

ASTRA'S TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

I do hope, girls, that you are all taking care of yourselves in these exciting days, when no one knows who will be the next victim of the fell la grippe; and we are by no means sure when we go to bed at night that we shall not "wake up," as the Southern general said, "and find ourselves dead in the morning." Geoffrey says that I have made so many different arrangements for my own funeral, and given him so many conflicting directions that he knows he will get things all mixed up, and either give me two separate funerals or else leave me above ground altogether. "Not that I do not feel very certain, Astra, of your living many years after I am in my grave," he always adds, with a man's love of making people feel unhappy on his account. "You will marry again, I have no doubt, and think far more of your second husband than you ever did of me. Statistics show that you 'literary women' as you will call yourselves, almost invariably marry two, or three times; but some one must suffer I suppose, and I will have to be contented with the doubtful satisfaction of having been the first." I must say that I fail to see just where the satisfaction will come in for Geoff, unless he expects to be in the flesh at the time of my second marriage, but meanwhile he is very well indeed, so I am not uneasy about him.

What I really wanted to say though, was that I hoped you would all take care of yourselves, and if you would only think less of wrapping your throats and shoulders up in fur till your ears are invisible, and give a little more attention to your feet, I believe there would be fewer cases of illness. Wear thicker stockings, my dear girls, thicker boots, and warm overshoes; and above all, as long as you wear the senselessly long skirts in fashion now to flap like wet sails around your ankles, be sure to change them as soon as you come in, and don't sit down to rest, and talk for a few minutes before you "take your things off," as most of us do. More colds are caught in that way than in any other. So beware, girls!

Now GUESS.—I really couldn't, I have not the least idea, but thank you all the same for the pretty little valentine you kindly sent me. It was the only one I received, or have received for a long time, and I assure you I value it very highly! I wonder if the sender's name could possibly be Bessie? Somebody I thought a great deal of, and who bore that name used to send me pretty Christmas cards, a few years ago, and, also, packages of my favorite "nonparel" chocolates.

LUCILLE, Nova Scotia.—Do you know, Lucille, that I shall be getting jealous of you soon? and the reason thereof, is that Geoffrey is really getting dreadfully "broken up," as the boys say, on you. I don't believe I will be jealous of you though, my dear, because I like you too much. What a love of a girl you are to write to; you understand so quickly. I am glad you are better and have enjoyed your drives so much. I am not fond of sleigh driving. I do not believe that you are not clever. I think you are. I think that a very moderate weight indeed; so the expression did apply to you after all. It is exactly my own weight, too, and I like to imagine myself quite small. That was the address I meant to use, as it is the only one by which I could reach you. We have had so much illness in our house lately that I have had less time than usual, and so, could not look up the paper, but I will not forget. Thank you for your nice letter, which shows that your old brightness is returning with your restored health. Your letters are always a pleasure to me.

PRETTY LIPS.—I am afraid you are flattering me, but I should be delighted if I thought I really had now a place for myself in the hearts of the girls. "Star among women," why you are absolutely original in your expressions my child, and you will make me as vain as the poor daw who borrowed the gorgeous plumes of the peacock and tried to fancy them her own. Verily those "pretty lips" have cunning tricks of speech. (1) To begin with, every one of the writing pads containing 100 sheets of paper, in size about nine by five inches; it will cost you fifteen or twenty cents, and it is a very favorite size with publishers, being easily handled. Write on one side of the paper only and as clearly and legibly as possible, pay attention to your punctuation, and divide your sentences carefully; so much depends upon the neat appearance of MS. In fact I feel quite convinced that I should have risen to eminence in my chosen profession long ago if I had only written a better hand. Leave a margin of half an inch at the left hand side of the page, and another half an inch at the top; number the pages carefully and fasten them together at the upper left hand corner, using paper fasteners; then fold it. Violate any other rule, break any other commandment of the printing office, but never! never! NEVER! roll MS.; it is the one unpardonable sin with editors. I do not think I quite understand you, but an editor always keeps a contributor's name in confidence, and never uses it without permission. (2) For evening wear they are quite correct. (3) Yes, I admire the style of beauty you speak of, very much, but still I have a great admiration for fair men. (4) I do not know, but I do not think you would find it pay you at all well; I tried once myself and I did not. You did not take up too much of my time at all, I am always glad to give the girls any information in my power.

