

"ASTRA" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

Well girls, between ourselves, I am glad to get back to St. John—and peace—I always thought I had a truly Irish love of conflict, or in more expressive, it less "eloquent language," of a row; but somehow there was too much strife in Moncton while I was there, even for me. It is an awfully militant place, girls, and I think the air must have had an effect on my temper, because a young man told me one evening while I was there that I was pugnacious. I believe I was, and my only regret now is that I was not more pugnacious on that occasion. I believe the air of St. John has a cooling effect on the temper, it is so damp and so raw that it prevents you from having enough spirit to fight with your meanest relative; you are thoroughly occupied in trying to keep warm.

PENCIL, St. John.—Don't apologize for the paper, my dear; it was not pretty, but then there was plenty of it for the question, and you only wrote on one side of it, which was a great recommendation. (1) I would not do anything, nor would I think anything about it at all, except to admire her for her frankness. Don't you know that girls cannot always do as they like, and she had been forbidden to do so, and she could think of to excuse herself was to tell the truth and to explain that it was not her fault. (2) Wrong? Why, of course not; it is perfectly right and proper. I should think it very wrong if he left her to go home alone.

OLIVA, St. John.—You were quite right in deciding to join us, and you must not say that your questions are silly, because they are not, only I am afraid I cannot answer the first one satisfactorily. I do believe in astrology to a certain extent, but you see it is a science we know so little about that we are apt to dismiss the subject from our thoughts with a few careless words, on the rare occasions when it is touched upon. I confess it is a mystery to me, but yet the ancients believed in it most firmly I know. Indeed any knowledge of astrology is so rare in these days that you surprised me greatly by what you said about the horoscope. I am rather inclined to question the belief that the planets can influence our disposition, temperament or destiny; it does not seem reasonable to me, but yet it there is really anything in the science, and an astrologer can tell you of events in your past history known only to yourself, why should he not be able to foretell the future? Surely that would not be any more wonderful. You see that I am open to conviction, and ready to admit that I know very little about the subject, as I have never paid special attention to it. I was deeply interested in what you told me, but I have always disbelieved in the ability of any human agency to foretell the future; that, as you say, belongs to but one power, and I think I should be very slow to believe otherwise. (1) Yes, I really do believe it, and that some day you will be very thankful for your two escapes. That some higher power has a hand in these things too, and you already see that it was all for the best. You need not fear being called a flirt, for you only did right in declining to marry a man you did not really love, you would have been doing him a greater injustice in keeping to your engagement than in breaking it. I don't think you need fear being condemned to "braid Saint Catherine's tresses" for a long time yet, and I do hope you will let me know if the astrologer's prediction comes true. (4) Not at all, I think it would be very suitable indeed. I don't see how I can criticise any of them, because, without wishing to flatter you, they are all that they should be. The writing is especially clear and legible, and yet perfectly formed and original in these days when we all write so much alike; it seems a little old fashioned, as if you had been taught to write by some lady of the old school, but it is none the worse for that. It makes me think a little of my mother's writing. I can assure you that you were not in the least tiresome. Thank you for the love and good wishes, and let me reciprocate them.

GRINNON BARRETT, St. John.—Not at all! I am always glad to hear from you. But what an extraordinary individual you must be to possess that most unusual peculiarity of being unable to rest till all your debts of correspondence are paid: I only wish that it was a trait in my character. No, I have not read the book you name. I have so little time for reading ever, and this winter I have had a regular hospital to look after, so I have had less than usual. Even the cat has been ill, and the only really robust person in the house is the pup. What happened the typewriter? You surprise me about the lines, because I have seen them in print. They were published in some paper last spring. I think it was the Moncton Times. I remember being very much struck with them. I will show them to the editor and see if he would care to publish them. I think there was a verse or two more. I suppose you will be horrified if I suggest a glass of hot gin and water with plenty of lemon and sugar in it, before you go to bed. I never found anything cure a cold so quickly, and I also am strictly temperate. So I think you may safely take anything I prescribe. I should certainly write and thank her for it. I do not see that you could do less, as it was clearly intended as an olive branch of some kind. I only wish Phyllis would get in her work more rapidly and hasten the season.

