

### "ASTRA" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

Correspondents seeking information in this department should address their queries to "Astra," Room 208, St. John.

Suppose you write a sort of memorial to the editor, girls, and ask him please to publish an extra sheet some time soon, and give it all to us, so we can catch up with our work for once, and I can draw a long breath and say "there are all of them." I like the man in "the Forty Thieves?" I have no doubt that we could easily fill up the entire sheet, and it would be such a comfort to me to know that everyone had received their answers instead of watching and waiting for the letter that never seems to come. Try the experiment, and send him a circular, and though he is far from being susceptible to feminine charms, I think a continued effort might carry the fortress.

LUCILLE, Nova Scotia.—Are you quite tired out, Lucille, waiting for your answers? I am afraid so; but I wish you could see my desk, it is getting to be a regular dead letter office, and I feel like a "haunted woman." I am so glad to hear that you are better. How fond you seem to be of sleigh driving. I do hope for your sake the sleighing will last a long time. Did you ever go tobogganing? I don't mean down a toboggan slide, but a real hill. I think that is my idea of winter sport. I hope you will be quite well very soon. I must tell you how much I enjoyed your letter of February 20th! Do you understand? It was so bright and interesting and readable. Geoffrey never misses reading anything you write, and he thought so too. You were perfectly right about the address of the letter, and the reasons you gave were just those I should have given myself; but yet it is such a very common error, that opinions differ as to its being an error at all. I was glad to hear about that boy, I thought there must be some reason for his being so nice, and now I understand it. I am afraid you get a little blue, sometimes, don't you? I suppose it is only natural, but it is too bad, when the spring comes you will be as happy as a bird again, I hope. It was great fun about the man who wrote. I am always glad to hear from you, and I only wish I could give you more time.

ROLLING STONE, St. John.—You little know what a sympathetic chord you have touched. How I wish I knew of anything that would really cure, or even permanently relieve those most cruel thorns in the flesh! Would not I use it myself, and publish it to the whole suffering world? I never obtained as much ease from anything, as Wizard Oil. Apply it regularly every day, and it will give you at least a little comfort. The stamped envelope or wrapper is to insure the safe return of your MS., as you would not want to lose it, and the editor cannot be expected to provide stamps to return rejected MS. In case it should be accepted, the editor will write and tell you so all the sooner, if he has your envelope at hand, all ready stamped and addressed. It is an invariable rule, I know, so, there must be some excellent reason for it. Your second question I cannot answer for the best of reasons—I do not know. In fact I know very little indeed about the paper outside of my own department. I had not the least intention of telling you it was no concern of yours, I can assure you, as I know people nearly always have some good reason for asking any particular question, and I would oblige you if I knew anything about the matter. No! I do not think I would advise you to stop as it is good practice. Your questions were no trouble at all.

CONSTANCE, Moncton.—(1) My dear, I think it is a great pity for a girl of fifteen to flirt at all! It is such a mistake for school girls to be too precocious, and no sensible man or woman could admire them for it, and I am sure, the very boys they flirt with, laugh at them. (2) I scarcely think so, almost the only cure for those troublesome blackheads is to squeeze them out; then bath the face with soda and water, baking soda. The Turkish bath, and the use of good soap on the face once a day would prevent them from growing again once they are removed. (3) Light the lamp, the other would be sad English because you know it is not a light until it has been lighted.

HOUSEKEEPER, St. John.—Now I do not want to seem mean, my dear "Housekeeper," yet business is business, and you really must put a two cent stamp on your letter when you write to me, or else two ones. We had to pay two cents before we could get your letter out of the post office as it bore the unpleasant legend, "Insufficiently prepaid." Of course it did come out of my pocket, and I do not think it will seriously embarrass Progress financially, but still it is hard to be obliged to pay for letters, though I am quite sure you were not aware that two cents would be necessary. Your suggestion is a very good one I think, and as I thought your letter should best speak for itself, I have great pleasure in publishing it. I do not think that it is at all outside of my column, as all that interests our sex is entitled to a place here.

