

"ASTRA" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

[Correspondents seeking information in this department should address their queries to "Astra," Progress, St. John.]

When I opened my batch of letters this morning the first one I lighted upon was an exceedingly disagreeable epistle indeed—but then it was not from a girl—bless you, no! the dear little souls nearly always write me such pleasant appreciative letters that to read them is a refreshment of spirit. But this letter was from a man, and he jumped on me with both feet, as the boys say. I don't feel very well this morning, anyway.

I believe I have indigestion or something, and I know I am not feeling at all good-natured, so I read that letter wrathfully, and then—as it did not contain a single question, or anything else but cheek, I put it in the waste basket, and went on with my work. The next two letters completely restored my good temper; they were so bright, so witty, and so amusing. Here is the first one, which I think the writer meant me to insert, as she modestly requests me to correct all errors. That will be easy, for I have not found any errors yet, and I only wish I could insert the other, too, but as some of the questions are of a private nature, I must refrain. Susan, of Wood stock, says:

"In looking over PROGRESS as usual I, and after enjoying John's description of Mrs. Smith's party, the thought came to me, what a sad fact it was that out of every brilliant and beautiful assembly a few will always make others blush for them. I have not travelled much, and have only just begun to go to parties, because I am young, but O, Astra! Astra! Tell me O, Astra! where did the fashion of 'cut low' dresses come from? I have seen the picture of 'Good Queen Bess' as she was called, in a high dress, but then perhaps, she was a skinny Queen! If so let us pray:

God give us a skinny queen! God give all the women in authority scrawny necks. Let the W. C. T. U. and the S. P. C. A. make it a subject of prayer.

Poor girls! Their dear, dear mamma—not my mamma—likes them to freeze and be fashionable. The poet Pope says:

Want of decency is want of sense.

Now, girls, let us be reformers! Let us have some backbone, and let us keep it covered, Astra! I hope I have not been too severe, but really I am afraid some will catch their death, instead of a husband this winter. Married ladies I notice, look better, or as well with their high dresses. I wonder if their husbands tell them how to dress? I would like to hear some man's opinion on the subject—some man—not a silly dude. SUSAN.

Really Susan, you have not left me anything to say! your lever letter clever the whole ground, only this—I know for a positive fact, that most men object strenuously to their wives exposing even a little, of their necks and arms, they like to see others in décolleté dresses apparently, but not their own, and this, I think, is an excellent test of their real opinion of the fashion. Let fashion be tempered with modesty, say I. Suppose we ask some men to give us their ideas on the subject? It ought to be a very interesting one to us all.

L'ANE DE BURIDAN, St. John. —English next time, please, because I know the printers will murder your *nom de guerre* and small blame to them! I enjoyed your bright letter very much.

(1) It would not be necessary for the lady to send her card, in the case you mention, though of course, she could do so if she chose; but it would be proper for the daughter to make her excuses to the hostess, and express her regret at being unable to come.

(2) If you want my candid opinion of that young man, here it is. I think him a mean cad. He throws the entire responsibility upon you, so that whatever may happen he shall be blameless, and perfectly free to choose another—should he please to do so. Then the cool indifference with which he makes his request is unpardonable, and the injunction to absolute secrecy insulting. It looks as if he were ashamed of you. Have nothing to do with him. Send him about his business at once. At least that is what I should do.

(3) The lady should precede the gentleman of course, unless he is old, and she should show him the respect of standing back, though it is not at all likely he will permit her to follow him, even in that case, for you know a man very rarely cares to be considered old before he is 90.

(4) Well, I don't know why it should be, I am sure, and it is certainly very unkind of Dame Nature to be so unfair with her favors, but still there are remedies. You need not be afraid of my recommending "chemicals or such like cure." Rubbing, or rather massage, is the thing for you, and the "how of it" is this. Rub with vaseline, or better still, sweet oil, for ten or fifteen minutes, every night before going to bed. Rub in a circular direction, and stroke upward. Do not be rough, work very gently. Such treatment has been known to make a difference of two inches in chest measurement, in the short space of

one month. Of course wash the oil off in the morning, with warm water. You need never be afraid of my "giving the girls away by publishing awkward questions." It is impossible to answer the same week that I receive the queries.