BRANDY, St. John.—It is a pity you could not have thought of a prettier name, and one less suggestive of intoxication, even Bran would have been better and only suggested to the imaginative mind a harmless and comforting poultice. (1) Certainly eight dances are too many to give to any man at a party, unless you are engaged to him. Even if as you touchingly express it "you think him too sweet for anything." Suppose you give him a little less of your society for a change, and a little more opportunity of thinking you too sweet for anything, for that is the way it should be according to my idea of the fit-

ness of things; girls are so much given to raving over men now-a-days that they will not give the poor dears a chance to exercise their hereditary prerogative of raving over them. (2) I don't think I understand you. I do not see anything at all "dreadful" in girls "walking the streets," as you call it, provided the same girls have some good reason for their perambulations. Numbers of girls go out shopping or visiting, or simply for a walk, and even if they merely go for amusement I cannot see any harm in it, there is nothing I like better than to saunter along King St. on a Saturday afternoon and look into the shop windows, buying a trifle now and then, halt for the pleasure of going into the shop; and I do love to watch the pretty, stylish, well dressed St. John girls who always seem so busy and in such a hurry. By the way, perhaps that is the reason they are in a rush—they are afraid people will suspect them of "walking the streets." If you mean that it is wrong for young girls to spend nearly all their time running about the streets, I agree with you perfectly.

PINCUSHION, Moncton.—Why did you not choose a prettier name—Brown Eyes—for instance? (1) If the gentleman is a very old and intimate friend; or if the ladies in question are much older than he, it is not only quite proper, but very kind of them to lighten the tedium of his illness. But if he is a comparatively recent acquaintance, and the ladies at all near his own age, they had much better restrain their anxiety about his health until he is able to come downstairs, and if I were the invalid I would much prefer that they did so. Now, "pincushion," your own common sense should answer that question for you! Why you might as well have said at once, "Is it proper for a young lady to give an entire programme of dances to one young man?" It not only shows "too much partiality" but a very great deal too much foolishness for any girl to be guilty of. (3) I should think him either very foolish or very conceited. (4) Hardly, because in the first place it would make him regret having admired the article, lest he should be suspected of giving a hint that he would like to have it, and in the second place, he would naturally feel bound to return the gift in some way. (5) Not at all provided she does not make a practice of doing so, and detaining him from his work during business hours. No I was not in the least weary of reading your letter which was one of the best written and best expressed letters I have received for a long time. The only fault I have to find with it is that it was written on both sides of the paper, but as you wrote it straight ahead and did not turn the paper over and write on the last page instead of the second, I will forgive you this time, and you may certainly write again whenever you like. I can't kiss Geoffrey for you. I wish I could, but he is not at home; however, I will pat Jack with pleasure, and kiss the cat instead. "You and Geoffrey" sounded very pretty, and I will tell Geoffrey when I write.

WOE BEGONE, St. John.—What a beautiful hand you write; it is so bold and so free that it is hard to believe you are a girl. Sympathy is sweet to us all, and I am grateful for yours, but you see it is all in the way of business and one gets used to it. You are perfectly right in what you say about the man worship of the present day; there is far too much of it, and that I think is one reason why there is so little chivalry left in the world. It is girls would only stand aloof a little and give the other sex an opportunity of doing the worshipping I think they would quite enjoy the change, and it would do them so much good. As you say, they are adored, for a condition of things in which they had no hand whatever, it was thrust upon them. I mean the fact of being men. I, too, am fond of men's society, and I have known many good and true men, but it certainly is not our fault if they are unspoiled, since we do all in our power to make them the reverse. I am glad you are "old maidish" in that respect, because no man respects a girl who allows him to take liberties, even though he may like to amuse himself with her. I think it far better never to have what is called a confidential friend, so few friendships last, and then there is apt to be so much that one regrets, after the usual break comes. I believe they indicate force of character. No, I never was strong, and I have come to the conclusion lately that my lungs were not built for the climate of Canada; I am afraid there is too much climate and not enough lung. I am glad you like Geoffrey's name. I like myself, but do not call the pup a pug, he is a spaniel. I don't care for "James" or "John" either, but "Jack" and "Jim" are lovely, I think. If you never have a worse cross to bear than that, you will have no need to be woe begone. Why don't you try what you speak of? You know "nothing venture nothing win." Make a beginning and do your best. Think of success not failure. Thank you for your pleasant letter.