MY DEAR ASTRA: I have been for a long time trying to write to you on a subject which I am sure you will take an interest in. I was thinking it would be a grand idea if some energetic lady, say, for instance, Lady Titley, would start a cooking school in St. John. I am sure you will agree with me that it would be a great advantage to have such an establishment. I know that this is a question outside your column, but I don't think you would mind suggesting it to your readers. If you do, I would be forever obliged to you. Hoping that you will comply with my request.

Yours in trouble,  
St. John.  
HOUSEKEEPER.

Why are you in trouble, Housekeeper? and do you think the cooking-school would help you out? Do you know that I have the greatest faith myself in a good cooking book, and practice; though, of course, the latter is sometimes rather expensive.

HOUSEWIFE, Moncton.—My dear Housewife let us shake hands, and metaphorically at least, embrace each other. I don't know either, though I have given the matter a great deal of thought; so to you belongs the distinction of having utterly routed "Astra" in the fastness of her own stronghold. I confess myself beaten, and so, as I cannot answer the question myself, I hope you will not mind my publishing

your letter, in the hope that someone else can throw a little light on the subject.

DEAR ASTRA: I am married woman with a family, and am greatly puzzled with the problem of how to get any spare time to myself for a little pleasure. Looking over the papers I see that the Moncton ladies have a great deal of time to spend in lecturing on the evils of intemperance, and running down the city council. Now, the questions troubling me are, who puts their children to bed, and who does the house-keeping? If you can answer these questions satisfactorily I will be greatly obliged.

Moncton. Yours,  
HOUSEWIFE.

As for putting the children to bed, Housewife, I think I can easily answer that question. The truth is that they—I mean they are not—well, Housewife, if I really must tell you, it is the same reason that prevented Mrs. Alfred Lammie in *Our Mutual Friend* from looking at her baby—she hadn't any to look at; and if I am correctly informed the ladies referred to in your bright little city, are not troubled in that way either. So, they are enabled to devote a great deal of attention to municipal affairs in general, and the city council in particular, that would otherwise be consumed in administering soothing syrups and darning small socks.

ANGEL, St. John.—Your writing looks very familiar, but still girls write so much alike now that it is very hard to tell. (1) The young lady need not have said anything at all, as it would have been rather difficult to do so before others, she should have simply unwound the encroaching arm, very firmly, and then pushed it resolutely away. If she could do so unobserved, she might say in a low tone, "I think you are forgetting yourself." And I will venture to say that the offence will not be repeated. (2) Well, yes! I think so, as long as they are not silly ones, and they are sometimes much prettier and more expressive than the real names. Your own name is lovely, though, and I wonder you do not use it. I never made a study of handwriting, and so, I cannot tell anything about it except in a very general way. Yours is very pretty indeed, and looks to me as if you might possess a very frank open, nature. This is the first, but I hope it will not be the last time, you will write to me.

MOO, Moncton.—Did I not hear from you once before? I think I remember your funny, pretty name? It really depends upon the degree of intimacy between the young lady, and gentleman. If they know each other at all well, there is nothing in the least improper or even out of the way, in her accepting such trifling attention. It would be perfectly right to say "thank you" and accept, and it would also be quite right for the gentleman to offer. So make your mind perfectly easy, my dear. If you are the original "Moo" I am glad to hear from you again, and even if you are not, I am still glad, for I like your name.

KITTIE AND MOLLY.—The idea of maidenly shyness preventing you from writing to me, is certainly refreshing! Why in the world should you be shy of me? Of course I will interest myself in your letter, I love roses, and I fancy you a very sweet pair of twin buds. Perhaps you are two saucy boys, but still I don't think you are. I am glad you are so much interested in our "Talks;" the girls all help me a great deal, by their interest, without which our column could never be a success. The pen picture is scarcely correct, because in the first place I hardly ever write in the evening, and when I do, Geoffrey is never around. In the second, I don't use the davenport, which is far too good for my work. I use a large old table piled with papers, and terribly untidy. In the third, Geoffrey never dozes; he is the most wide-awake mortal you ever saw. But the rest is correct. Do you know that it is very difficult to prescribe a course of study for anyone, especially one you do not know? But still, if you read the best magazines and Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Lever, Bulmer and Shakespeare, you will have your minds pretty well stored. History and travels also, as they broaden as well as cultivate the mind. What wonderful girls you are to be anxious to pursue your studies even after leaving school. Ouida has written some wonderfully clever books, but on the whole I would not recommend her. No I do not approve of them at all, I think them decidedly vulgar. No I am not by any means inclined to believe that you and I and all our friends are descended from apes, it would be too humiliating. Try *The Youth's Companion*, Boston, but of course I could scarcely judge without seeing them. Thank you for your kind interest in Geoffrey. Your letter was not too long at all. Write again.

