

"ASTRA" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

I begin to feel that I am really catching up with my correspondence now, girls! Two weeks of rather lighter correspondence than usual have helped me wonderfully, and if all be well, and I can get two columns of space to myself this week, I shall actually be up to date for the first time for many weeks, and everybody to whom I am owing a letter will have the satisfaction of seeing their long-expected answers in print. Won't it be joyful?

Two LITTLE PANSIES, Fredericton.—Lots of room! You know our columns are like a street car, they always can make room for one more; but don't you think it is terribly cold weather for pansies? You must be very timid blossoms indeed if your courage needed so much screwing up to enable you to apply for admission into our garden. You were more than kind to hold back, and feel very sorry for me because you thought I was very busy, but you are mistaken on one point; you did wait till I had more time, because this is an especially easy week for me, and I don't think you will have to wait for my answer at all. I wish everyone would be as considerate as you are. You are very kind to say so many nice things about this column and its editor, such words of appreciation help one along wonderfully. Come into the office some time, and you will see for yourself. (1) I am afraid you are very bad little pansies, indeed, but yet I shall agree with you, they do need getting "even with" so very badly, and yet you know two wrongs never yet made a right, and all we can do is to set those wicked creatures a good example. So on the whole I would advise you to be content with being engaged to one at a time, and you know you can make him as miserable as you like, for the time being. Besides, I can assure you that there are numbers of the other sex who do not require any punishment at all. (2) I scarcely know how to answer you; it is "gets the chance" and then why punish him with his own weapons if you like but don't punish him before he commits the crime; after all you may misjudge him. (3) I would much prefer the fascination, because beauty will fade in spite of all one's efforts to preserve it, and fascination lasts almost as long as life itself. Madame Recamier had numbers of lovers at 60, and though we know she was a wonderful old lady, yet even she must have been slightly faded by that time, so it must have been her powers of fascination which held them. Many thanks for the love and also for Geoffrey's and the pup's share. Write again some time.

LAUGHING WATER.—I do not think you "refreshingly ignorant" at all, it is kind of you to take the trouble of trying to answer me modestly, to answer "Housewife's" letter, and offer her a suggestion. But still, I really don't think many overworked mothers of families spend any time in making "yards of accusing embroidery" now-a-days. You see it is so much cheaper to buy it ready made. I used to spend a lot of time in that way myself, but I have long given it up. But I agree with you perfectly that we each have a sort of mania for something that takes up a great deal of valuable time. With some people it is house-keeping, and with others it is fancy work. Geoffrey says my special mania is for loafing, and perhaps it is. I think if I have room enough I shall print your sensible, thoughtful little letter next week. I believe the literal meaning of Mizpah is Watchtower, but its usually accepted meaning is, "The Lord watch between us and me, while we are absent, one from another." Both very pretty significations, are they not?

RAUL, St. John.—What a charming name you have chosen, but yet you are unmistakably genuine, and don't deny it. Who were you before, as this is your second letter? I often feel as you say, about some of them, but bless your heart the waste basket would be running over all the time if I yielded to the feeling. What a pretty name he has too, and what a happy young couple you must be. Why he must be a good deal like Geoffrey, so far as looks go, only I should be frightened to death of Geoff, if he was as tall as that. I think you must be a very sensible girl indeed, it did my heart good to read what you said about being thankful for the blessings nature has bestowed upon you, and glad they made you more desirable in the eyes of the man you love. I think you ought to be as happy as the day is long, in spite of going so far away from your friends. My dear I never even heard of cap-pot oil, so I cannot tell you anything about it. I liked your letter very much indeed.