PERPLEXED, Charlottetown.—You have my sincere sympathy, and the one piece of advice I can give you is the same that I should apply to myself. Never, under any circumstances, marry a man unless you love him with your whole heart, and love only him. Otherwise I see no prospect of happiness before you, and worse than that

A bashful man is nearly always a true good fellow, though his shyness places him at a disadvantage. Note carefully whether your friend is affected in the same manner in the society of other girls, and if not, I think you may fairly conclude that he is in love with you. No, six months is not long enough to enable a really shy man to overcome his timidity; it sometimes lasts all his life, and probably he endures agonies of shyness in your presence, and is furious with himself for lacking courage to speak to you. Can't you give him a little quiet encouragement. ASTRA.

An Imperial Romance.

The Countess Thun-Koller, whose death at an advanced age took place at Venice a few days ago, was perhaps the most beautiful woman of her time. But in addition to every charm of face and figure, nature had gifted her with vivacity, wit, and conversational powers of a very rare order. Many of the most noted men of her day, princes and monarchs, sought her hand, and there was at one time every probability that the Emperor William would be the favored suitor. State considerations, however, interferred; but to his dying day the aged Kaiser was advised periodically of the Countess' welfare, and among the packet of letters which, by her express

desire, was interred with her, is one of the last epistles which the monogenarian monarch penned.—*Philadelphia Record*.

The Kind he Meant.

Dearest—"How do you like my cake, John?"
John—"Excellent, dearest. It reminds me of a cake I had at the best hotel in Bristol."

"O, John! you flatter me. Hotels have such good food, you know."
"Yes, dearest. The particular cake I speak of was a cake of soap, and of the consistency of a piece of brick."—*Ex.*



STUDY.

Firefly Jewels.

The ladies of Chihuahua and Zacatas have a habit of wearing fireflies for jewelry. The legs of the flies are shaped like hooks, and they appear to have been formed expressly in the interest of the ladies. These living diamonds sparkle and shine more than any of the diamonds of Africa or South America, for the fireflies in that part of the world have a rare brilliancy never witnessed in the North. They will almost do for a lantern on a dark night so beautiful and strong is the light they give to the world. The habit of wearing fireflies is indulged in by the ladies of the poorer classes to a large extent, and even the society ladies often pick up the shining brownies and fasten them in the hair just as a girl will gather wild flowers for a similar purpose.

Mad People's Thumbs.

A physician in charge of a well-known asylum for the care of the insane recently said to the writer:

"There is one infallible test either for the approach or the presence of lunacy.

"If the person whose case is to be examined is seen to make no use of his thumb, if he lets it stand out at right angles from the hand, and employs it neither in salutation, writing, nor any other manual exercise, you may set it down as a fact that that person's mental balance is gone.

"He or she may converse intelligently, may in every respect be guarding the secret of a mind diseased with the utmost care and cunning, but the tell-tale thumb will infallibly betray the lurking madness concealed behind a plausible demeanor."

A Compliment.

Old Bachelor—"Now, Arthur, suppose I should give you this nice red book, what would you say?"

Arthur—"I should say you weren't half so stingy as sister said you were."

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Wheat has an ash of 17.7 parts.

Flour has an ash of 4.1 parts,—an impoverishment of over three-quarters.

Wheat has 8.2 parts of Phosphoric Acid.

Flour, 2.1 parts of Phosphoric Acid,—an impoverishment of about three-quarters.

Wheat has 0.6 Lime and 0.8 Soda.

Flour 0.1 Lime and 0.1 Soda,—an impoverishment of about five-sixths Lime and Soda each.

Wheat has Sulphur 1.5; Flour has no Sulphur.

Wheat has Sulphuric Acid 0.5; Flour has no Sulphuric Acid.

Wheat has Silica 0.3; Flour no Silica.

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