THE MISSES SUSAN BROWN, St. John.—You were quite right, the letter must have gone astray as I never received one with the above signature before. What would you think of chess? It is just suited for two, and I believe most interesting. I tried to learn it once but had not enough time to devote to it. Another very nice game for two is ecca or hoppy, and it is very easy and very absorbing. (2) It is much more correct for the lady to take the gentleman's arm, but I have heard men say that in a case where a lady really needs support, such as walking on ice, they can really help her much better by using their strength to hold her, than allowing her to depend on her own feeble hand to hold their arm. (3) I really do not know what you could say in such a case! In fact it would be impossible to say anything that would not offend Number One. You must accept whichever one speaks first. (4) Two dances would be sufficient. (5) *Backlog Studies* by Charles Dudley Warner, if you mean to read aloud. Also some of *Mark Twain's* sketches, or a short story or poem by Rudyard Kipling would be suitable.

ASTRA.

A Soft Night Light.

In households where there are young children a softened night light is indispensable. Very pretty ones are made, but an inexpensive substitute can be contrived by any one. A piece of candle, weighted so as to float upright in a tumbler partly filled with water, will last for several hours. Such an arrangement that can be improvised at a moment's notice in time of need is worth remembering about.

### SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

Specially Prepared from Practical Tests for the Lady Readers of "Progress."

"In compelling man to eat that he may live, nature gives appetite to invite him, and pleasure to reward him."—*Gastronomy as a Fine Art.*

Cooking is an art—a fine art—and cannot be learnt in a day, nor can it be learnt by simply reading a book on the subject. The study of cooking must be combined with practice. One important practice is to acquire the knowledge of varying receipts as occasion may require as it would be impossible in a newspaper to give receipts, one adapted to a family of two, another for one of six, and another of twelve persons. The principle of a receipt is the thing to grasp. Economy is not simply buying cheap things out of which to make dishes. It is the art of extracting the greatest amount of nourishment out of the various materials used. For instance, poor people will buy peas to make soup; and having boiled them in some water, with a piece of bacon, will strain it off, and for want of knowledge, throw away the peas, thereby losing half the nourishment. A good cook would rub all the peas through a sieve, thus making what the French cooks call a *purée* which is twice as nourishing and twice as nice. So in

Making Tea.

Inexperienced cooks do not know that water can be boiled too much to be fit for this purpose, and in putting on a kettle of water to make tea would most likely take the water out of the hot water tap instead of the cold, or use the water that has been boiling more or less in the kettle all day, and which has become as "flat as dish water." To prove this, let any one experiment by making a cup of tea with long boiled water and note the difference. The rule for making tea is to allow one teaspoonful of tea for each cup and one for the pot. Let it draw for from six to ten minutes, and if it is necessary to keep it any length of time, strain it off from the leaves or else it will have a bitter taste and be injurious.

Making Things Look White.

In boiling fish it should be remembered that the coloring matter in fish is affected and partially dissolved by acids. Suppose you are going to boil a chicken halibut. Before putting it into the fish kettle, rub the white side of it with a slice of lemon. This will render the fish beautifully white when taken out, but care must be taken to remove the sum floating on the top of the water first or it will settle on the fish and destroy, not only the appearance, but even the flavor. So, in boiling a leg of mutton or fowls, if the sum is not frequently removed, it will spoil the appearance of the joint. For this reason also good cooks will put a few drops of vinegar into the water in which they poach eggs. It makes the eggs look whiter. The coloring matter mixed in with eggs is more soluble in boiling water slightly acid than in ordinary water, and consequently, poached eggs treated like this present that snowy appearance that renders them appetizing—not that they taste any better, but that the palate is affected through the eye.

To Truss a Fowl—Roast.