MOSES, Sackville.—So you are a boy! Well, you are none the worse for that! In fact you are all the better, provided you are a nice boy. I used to know some Mount Allison boys once, but I am afraid I have none "upon my invitation list" now. Thanks for your appreciative letter; I think they might almost be called "Talks with girls and boys" now, I have so many boys amongst my correspondents, and I am always glad to hear from them. Well, Moses, you only asked me one question, and that one is deep, dark, and mysterious. Why do you want to know, and do you mean as a lady love, or a "hired girl"? If the latter, give me an English girl by all means. But if, as a lady love, I am afraid my native modesty will prevent my answering you frankly, because you know I am English myself, and it might sound conceited if I said, "An English girl always." Seriously, I do not feel competent to give an opinion because I think we know so little of the French character, that we instinctively turn to something we are more familiar with, and, therefore, I should be inclined to prefer an English damsel. I am afraid I have given you very little satisfaction, but I hope the next time you write, I will be able to give you a more positive opinion. Never mind! if she is a nice girl

her nationality does not matter in the least, and you know there are lots of nice girls right across the way.

ANGEL, St. John.—You have seen your answer in last week's Progress by this time, and understand that the delay was unavoidable. In fact you fared very well, because there were answers in the same column which had been awaiting publication for at least three weeks. (1) I am sorry to say that I cannot give you a list of the meanings attached to precious stones, I had one but I have lost it. I remember that diamonds are the emblems of purity and that the turquoise means constancy, and brings good luck to its possessor; it is also supposed to warn its owner of approaching danger by turning pale, and to fade when its owner is ill, but I cannot remember any other stones, and I do not know where to get another list. Perhaps some correspondent can supply the deficiency. You did not trouble me at all, and I am only sorry that I cannot give you the information you ask for.

BLUEBERRY, Halifax.—St. Valentine was a christian bishop, beheaded at Rome on the 14th of February, A. D. 270. The christians in Rome long observed the anniversary of his martyrdom, and as the years passed on, and they grew more numerous and powerful, the Roman authorities endeavored to change the observance into a sort of festival, thinking the constant revival of their martyred bishop's memory in the minds of the christians dangerous. So the character of St. Valentine's day was gradually changed, and instead of a time of fasting and mourning, it became a merry making, when young men chose their sweethearts for the coming year, and birds being supposed to choose their mates, your writing is scarcely formed yet, I think. The hair is very pretty and a most unusual color. If you could see the accumulation of unanswered letters, patiently awaiting space to make their appearance in print, you would understand how impossible it is for me to answer at any particular time; I am very sorry you have to wait so long, but everyone has to wait their turn. I wish I had twice as much space at my disposal, but you see here are many more important things in the paper I am afraid, than our "talks."

PRUE, Boston.—Of course I do, I am very fond of nice bright "Yankee girls," I was one myself once, at least I lived amongst them when I was a child, but never so far north as Boston. Do you know I have some friends in East Medford? I wonder if it is far from West Medford? (1) What a funny question. They could not all be my dear child, or the poor queen would have to buy about a bottle a year from each one. The meaning of the label you quote is that the pickles, sauces, etc., for her majesty's household are really purchased from the firm mentioned, who manufacture the best goods in the market, and have been appointed to supply the Royal household. There are certain tradesmen appointed to supply their special wares to the household. It is the same with photographers and milliners, but there is often a great deal of humbug about it, and many a tradesman who never sold one cent's worth to any member of the Royal household, puts Her Majesty's name over his door. It was quite impossible that the photographer you mention could ever have been "photographer to Her Majesty," but I believe he had the honor of photographing the Princess Louise when she was here, and straightway assumed the title. I think any photographer who takes a portrait of one of the Royal family is entitled to call himself one of the photographers—"To Her Majesty." (2) No; the electric street cars are still but a dream of the future with us. (3) The pup is a very fine specimen of a cocker spaniel; he is brown and speckled white, and his name is Jock, a good Scotch name. What a dear girl you must be, to be so fond of dogs and horses. I hope that ship will soon come in, and that it will have a nice captain. (4) I do not think the quotation exists in that form, though it is so frequently used that it has become almost a classic. I fancy it is a sort of compilation or adaptation, of the sayings of two authors. "Virtue alone is happiness below," by Crabbe, and "There is no happiness without virtue," by Madame de Staël. At least I never could find the other form, in any book of reference. (5) I really do not know, but from what I have heard Halifax people say, I think Halifax must, I never was in the latter city long enough to form any comparison. I do hope you will see your answers. Thank you for your kind and appreciative letter, you know a Boston girl's opinion is valuable, because they have such a reputation for wisdom.