MAX.—How bashful you all seem to be, you nearly always tell me how long it has taken you to make up your mind to write, but that at last you have decided. Surely there is nothing so terrible about me? If I did not see that you are really in earnest, do you know I should feel inclined to laugh at you, because, though I am sure you don't think so, your question is ridiculous! Certainly, he should continue to do on exactly as if nothing had happened, and he will soon cease to think about his misfortune, or even remember it. I can unhesitatingly answer yes, to all of your questions. I have known several young men similarly afflicted, and they never seemed to think of it any more than their friends did. The sooner you let people get accustomed to it the better, only I think that whenever I went out amongst strangers to a party, of course, I would wear gloves. I am glad you like our column so much. I am glad you very well, thank you, but he does not know what a blanket means. He is a hardy little fellow, and prefers his barrel of straw in the wood-house to any other spot, even on the coldest night. A thoroughly good, business hand. I don't see why you should have imagined I would put you in the waste basket.

SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

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

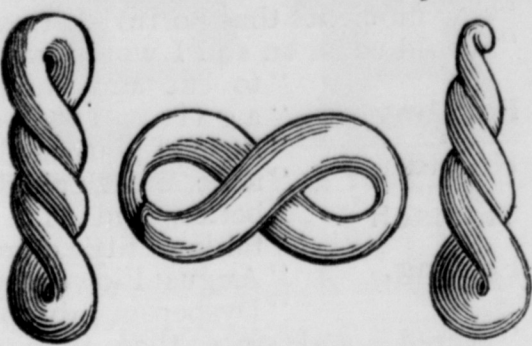
"C. M. L., Montreal.—Some of the 'best ways of using up the remains of roast beef' and other meats were given in a former letter under head of Rissoles, Croquettes, &c. The following are also good.

Roast Beef, Minced.

Place a spoonful of flour in a pan, and brown it with some butter. Add a pound of cold roast beef, finely minced, some gravy or stock broth, and season with a little thyme and parsley chopped up, salt and pepper. Mix all together, and when quite hot serve with a border of mashed potatoes, or poached eggs on top.

Fancy Twist Rolls.

For variety's sake a few simple shapes like those in the cut, should be practised



beside the plain round and oblong kinds. These are not at all difficult to make.

1 lb of light bread dough.
2 ounces of sugar.
2 ounces of butter.
Lemon or vanilla flavoring.
2 egg yolks.
Small half cup of milk.
Flour to make it soft dough.

If for an afternoon tea take the dough at breakfast time and warm it and the butter, sugar and milk together by setting in a pan in a warm corner. Then mix them together thoroughly and add the yolks and beat up thoroughly, and then the necessary flour to make dough of it. Knead it on the table by pressing out and folding over. Set the dough in a warm place for three hours to rise. Then knead it a second time. Every time the dough is doubled over on itself the edges must be pressed together first. When good and finished it looks silky, and air will snap from the edges when pinched, but do not do this. After the second kneading let stand an hour and then make into shapes, buns, oblongs, split rolls, twists or rings. Rise in pans an hour and half longer, then bake in a slow oven about 20 minutes. When done brush over while hot with thick syrup of sugar and water flavored with vanilla. Do not expect good results unless the directions are carefully followed. You cannot knead the dough in a pan properly. It must be done on a table.

Scalloped Beef.

Prepare the meat as above, put into a baking dish, spread the mashed potatoes on top and bake in the top of a quick oven until the potatoes are nicely browned.

Beef, Inky-Pinky.

Good gravy should be used if on hand. If not boil down the bones from which the meat has been cut, as well as the outside trimmings, in enough water to cover them; they will make a good gravy, with the addition of sliced boiled carrots and an onion. When the bones have parted with all their strength, strain the liquor, and add to it some slices of cold roast beef, and the carrots and onions. Simmer slowly for twenty minutes, and add a teaspoonful of vinegar, and pepper and salt to taste. Remove the onion if the flavor of it only is wanted, but serve up the carrots with the meat. Thicken it necessary with a little butter and flour mixed together smooth. Serve, garnished with sippets of toast or mashed potatoes.

