tweeds.

"Picture Seven points up a social error that many men may be guilty of... that of puffing smoke into one's partner's face.

"In Number Eight it would have been better had Gene Raymond introduced his hat when greeting his mother-in-law. And Dolores Del Rio's make-up is decidedly an exhibition in Nine. Applying make-up is all right so long as one does it privately or unobtrusively, but a public performance is something else.

"NUMBER TEN seems to be typically Hollywood. Walter Wanger is dressed in a dinner coat suitable for winter wear; Richard Bennett's clothes are correct only for midsummer; Gilbert Roland isn't dressed at all; and Constance Bennett wears a heavy winter fur coat with a white hat and those beach sandals with protruding bare toes!

"Number Eleven shows Mr. Darryl Zanuck and party with their elbows sprawled upon the table. Everyone will expect me to disapprove of this, but I don't! There is no food on the table. They are evidently enjoying conversation. There is nothing formal about it... so elbows are all right.

"Twelve is a dining table of one of our stars. Evidently the picture was originally captioned as 'a formal table.' I take it that it was intended as such. So the butter plates should have been formal. No butter is ever served at a formal dinner, or, for that matter, can a bare table be considered suitable. A damask cloth would have been the proper thing. On the other hand, as a supper table, the layout is correct.

"In Thirteen the seating arrangement could be improved. Husbands and

wives should never sit together. Just look at poor Gene Raymond, way at the end, with no one on his right to speak to.

"In pictures I notice they have trouble when they serve dinners for eight. To avoid having either two ladies or two gentlemen seated at the head and foot of the table, the hostess should relinquish her place to the guest of honor. She should sit at his right. The host keeps his place.

"And I have been told by visiting foreigners that there is one Hollywood custom that has given all America an illiterate reputation. That is the impulse of every new-rich hostess to have herself served first. There is no excuse for the impoliteness of this behavior. The custom goes back to the Borgias, when hosts invited enemies to their tables with the full intention of poisoning them. I am sure this is not the habit of Hollywood stars, no matter how bitter their professional rivalry.

"Speaking of foreigners reminds me of another mistake one often sees and that is the European gentleman clicking his heels and kissing our heroine's hand. In society only the hands of married women are kissed... never those of single girls.

"At one time Hollywood did ask for instruction in etiquette," Mrs. Post said. With a reminiscent smile, she told me the story of Edward C. Potter.

It was in the days before the smartest. Edward C. Potter was one of the talkies in Hollywood. A well-known author in Hollywood suggested that his company persuade Mr. Potter to lend his talents to the screen. So they telegraphed a liberal offer, which Mr. Potter was tempted to accept. And he departed for the coast.

Arriving, he was given a royal welcome and everything went smoothly until they were ready to shoot the first scene of his first picture. He was supposed to be the host at a dinner party.

Mr. Potter went forward, offering his arm to the guest of honor. Thereupon, the directors stopped him and said the hostess must lead the way.

"But," protested Mr. Potter, "they don't behave like that in any society in the world. In Paris, in Newport, London or New York, the host leads with the woman guest of honor."

But the director was not content with Mr. Potter's opinion. The entire production was held up while he telephoned Douglas Fairbanks in order to find out what he did. Fairbanks was out, but his valet obligingly condescended to come to the studio and tell them how things were done at Pick-fair. The valet said that not only did Mr. Fairbanks give his arm to Mrs. Fairbanks, but, after going into dinner first, they always sat next to each other. This was enough for Mr. Potter. He returned to New York.

"Then, there was young Craig Biddle," Mrs. Post said. "He also was imported to portray the society man. The scenario read that he was to pay a call upon the girl he loved. The director ordered him to slap the butler on the back, pause in front of the hall mirror and rearrange his tie. Mr. Biddle, on the grounds that he never acted that way, refused to do this. The director insisted, so Mr. Biddle, like Mr. Potter, was sent home.

"That continual sneaking habit of slapping everyone on the back is utterly impossible. Men in society never do that sort of thing.

"Of course, there are certain stars I like very much," Mrs. Post admitted. "I go to see any picture that presents Claudette Colbert, Bette Davis or Margaret Sullavan.

"I also like Spencer Tracy, Walter Huston, Gary Cooper, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Ronald Colman... sometimes, and Herbert Marshall's voice.

"I like Carole Lombard when she doesn't yell or make a face as she opens her mouth.

"And now," Mrs. Post leaned back, "I hope I've answered enough questions for you."

"All but one," I assured her. "And what might that be?"

"English, pure and simple."

Mrs. Post laughed. "I'm afraid to speak about that, for I'm really a kind person. I don't like to hurt people's feelings. But it is true that your scenic designer may furnish a faultless set, a star's gown may be flawless... everything can look like society... but talking is the dead give-away."

And because this fault, so glaring, can so easily be corrected, I prevailed upon Mrs. Post to give us part of her preferred list of English "don'ts."

Both Mrs. Post and PHOTOPLAY hope these observations will be accepted in the spirit in which they are given... as constructive criticism, and that they will help not only Hollywood production, but you, also, in your everyday life. Here they are:

- | DONT SAY: | SAY: |
|--|--|
| automobile | automobile |
| really secretary | really secretary |
| secretary (unless you're English) | |
| aviator eggst | aviator egg |
| Muhrem col yum | Marie column |
| for mid able cult your at-all | formidable culttha a-tall |
| ray-tion (rash) to-may-to mayonnaise vally | ration (rash) to ma (t) mai-onnaise (my) valet |
| attended wealthy brainy | valet went to rich |
| "Pardon me" | "I beg your pardon" or "Excuse me" |
| lovely food | "How do you do?" |
| "Charmed" or "Pleased to meet you" | "She wears lovely clothes" or "She dresses well" |
| a stylish dresser | formal clothes man |
| | a best or intimate friend |
| | a party curtains big house |
| | I remember ask |
| | "Let me help you!" |
| | talk |
| | I suppose |

"That's about all," said Mrs. Post, re-reading the list. "Except you might add that if the producers would only realize what one drop of ink will do to a glass of water, they could easily see how seemingly unimportant trifles can mar what might have been a great picture!"

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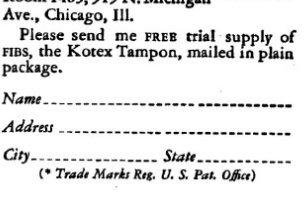
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