WILD ROSE.—I am glad you made up your mind at last, and also that you admire my style of writing so much, you really paid me a great compliment in saying you think it "easy." One has to cultivate a patience sometimes, and good nature also, but I never was blessed with much of the former. I think, from your letter, that you must be very good natured indeed, and I do not wonder you have plenty of friends. How do you know you are not good looking? I do not remember reading the article you mention, but I do not think it could possibly do any harm, if carefully applied, and washed off before going to bed, unless it was belladonna, in which case have nothing to do with it, as the slightest particle too much will destroy your sight forever. I know actresses always use either antimony or lead pencil, scraped; I have used the latter myself when on the stage and it certainly has a wonderful effect in increasing one's good looks. Use a little pencil made of rolled paper, instead of the bodkin, cut a thin strip of paper and roll it between your finger and thumb till you have it long enough. I will give you my message to Geoffrey and the pup, with pleasure. Your letter was not dated, so I do not know when you wrote it, but I am afraid you will be disappointed at not seeing it sooner, as everyone has to wait their turn lately, and sometimes it seems a long time in coming. Write to me again whenever you like.

SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

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

A Bit of History.  
"In the eighth and ninth centuries women, even those of highest station, took part in the preparation of food, and thought such cares were included in the duties of hospitality. From the care bestowed by the ladies of France upon the art of cooking, we must conclude that to them is due the indisputable pre-eminence which French gastronomy has always enjoyed. It is now looked upon as a bias or liking which one need not be ashamed of, as a social quality agreeable to the host, useful to the guest, and advantageous to science. In short the gastronomie is ranked with the connoisseurs or lovers of the fine arts."—History of Cookery, Medical and Modern.

Soup Stock—What It Is.  
It is easier to learn principles from the wholesale preparation of any article than from the preparation of such small quantities that often little apparently unimportant matters of detail are omitted. It is obvious that the method of preparing stock for say, the Grand hotel, and for the family consisting of two, must be widely different, but as I have said before, the principle is the thing to grasp, so we will therefore first describe how to make stock in large quantities.

Hotel Stock.  
A really good cook does not know how to get along without a stock pot or boiler. It is such a help toward good cooking, and makes the work easier. The pot should be larger than the ordinary stone pots. Into it are put, bones of beef, veal and fowl, rabbits or game, and during the day all the trimmings and tough, gristly ends of meat such as would serve to be left untouched if cooked and sent in to guests. Then if there is a chicken or leg of mutton to be boiled, why boil it in the stock pot, and it makes the stock so much richer. All the available meat and bones being in, next throw in a little vegetable seasoning, such as an onion stuck with cloves, a turnip cut up, a carrot, a head of celery, and a "bouquet" (bunch) of herbs, consisting of two sprigs of parsley, one of sweet marjoram, one of savoury, one of thyme, and a bay leaf; add also a very little salt, and a few pepper corns. Fill in enough cold water to cover the contents and let the boiler heat slowly, and when at last it boils, skim carefully two or three times, put the lid on again and let simmer four or five hours. The result will be a rich stock ready when strained to be used in making soup, gravies or sauces. It should be strained through a large cloth or sieve into a jar or basins, and put by for use, all the fat being easily removed when cold. The fat is useful for frying purposes. Meat for soup should not be washed, because that part of the meat which contains the greatest amount of flavor is soluble in cold water.