DINO.—No, I never found the meaning, or rather the significance of the stories you asked about, in fact I don't believe they have any meaning or I would remember it. I have an excellent memory for such things. I am glad you enjoy our "Talks" so much. (1) Under the circumstances you mention, it would be perfectly correct, and indeed rather strange if you did not. (2) I do not know anything about it; consult some musical friend who will be sure to know, as musicians invariably seem to keep track of each other. I am particularly

fond of the lovely, though inexpensive turquoise, and I cannot see any beauty in diamonds, if anyone gave me a bushel of them. I would sell them all. Pearls are beautiful, but are supposed to bring sorrow to their owners, and I am superstitious enough to believe it; opals are lovely, too. (4) Black is a very trying color, and I prefer light evening dresses, though black skillfully combined with a color, is very stylish. (5) No; I have never been in Yarmouth. I will give your message both to Geoffrey and the pup, who is rapidly growing into a dog.

ALFIRETTA, North America.—I am afraid you have grown tired of waiting for my answer, but as long as I have so little space at my command, the letters will accumulate. If I ever drift "out into the Golden West" I will make a point of looking you up and I hope you will be glad to see me. (1) The surname of Burns' celebrated Highland Mary, was Campbell. (2) Which "Maid of Kent" do you mean? It is "The Fair Maid of Kent" she was Joanna, daughter of Edmund Earl of Kent, called the Fair Maid, on account of her great beauty. I regret to say that she was married three times, but I suppose she could not help herself; the men would propose, and she was too kind-hearted to refuse. She was first the wife of William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, from whom she was divorced. She then married Sir Thomas Holland, and after his death Edward the Black Prince, her second cousin. She was the mother of his son, Richard the Second, in whose reign she died. The other "Maid of Kent," the "Holy Maid," was popularly believed to possess miraculous powers, and to be an instrument of divine inspiration. She was beheaded at Tyburn in the reign of Henry VIII. for high treason, because she predicted a speedy and violent death to that much-married royal assassin, if he divorced Queen Catherine and married Anne Boleyn. Her name was Elizabeth Barton. You must take your choice as to which was the Maid of Kent. (3) Ammon was one of the titles given to the one only original Jupiter, king of Olympia; but, my dear girl, to ask me who was his son is like casually inquiring how many stars there are in the heavens. Mercury, god of eloquence and thieving, was one. Apis was another. Castor and Pollux, the "Great Twin Brethren," were two more; and I think there were about fifty others. So, you see, I do not know which one you mean. (4) I cannot tell you who Alaric Cotton was. There are some Cottons celebrated in the history of Boston, but I really cannot remember anything about them. Perhaps some correspondent can give us the requisite information, as they are always so kind in helping us out when we get into a corner. (5) I do not quite understand your question. England was sometimes called "The Middle Kingdom" in old times, when Ireland and Scotland were still kingdoms, but you may have referred to something different. Perhaps you meant it in a spiritual sense. You did not tire me at all, and I hope your answers will please you.

ANNIE AND JOE, St. John.—Go to Annie and Joe. I believe you are poking fun at me! If it were not that I have so little space at my command, I should have published your letter in full, but after all perhaps it is just as well I did not, as it would scarcely be a good example to other young people. When two young lovers have reached the mature ages respectively, of nineteen and twenty-one, and also such a state of devotion to each other that they "don't give a cat's curse" whatever form of profanity that may be—for their parents opinion and have decided that "if they don't like it they can lump it," why, of course, they quite old and experienced enough to get married, and the sooner the better, since it would be a thousand pities to spoil two houses with them, and the chances are, that before the first year of wedded life has passed they will be swearing at each other as cordially as the cats do, and wishing they could go back to their once despised parents. I think "Annie's" parents had better give way at once and thankfully accept so witty, courteous, and respectful a son-in-law. I should not think so extreme a measure as an elopement would be necessary if I had the honor of being a parent of either of you. I should give you my parting blessing with the greatest alacrity, and speed you on your way with all the old shoes in the house. I am glad to hear that you don't either drink, smoke or chew; even negative virtues are something to be thankful for, but perhaps if you did smoke, and had your lips closed over a pipe stem occasionally, you would have less opportunity of making flippant jokes at your future father-in-law's expense. Seven hundred dollars is quite enough to begin upon, I think, as long as you love each other so devotedly, and you should be able to indulge in a moderate amount of luxuries too, that is if "Annie" is anything of a housekeeper. Of course as long as you have loved each other for so long, three whole years, there cannot be the least doubt that such devotion will last throughout all your lives, through storm and sunshine, sickness and health, poverty and riches, and finally land you comfortably in the one grave. Good-bye, Joe! Good-bye, Annie! and may you be happy in the present, and more respectful to your parents in the future. I really don't know that you could have a better wish from your friend.