2nd.—In preparing "Liver and Bacon" is it necessary to cook the bacon first and to a crisp, or how? The best way is to cook the bacon first, crisp or otherwise, to taste—and then fry the liver in the bacon fat, if not sufficient fat, add a little dripping or lard. Fried bacon has a trick of getting hard, and I find it a good plan to cover it when cooked and keep it in a warm place while the liver is being fried. Don't use anything but calves liver and you will always have a good word for the dish.

The Market.

There is not much variety in the market at present. Calves' shoulders are a little more plentiful, and those who have not been able to try the previous receipt for calf's liver and bacon will not have much difficulty in getting one. The friendly sausage will soon have to go. Gaspareaux have made their appearance, and a nice lot of halibut was to be had this week. Lettuce and radishes, though not plentiful, were offered and soon bought up at rather high prices which generally prevail at the commencement of the season.

Lettuce Salad.

The great secret in preparing lettuce is to have it dry and fresh. In order to insure this, look the leaves over carefully and if perfectly clean and free from grit and insects do not put it into water as it spoils the flavor. If, however, there is any doubt about it the leaves must be carefully washed and when taken out of the water, dried by shaking in a wire salad basket or a towel until not a particle of moisture remains. The French break the leaves carefully with the fingers instead of cutting them, as they maintain that contact with steel spoils the flavor of the salad. It should be served in a salad bowl and the dressing put on at the last moment, and thoroughly mixed with a spoon and fork by tossing it lightly until every portion glistens.

Salad Dressing.

Many prefer to make their own dressing to taste. The ready made salad dressing put up in bottles and sold is avoided by all who ever pretend to know anything about salads. The kinds most generally used in clubs and the best restaurants are mayonnaise, and oil and vinegar.

Mayonnaise.

2 raw yolks; ¼ teaspoonful of olive oil.
¼ teaspoonful vinegar or lemon juice.
A level teaspoonful of salt; same of mustard.
Pinch of cayenne.

Put the two raw yolks in a pint bowl, add

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two tablespoonfuls of the oil, set the bowl in ice water or otherwise make it cold, and beat with an egg whisk about half a minute. Then add another spoonful of oil and beat again, then throw in the salt and on whipping again the mixture will at once thicken up, looking like soft butter. Then add a teaspoonful of vinegar, then oil and so on alternately until all is in, beating between each addition, add the mustard and cayenne. The best mayonnaise is made by using half vinegar and half lemon juice. The dressing should be thick enough to coat over a salad, and not thin enough to run. This is the quickest method of making this important sauce or dressing. After spreading the mayonnaise over a chicken, or lobster salad, ornament with quarters of hard boiled eggs or with chopped eggs, parsley, olives, cut lemons or cooked beets cut into fancy shapes.

Oil and Vinegar or French Dressing
is simply a mixture of one part vinegar and three parts salad oil with salt and pepper to taste, shaken up in a bottle just before it is used.

Eggs.

Now that Easter will soon be here, something out of the beaten track of domestic egg cookery will perhaps be appreciated. It would be useless to publish here many of the hundreds of ways of cooking eggs as given by M. Sausanne and other famous chefs de cuisine. Nothing but what is practical will be found in this column. Here is a pretty luncheon or tea dish.

Eggs a la Bonne Femme.

Get six eggs of the same size, large ones, boil them for ten minutes, and when cool enough remove the shells carefully, dividing the eggs equally in halves. Take out the yolks and cut from each half the pointed tip of white so that they may stand firmly on this cut part, looking like little white cups. Make tiny dice of some cold chicken, ham, boiled beets, and the yolks of the eggs, or rather mince them. Fill the hollows of these cups piled up high in the centre—two of ham, two of chicken, two of beets, two of yolks, and so on. Arrange some neatly cut lettuce on a flat dish and place the eggs amongst it letting their bottoms rest on the dish. The pretty effect thus obtained will reward any pains taken in preparing the dish.

Carried Eggs.

Fry a couple of medium sized onions in butter, and stir into the pan, as soon as the onions are slightly browned, one tablespoonful of curry powder. Mix well, and add by degrees half a pint of veal stock; keep stirring the sauce until it is smooth and thick. When the mixture has simmered from ten to fifteen minutes, add, carefully stirring, two tablespoonfuls of cream, and let it simmer a few minutes longer. Have ready sliced half a dozen hard boiled eggs, lay them in the curry sauce long enough to get quite hot, then serve both together on a hot dish. Time, half an hour to prepare; 10 minutes to boil the eggs. Sufficient, two eggs for each person.