They are usually bought ready plucked. Cut off the neck, and fold the skin over the back. Cut off the feet, bend the legs down and press them close to the sides, and down to the back. Fasten in this position with a skewer, and tie a string across the tops of both legs to keep them together. Stuff with sausage meat mixed with fresh soft bread crumbs. While roasting, baste often with butter or dripping, and sprinkle with flour some minutes before serving to make it look brown and frothy. Time to roast  $\frac{3}{4}$  to one hour.

Veal.

Veal is now quite plentiful in the market. Many people will not eat veal in any shape, but if care is taken in buying and cooking it, no one need be afraid to eat it. There is no meat more generally useful for making soups and gravies, and there is nothing nicer in its way than a veal cutlet breaded served with tomato sauce. To give an idea of the many uses to which veal can be put, I have to say that in a work before me there are no less than two hundred and sixty-eight ways of dressing it. I have already given in a former letter some instructions as to roasting veal, and I will now tell

How to Choose Veal.

The flesh of veal ought to be white, approaching to pink, with firm fat. It is best when the animal is from two to three months old. It should not be too large or it will be coarse and hard. The vein in the shoulder should be of a bright red, and the kidneys should be covered with fat. If the flesh be clammy and discolored by spots of various hues or if it is a dark pink color, it is unfit for use.

M. Ude says: "It is necessary to observe that the veal you intend to serve must be very white and fat; it is certain that white veal is more healthy than common veal. Red veal will disorder a great many stomachs; white veal never does."

Veal Cutlets.

They may be cut from the fore part of the loin—that is the ribs, or from the leg. The loin is usually made into chops or roasted. If from the leg or fillet, cut them half an inch thick, and shape them like a small steak. Dip them in beaten egg and then in brown, crisp, bread crumbs—see breading, February 13th—and fry in hot lard or dripping.

Tripe.

It is both nutritious and of easy digestion. It is usually sold ready prepared for dressing. The honey-comb part is generally preferred. It may be dressed in various ways, the most usual of which is to boil it still tender and serve with white mint sauce. The Carleton club, (London), has a famous specialty of broiled honey-comb tripe, and a club not so far away has fried tripe in batter which seems to be very well liked. This is how it is done.

Batter for Frying.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cupful of milk.  
1 egg.  
2 tablespoonfuls of melted butter.  
1 teaspoonful of syrup or molasses.  
1 cupful of flour.  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoonful of baking powder.

Put all in a pan together, the flour last

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with the powder in it, a pinch of salt, and work them together with a spoon. It should be a batter that is thin enough to coat the article dipped in it without seeming to make it all dough when fried. Cut the tripe into pieces about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches square, dip them into the batter and fry in a kettle or pan of hot lard. The same batter can be used for frying all kinds of fritters.

Queen Fritters—Also Called "Spanish Puffs" and "Belgians Softies."

$\frac{1}{2}$  pint water—a coffee cupful.  
2 ounces of butter—size of 2 eggs.  
4 ounces of flour—large cupful.  
3 eggs.

Set the water on to boil in a little saucepan and the butter in it. Stir in the flour all at once, and work the paste thus made with a spoon till smooth and well cooked. Take it from the fire and work in the eggs one at a time, beating in one well before adding another, and when all are in beat the mixture thoroughly against the side of the saucepan. Make some lard hot. It will take half a saucepanful. Drop pieces of the batter about as large as eggs and watch them swell and expand in the hot lard and become hollow round, and light. Only 4 or 5 can be tried at a time, because they need lots of room. Dished in a heap on a doily, they make a very pretty dish. The lard used need not be wasted. See previous remarks on trying in deep fat, Progress, Feb. 13th.

A Dish of Cold Meat

looks very much more inviting when the meat is thinly sliced with a knife that is ground more than once a year, and laid in neat order on a platter with a few sprigs of parsley or cress, and a dish of beets in vinegar set near, than when the misspoken lump is set on the table as it is, for some one to carve in pain and tribulation.

A Discovery.

When ordering fish this week I had occasion to step behind the counter to talk with the proprietor. He was opening herrings and throwing the rows away with the offal, because, he said, "nobody cares for them." In the dead season you will see the same waste of the best part of the fish going on every day, while in New York the rows are taken out and sold at a high price, and in some cases the rowless fish shipped to Montreal and other places where "nobody cares for them."