A Wonderful Vase.

In the Cathedral of Genoa is preserved, and has been for 600 years, a vase of immense value. It is cut from a single emerald. Its principal diameter is 12½ inches, and its height 5¾ inches. It is kept under several locks, the keys of which are in different hands, and it is rarely exhibited in public, and only by order of the senate. When exhibited it is suspended around the neck of a priest by a cord, and no one is allowed to touch it but him. A decree passed in 1476 forbids anyone going too near the precious relic. A Genoese antiquarian has written a book to demonstrate that this vase is one of the gifts made to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba.

SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

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

SEASONABLE FOOD.

FISH—Haddock, cod, chicken, halibut, smelts, herring, lobsters, oysters, clams. MEATS—Beef, mutton, veal, kidneys, ham, bacon, liver, tripe, sausages, pork, turkeys, fowls, rabbits. VEGETABLES—Potatoes, artichokes, beets, cabbage, turnips, squash, onions, parsnips. FRUIT—Oranges, figs, bananas.

"A lover of eggs," who inquired about fried eggs some time ago may be interested in the following which I have just noticed in one of Whitehead's works for the first time. He says: "Fried eggs are best known and most commonly ordered, yet those who want them very soft cooked and still cannot bear to see the raw surface of 'straight-up' eggs are not likely to be suited unless they learn to order their eggs 'half turned over,' which means doubled over in half moon shape as soon as the under surface is cooked enough to 'flip.'"

"What is the meaning of 'Maitre D'Hotel' asks a correspondent. It means 'Master of the house,' or 'House steward.' Any dish styled a la Maitre D'Hotel means that it is served with a Maitre D'Hotel sauce or butter. It is nothing but soft butter stirred up with chopped parsley and lemon juice. It is mostly used for broiled fish and meats, put on cold, but for maitre d'hotel potatoes the sauce is thrown into a saucepan with a little water, slightly thickened with flour and poured over new potatoes, or old boiled potatoes quartered and hashed with milk. It is pronounced matre do-tel, not 'matre de hotel,' as we sometimes hear it. I presume the sauce takes its name from the universal custom of French cooks or stewards of dressing all broiled meats and fish in this way.

"Chicken" Halibut, Baked.

The halibut grows to an enormous size, but the smaller ones are the best eating. The very small ones are called "chickens." I suppose because they are so tender and delicious. Boiling is the least satisfactory mode of cooking halibut. It is much better baked, fried or made into a pie. The "chickens" are now in the market, and this is the way to bake them: Wash the fish and put it into a well buttered baking dish, dredge some flour over it, and season rather highly with salt, pepper and powdered mace, but very little of the latter. Put four or five good-sized lumps of butter on the fish and bake in a moderate oven until nicely browned, which will be in about an hour. Thicken the gravy which runs from the fish with flour and butter, and serve with the halibut. Shrimp or anchovy sauce may be sent to table with it.

Anchovy Sauce.

Make a butter sauce as given in last week's receipts, and stir into it two or three teaspoonsful of anchovy essence.

A Chat About Oysters.

"A oyster, sir, is one of the elements of social existence, a delicacy of no age, sex, or condition, but patent to the universal family of men. Good in a scallop, better in a stew, best of all in the shell. Good at luncheon, dinner or supper; good to entertain a friend; good to eat by yourself; good when you are hungry; good, moreover, when you are not." There are many varieties of oysters, but our own Island "Malpeques" are, perhaps, equal to any in the world.

Eating of Oysters.