Stock on a Small Scale.  
In small houses cooks should endeavor to do on a small scale what we have shown is done in great hotels on a large scale. First, the common stock, made from any bones, scraps and pieces of cooked or uncooked meat left over, should be put on with some gravy beef and a knuckle of veal, the best part of the meat of the veal being cut off to use in transforming the common stock into good soup.

Method of Clearing Stock.  
Suppose the quantity of stock required to be cleared to be two quarts. Take the whites of two eggs separated from the yolks, and be careful that no tinge even of yolk be with them. Place these two whites in a basin, breaking up and adding the shells and add nearly a tumblerful of cold water, and mix it well till the whole froths on the top, then pour this into the saucepan or vessel in which the stock is, which ought not, however, to be boiling at the time. Mix it well up, and place the saucepan on the fire to boil. While it gently boils, skim it thoroughly, then stir it all up again, let it stand a short time, and then strain it through a fine cloth, or better still, a thick flannel jelly-bag. This will render it as bright as sherry, only bear in mind that every particle of fat should first be removed from the stock.

Soup.  
Having briefly described how to make good strong stock and how to clear it, we now come to consider soups in general, and will divide them into three classes—clear, thick and purees. We have no English word that conveys exactly the same idea as the French word puree. A puree owes its consistency to the fact that the ingredients have been rubbed through a wire sieve, while a thick soup's consistency is due to the addition of some artificial thickening, such as flour or arrowroot etc. Clear soups are, of course, as the word implies, bright as well as thin. They are the consommés of beef, game or poultry, varying according to the floating garnish added to them. Some hotels make a great show on their bills of fare with five or six soups. There is always one thick soup or puree but the rest are all consommés with a handful of *Julienne*, *Jardiniere*, *Printaniere*, macaroni, vermicelli or tapioca previously prepared and thrown in just before it is served. They read like this: "Consommé a la Julienne," "Consommé au Vermicelli," &c., &c.

Consommé—What It Is.  
We have no word in English for consommé but broth, or clear soup, and that is not an equivalent, but only a substitute. It is something more than can be obtained by letting the soup-stock get cold in a jar and after taking off the fat, pouring it off without disturbing the sediment, strained through a napkin, made hot and a spoon-ful of coloring added; French cooks understand by consommé, a clear soup as rich as melted jelly and the color of pale brandy. It is made as follows:  
To Make Consommé.  
Simmer a large fowl and two or more shanks of veal in a gallon of water for three or four hours, and while it is cooking add the seasonings. These should be the

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usual soup bunch (without parsnips or green onion tops, however), together with a stalk of celery, half a bay leaf, a teaspoonful of bruised pepper corns, a sprig of green thyme or marjoram and a carrot. When it has boiled long enough—about four hours, slowly, strain the broth into a saucepan. Chop a pound of lean beef fine, mix it with two whites of eggs and a cup of cold water. Then pour the broth to the beef, stir up and boil again. Strain through a napkin or jelly-bag, season with salt, color with a teaspoonful of dissolved burnt sugar, and remove every particle of grease. It is then ready to serve, either plain or with any of various floating garnishes. The reason why I have explained the method of making soup stock at length, is because nearly all receipts of soup call for so much "stock." It is not always necessary, but it is always better than water for that purpose, and it is, moreover, a very useful article to have on hand in the kitchen.