How to Get a Spring Bonnet a la Diplomate.

The lady who is looking forward to having a new spring bonnet, and wondering how she can best please her husband, can profit by the above discovery. Let her ask her fishmonger to save her a few soft rows of the herring, and having got them, prepare as follows, and place them before her "lord and master" for breakfast.

Wash the rows, sprinkle salt and pepper over them, dredge in flour and fry a nice golden brown. Serve with tomato sauce. If this does not have the desired effect, continue practicing the receipts in this column and your object will be attained.

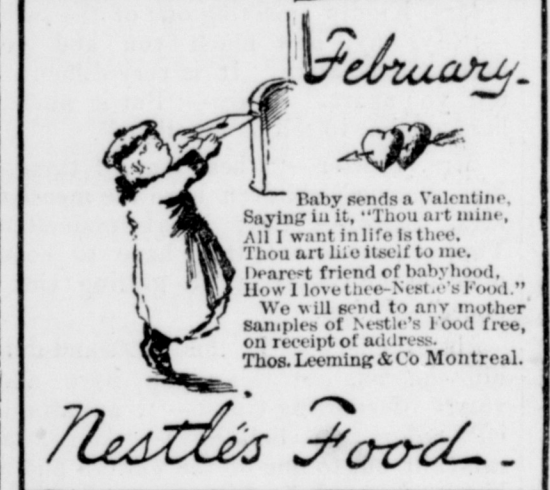
The Care of the Hair and Hands.

I am thankful to say it is once more the fashion to brush the hair. No matter how beautiful the hair may be in reality, it loses nearly all its effect if not thoroughly brushed at least once a day. Delicate hair is none the better for too energetic or elaborate treatment in the early morning; indeed, I once heard an eminent hair-dresser say that it should be barely touched when one first got up, as the heat of the pillow rendered it liable to fall out; but a thorough and regular brushing once a day is imperative both for the health and the beauty of the locks, and the present style of hairdressing requires the hair at its best and glossiest. Another point that requires especial care is the keeping of the hands. White, soft hands are a great beauty, and it is but a trifle to keep them so. Rub them freely either with vinolia cream, glycol, or, if the skin will stand it, with pure glycerine, and over this draw a pair of old soft kid gloves, and as to wash them, as old Peppy said. In the morning, wash them well, of course, dry with a soft towel, and before they are perfectly dry dust them with a little dry scented oatmeal. Always keep half a lemon on your washstand, and a piece of wash leather, and every time you wash your hands rub the tips of the fingers and the nails with the lemon juice, and polish the nails well with the leather. If you wish to whiten the hands rub them all over with the lemon. I was given some extraordinary soap the other day, said to be made at "Abraham's Vineyard, Jerusalem." It is made with olive oil, lathers scarcely at all, but cleans the hands wonderfully, and leaves them beautifully soft and satiny, and, joy beyond all others to me, has no scent! I mean to find out where it can be got, and always keep some by me.—*Glasgow Citizen.*

How to Look Smiling.

A London photographer has conceived an idea which has already made him fame, and deserves to make his fortune. He noticed that when he had a lady sittee with lovely graceful feet, she was always at least willing to let them appear in the picture,

but that when the boots were over size that she took care to keep them under the edges of her gown. So this man of genius caused to be constructed a pair of artificial feet of dainty proportions, and had them dressed in the newest and most approved bottles. These he exposed in his atelier and explained to visitors. After awhile he delicately suggested to a lady whose feet were uncompromising that she permit these to enter into the picture, and, dainty hooking the false feet to the hem of her gown, made a charming full length photograph. His success has dated from that day. London women don't mind availing themselves of the artificial beauty any more than of powder or any other toilet aid. Apropos of successful photographs, there is a very simple way of preventing the depressed, disconsolate look that one's face is apt to assume in the forced repose of a sitting. It is to drink just a thimbleful of sherry in the dressing room. It will put into your face the tiny touch of life and animation that adds so much to the beauty of a likeness, and which is so apt to degenerate into a grin when assumed to order.—*Ex.*



February.

Baby sends a Valentine.  
Saying to it, "Don't get married,  
All I want in life is thee.  
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