Eggs for Invalids.

By this simple process eggs are much lighter and better adapted to delicate stomachs than by the ordinary method of boiling. Proceed as follows: Heat a basin with boiling water until it is thoroughly hot; throw off the water and put the eggs in, moving them round so that every part shall receive the heat. Have ready a kettle of boiling water, pour this over the eggs, and cover the basin to keep the steam in. They will be perfectly cooked in 12 minutes.

Eggs au Bouillon.

Take as many small tin moulds as you have eggs to cook, of a size that will just hold one egg. Break the eggs one at a time, carefully, into a saucer and slip them

into the moulds. Take a large frying pan and stand the moulds in it. Pour in enough soup stock, or bouillon, to cover them and poach them thus till the whites have set. Turn them out neatly arranged on a dish and garnish with green parsley. They should look like little molds of corn starch or Blanc mange.

Eggs au Soleil.

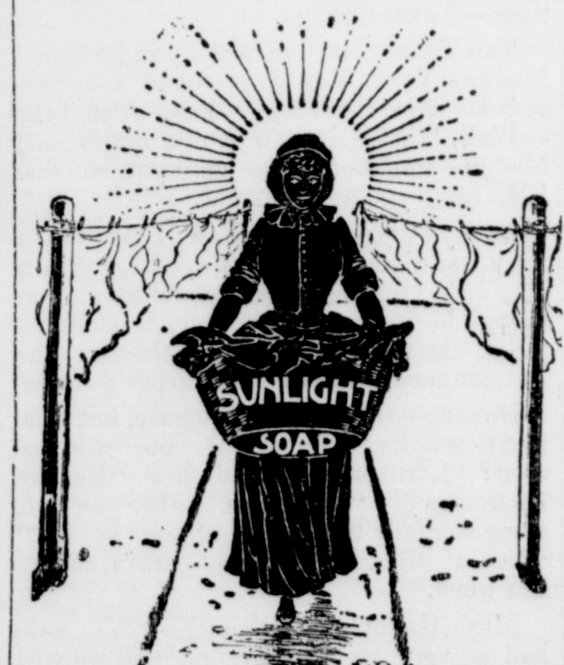
Are poached eggs, done rather firm, allowed to get partly cold, dipped in butter and tried in deep fat.

It is Said

That there are three dishes, which, if put upon the bill of fare of a London (Eng.) club, are devoured before all the rest; so that at 7 or 8 o'clock, when most members dine, there is nothing left of them. These dishes are Irish stew, tripe and onions, and calf's liver and bacon. The latter dish has been described more than once in this column, also tripe and onions, here is the

Irish Stew.

Take three pounds of chops from the best end of necks of mutton, and pare away nearly all the fat, for an Irish stew should not be greasy. Take as many potatoes as will amount after peeling to twice the weight of the meat, (remember potatoes average 6 to a pound and loose from one-third to one-half their weight in paring) slice them, and slice also eight large onions. Put a layer of mixed potatoes and onions at the bottom of a stew pan, place the meat on this and season it plentifully with pepper and slightly with salt. Pack the ingredients closely together, cover the meat with another layer of potatoes and onion, pour in as much stock, or water as will cover the topmost layer, cover the stew pan tightly, let it come to a boil, and simmer gently for three hours. Do not remove the lid while it is cooking, as this will let out the flavor.



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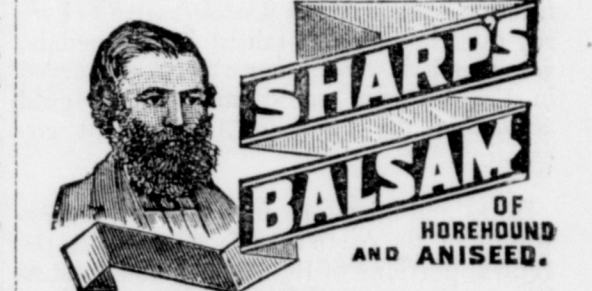
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