An authority says, "as to such heresies as pepper and vinegar, let them be banished from the table while oysters are upon it. These charming mollusks should always be taken unmitigated, without losing the delicacy of their flavor, by a mixture with any condiment whatever, except their native juice." They should be opened in the deep shell in order to retain the liquor, which is to the oyster what the milk is to the cocoon.

How to Open Oysters.

Hold the Mollusk firmly with a cloth in the left hand, with the roughest part down, and the hinge towards the wrist. Insert the point of the oyster knife carefully just before the edge of upper shell, give a quick decided pressure until the point is felt to glide along the inner surface of the under shell. Force it sharply to the hinge, give a smart wrench rather towards the right hand, and off comes the shell. Separate the oyster from its attachment, and let it fall into the under shell, floating in its juice, lit it quickly to the lips, and eat it before the delicate aroma has been dissipated into the atmosphere. The method employed by most of the "smart" openers in restaurants is just the reverse, for they open them on the flat shell which makes them look more plump and fat, but all the liquid is lost—except when they are selling them by the quart, then they contrive to save every drop of liquor in order to help fill the measure, and you cannot very well "kick," but oysters bought by the quart are generally used for frying, scallops, &c., and you have no use for the liquor. That, perhaps, is the reason you get it. Such is life!

An Easy Way to Open Oysters.

No knife is required. Wash the shells in cold water with a brush. Place them deep shell down on the hot clear fire. In a little while a hissing sound is heard, and the shells begin to open. There is no rule for ascertaining the precise point at which the cooking is completed, for every one has his own taste and must learn by experience. A little practice soon makes perfect. Take them off the fire with a pair of tongs and eat them hot. No one who has eaten oysters dressed in this primitive mode has the least idea of the piquant flavor of which they are capable. Stewed in their own juice, the action of fire only brings out the full flavor, and as the juice is consumed as well as the oyster there is no waste, and no dissipation of the indescribable but potent aroma. The same result is attained by baking in the oven, but the broil is perhaps the sweetest way.

Oysters Fried Without Eggs.

Mixed rolled bread crusts or cracker dust

LADIES' FINE EVENING SLIPPERS!

For Latest New York Styles our assortment consists of

Ladies' Red Morocco Duchess Tie Slippers.
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Ladies' Black Kid Windsor Tie Slippers.
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Ladies' Black Kid low cut Opera Slippers.

We also have a few Pairs of SATIN SLIPPERS that we are closing out at \$1.00, \$1.50 and \$2.00.

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and flour together, about half and half, but the former rather the larger.

Have some milk in a shallow dish. Dip the oysters out of their own liquor into the mixed meal and flour, out of that into the milk, then into the mixture again. If there is time let them lie a while before frying. Handle carefully so as not to rub the coating off, as it will not adhere a second time.

If a frying basket is not used, have enough lard very hot in a deep pan to quite cover the oysters. Drop in a few at a time, try 3 or 4 minutes, take out with a skimmer when light brown and drain on paper or a cloth to free them from grease. If the lard is deep and hissing hot, they come out crisp and dry, yet full of the juice of the oyster. If simmered in lard that is only half deep enough, the breadings peel off like so much greasy pudding. If too many are put into the pan at once, the temperature of the fat will be reduced and the oysters will be greasy and indigestible.

TO BE WORN IN THE SPRING.

Millinery that will be Popular when the Snow Disappears.

The wisecracks who confidently prophesied an approximation to coal-scuttle bonnets and roomy crowned hats in the spring and summer millinery models are much out of their reckoning. Wide of brim many of the hats are, but such a thing as a crown large enough to fit the head is scarcely to be found, while the majority of the bonnets, toques, and turbans before they are trimmed suggest dolls' headgear rather than anything else. Frills, pleatings, puffs, &c., of velvet, lace, or silk projecting from the brim, and which are much used, of course add to the size and serve oftentimes to transform a meagre, insignificant shape into a graceful, becoming one.