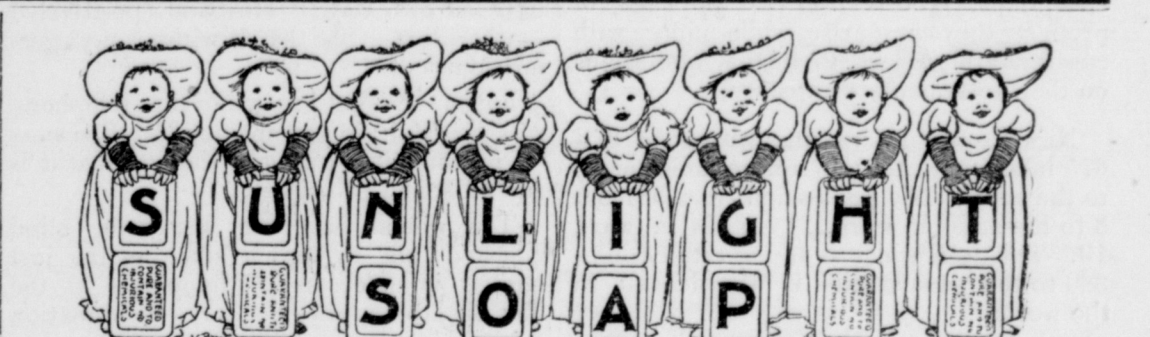
Scotch Barley Soup.  
3 or 4 parts of soup stock.  
2 table-spoonsful of pearl barley.  
Turnip, carrot, onion, parsley.  
A piece of boiled meat, remains of joint of mutton.  
Salt and pepper.  
Wash the barley in two waters and boil it in plenty of water for about two hours, then strain in cold water and have the barley ready to put into the soup at last. Cut two slices of turnip and half as much of carrot and onion in small dice, all of a size, and boil them in the stock about 3/4 of an hour. Cut the meat—about as much as there was of turnip, and all lean—the same way, and throw in with the cooked barley and chopped parsley. Season slightly. No thickening. This is a cheap soup, of good appearance in the plates, and is a favorite with most people.

A Wedding Breakfast—What It Cost.  
"Violent" writes, "will you give a sketch of menu for a wedding breakfast for twenty-four persons and the probable cost; also any suggestions as to service that we may be able to offer." Lent will soon be over and then comes the time when we may expect to hear of many of these "happy events" and the question "what shall we give our guests," will be asked by others than "Violent." It is possible I may be able to give some useful hints to the inexperienced, but in this article I shall only have space for a description of one wedding breakfast, which may be a guide to "Violent." It was a very simple, but good breakfast, the price being \$2.50 per head, including a pint of wine for each person. The following is the menu:

Consommé a la Nelson.  
Magonais de salmon. Lobster Patties.  
Lamb Cutlets aux petits pois.  
Filets de Volaille a la Beaufort.  
Galaatie (Veal, Game Pies).  
Italian Salad.  
Wine Jellies. Velvet Cream.  
Charlotte a la Parisienne.  
Chicoree and Strawberry Lees.  
Dessert and Bon Bons.  
Tea, Coffee, Chocolate.  
The table was a long one. The cake, a very high one, was sent by the bride's friends. The bridegroom being a naval officer, we decorated the table with little satin flags, suggestive of a ship on some great holiday. From the cake (forming the centre or highest mast) depended twenty-four silk ropes, on which were threaded the tiny flags. These were terminated by a large china figure of a sailor boy holding the menu to each guest. The menu was very pale blue, printed in a deeper shade. The table napkins were folded like boats, and the most beautiful seaweeds were mixed in with the flowers. The effect was charming. The service was of white china. The waiters wore white gloves. Crimson cloth was laid on the front steps and down to the carriages. A large drawing room was set apart for the guests to assemble in before breakfast, and bed rooms allotted for ladies and gentlemen to leave their hats, cloaks, etc. A good supply of extra cutlery, glass, cloths and everything else that may be wanted and having everything ready before the time appointed was perhaps the reason why this entertainment passed off so successfully as it did.—The Caterer.

"J. H." asks, "are wines necessary in cooking?" There is much good cooking done without the use of wines; their use, however, in certain soups, entrees and jellies is so common that their absence would be greatly missed, or would render such dishes obsolete.  
Suggestions.  
Cease the music's merry strain,  
It is Lent!  
Pleasant days will come again  
After Lent.  
Smiles are not at all correct  
During Lent.  
Now the time is to reflect  
All through Lent.  
Even the skies will frown down,  
And the rain will tumble down,  
And my own umbrella's gone,  
It is Lent!

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