As seen at the wholesale importers, the assortment of shapes is larger than usual, but the season is hardly far enough advanced to declare which will be the favorite. It was learned, however, that as to hats straight brims will be worn more than ever, both with a low crown and in plateau style, slightly elongated and turned up at the back. Where the brim is curved the tendency is upward rather than the reverse. For instance, the popular shape of last season, drooping at the sides and with a slight elevation in the centre of the front, is superseded by a droop or straight line in front and upward curves on the side. "The Guardsman," with a decided roll upward on either side of generous dimensions and with a comparatively large, flat crown, is cited as one of the most stylish and becoming of this year's hats.

The sailor is with us again, the shap somewhat disguised with a loose puff of velvet or other material falling over part of the crown and the brim. Other than a low crown is not to be seen, but the disposal of the trimming pyramidal effect, with the base of the pyramid located in the centre rather than either end of the hat. Full caplike crowns caught into a stiff, narrow band, representing one of the latest models, are trimmed low on the side. These are made of all sorts of straw, twisted, tufted, braided and plain, chip, especially, which is soft and pliable, occupying front rank. In fact, the use of chip and all sorts of novel combinations of fancy straw is a noteworthy feature, also their diversity of coloring.

All the neutral tints we are accustomed to have been supplemented with the daintiest shades, such as pink, pale blue, Nile green, lilac, and many tones of red, all of which, including cream dashed with brown, brown with red, ecru with blue and white with almost any color, are procurable in both the large and small models.

Straw ribbons exquisitely variegated in color vie in popularity with those of silk woven in the most bewildering of watered patterns in changeable or shadow effects. From all indications flowers will enjoy an unprecedented reign. Whatever may develop later, it is certain the French models to date show scarcely a trace of ostrich tip or plume, their place being supplied entirely by flowers. Small hats and bonnets made entirely of flowers are sold by the wholesale dealers, the retailer adding a twist of ribbon, lace, fancy straw, etc., to suit the whim of the customer.

Worthy of comment in this year's exposition of artificial floral beauty are samples of the late prize chrysanthemums and unusually beautiful varieties of green leaves, which include many specimens of the leathery fern family. Green is undoubtedly one of the leading colors. Yellow and yellow and black combined find equal favor.—N. Y. Sun.

Women Who Walk Well.

How few women walk well. Most of us wiggle. Even vanity is not strong enough to make us practice that smooth, even glide that is so fetching. The old-fashioned plan of carrying a book on the head is a great thing, after all; and if there are no such luxuries obtainable as gymnasiums and Delsarto classes, the simple, old plan will do a good work. A firm, easy walk is as good almost as a certificate of health, because the training

which secures an elegant carriage is precisely that which counteracts the tendency to a dozen fatal relaxations at different points of the frame, and prevents their appearance. French women carry the weight on the calf of the leg. If you would test this posture, the next hill you ascend, straighten your body and throw your shoulders back, instead of leaning forward and pulling yourself up. You will immediately feel the tension on the calf of the leg, and the lungs will be relieved of strain. In going up stairs walk erect, and you will notice the same. The Creoles of the Gulf, by a practiced movement of the hips, get a sinuous glide, betraying great flexibility of limb. The highly trained walker has a smooth, long step, the weight of the body on the loins, and the legs propelled without stiffness or obtrusive motion of the hips.—N. Y. Press.

The Effects of a First Impression.

They tell an interesting story of one of the famous London beauties. When she came up from her country house to be presented to society by a cousin already a leader in Vanity Fair, her hostess realized the fact that the girl's fresh, robust beauty needed clever management to make the required impression on the critics. She tried on the fresh pink and white ball dress she had brought, but the hostess shook her head, thinking but not saying, "She will not be looked at twice." Then she went to her own room and returned with an old tulle ball dress of her own. It was black and unrelieved by a hint of color. About the plain skirt was a rouleau of tulle trimmed with jet chains. The bodice was made with a flashing jet cuirass, and jet chains draped the sleeve on the shoulders. With some demur the country beauty was persuaded to go to her first ball in the half-worn gown, in which she looked like a queen, and after that night she could wear what she liked, for she was universally conceded the belle of the season, and made a brilliant social success.

INSTRUCTION.

The Monthly Stenographer says: "Prof. Snell has reason to be proud of Master Solano's progress and is entitled to a share of the credit, as he is a careful and exacting teacher." Get up a writing or shorthand party—instruction by letter.

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HOWARD D. TROOP, President.

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