

ASTRA'S TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

LASSIE.—St. John.—Perhaps if you were to know me better and outside of this column, you might not think me a "charming person" at all. It is just as well that we are not likely to meet, because I confess that I do like my girls to think I am an embodiment of all the virtues. (1) Your writing is very good indeed, though rather odd. (2) I do not think the question is so much one of propriety, as safety. For my own part I should much prefer riding alone, to having a groom at my horses' heels, even if I could afford such a luxury, but it is not considered quite safe for a lady to ride without a companion, as she is so helpless in case of accidents, that someone should be at hand to render assistance the moment she requires it. But many expert and fearless horsewomen ignore all such precautions, and throwing conventionality to the winds, enjoy long, delightful rides without any companionship but that of their horse. (3) I should most assuredly not call her a lady and should consider that she had not only very bad manners, but a bad heart. Her conduct is probably caused by jealousy. (4) Your last question I scarcely understand, if you mean by loving each other that they are engaged, of course it should be quite correct, but not otherwise, unless they have what is called "an understanding" which is really a half engagement. Your questions were not at all silly, and I hope the answers will be some use to you.

THREE MAIDS FROM SCHOOL.—(1) It is much better to have some married friends; indeed unless you are all very old and intimate friends, it is absolutely necessary. (2) Not later than ten o'clock at the outside. (3) Once more, no, unless they are old friends or engaged. (4) There is no harm in a young man escorting a girl home from church, or from a friend's house, quite the reverse, and you could not very well avoid it, but the age you mention is much too young for girls to make a practice of running about with young men; you are school girls, almost children, and you had much better go and return with your parents. If a young man wishes to walk home with you, he will not object surely to your parents' society also, and he will probably think all the more of you if you decline to be separated from them to wander off alone with him, because the higher value you set upon yourself, the more your male friends will respect you. Your questions do not tire me in the least, this column is set apart especially for the answering of queries, and I am here to answer them. Any time I can assist you I shall be glad to hear from you again.

EUNICE.—Richibucto.—You express it so prettily that I hope you will "call upon the stars, very often." (1) If I could have solved that problem I should have been spared many a weary hour, and so would numerous other helpless females, but since the usages of polite society forbid one to ask a man plainly if he would not go home, I do not know how the nuisance is to be abated, as I have known actual cases where the extreme measures of winding the clock, and putting the cat out, have been resorted to without success, and one terrible night, when I had a headache, and was very tired, I asked a visitor, whose staying qualities were too pronounced, if he would excuse my resting on the sofa, as my head was aching; I did not lie down, but I snuggled up in the corner amongst the pillows—and fell sound to sleep. Twice I awakened, and that young man was still talking on the same subject that had engrossed his attention when I went to sleep, and thought I was listening attentively, and just as I had made up my mind to ask him to breakfast he remarked that as I was not well he would not stay any longer and as it was half past eleven then I wondered apprehensively how much longer he would have stayed if I had been well. So you see we are only two out of many sufferers, and I know not the remedy. (2) There is such a book, and I think it is called *Biographical Studies*, but as I cannot remember the author's name, I am afraid I cannot help you much; any bookseller can recommend such a work to you I am sure, as he is pretty certain to have one or two in stock. (3) It would not only be correct, but nothing more to the hospitality one should show to a stranger. If you have a brother get him to call on the young man if possible, but if not, ask him to call at any time, and that your parents will be glad to see him. (4) Scarcely, you require at least half an hour to do you any real good, and an hour would be better, your writing is very clear, and very like a man's, but practice would improve it. I enjoyed your pleasant letter very much.

CAIRA.—What a pretty name you have chosen! No, I most emphatically and decidedly do not think it right! I think it very wrong indeed, and very harmful to the girl, who is, or should be, a young lady, and I believe it tends to destroy all her finer feelings. I consider it the greatest injustice that can be done towards a girl, and I cannot understand any woman doing such a thing. It should be prohibited by law. Such methods should never be employed with girls after they have passed their babyhood, and many parents never use them at all. I do not suppose that I can be of any assistance to you, but you have my sincere sympathy and your relative has my entire disapproval. You write a very pretty hand.

MARGUERITE, St. John.—Do you know that I sometimes get a little tired of reading the words, "I have intended writing to you often, but never could find courage?" They occur almost as often as the words "Dear Astra." In future I wish you would not mind about the courage, but simply write: you know I have never bitten anyone yet, and I am not likely to begin now. No one who writes to me ever intrudes; I am here to answer questions, and any girl who wishes to write to me is always welcome, so you need never be afraid again. (1) I am. I do not understand your question; what "Gwendoline" do you mean, and is she a character in fiction or a

real person? I cannot answer you till I know whom you mean. (2) Yes, I think it is a very pretty name. (3) I do not read character by handwriting. (4) Bathe them five or six times a day with cold salt and water; you may put nearly a teaspoonful of salt to a pint of water without making it too strong, and it is a wonderful tonic for the eyes. (5) Yes, I do, most certainly. (6) I think your writing rather uneven, but probably it has not formed yet. (7) Kathleen is much the prettiest. (8) It would be very rude to do the latter, so I suppose you had better make the best excuse you can, as it is the worst possible taste to hurt anyone's feelings.

DOROTHY, St. John.—You are most welcome, and it is no trouble at all. A study of good literature, and of the best magazines, will prove a great assistance to you, but I do not believe the study of grammar would do you much good, as one requires help in such studies, and very slow progress is made by the solitary student. Careful reading and observation of the speech of cultivated people is much better. (2) No, not unless you have been introduced to them properly; you know what is called a "counter acquaintance" is not recognized in society, and those same young men might be very much surprised if you bowed to them. It is so much better to be reserved than forward, and there is no danger of anyone thinking you rude, at the most they will only think that you are a modest girl and know your place, so they will respect you all the more. (3) Say "thank you, I shall be very happy," or simply "Thank you," and always thank him for his kindness in taking care of you, when he leaves you at the door. Say "Thank you for bringing me home," or something to that effect. It is always courteous to show one's appreciation of any attention. I will be glad to hear from you at any time.

STAVIE.—With pleasure. (1) No, it is too pretty and sweet an old custom, ever to go out, nothing looks more charming, I think, and I have seen it done quite lately at very fashionable weddings; so set your mind at rest on that point. (2) There is no rule, but it is usually either the father or the mother of the bride, if they are not present, the first bridesmaid, they are not present, in robing the bride, especially to fasten on her veil during the ceremony, to stand beside her, remove her glove when the ring is to be placed on her finger, and hold both glove and bouquet until the bride requires them at the conclusion of the ceremony, sign the register as one of the witnesses to the marriage, sit at the bride's left hand during the wedding breakfast and assist her in changing her dress, when she is going away, and if necessary attend to the sending of cake to her friends, the bride usually giving a list of those she wishes remembered. (4) The groomsmen's duties are somewhat similar, except that he is supposed to relieve the groom as far as possible of all anxiety with regard to the details of the departure. He generally talks matters over with the groom the night before, and arranges about the clergyman's fee, the checking of the luggage and often even the buying of the tickets. In short, he helps the bridegroom in every way in his power, sometimes even securing the marriage certificate when that much tried individual is too flustered to remember it himself. (5) Only the first piece, or even make one cut in the cake. (6) Unless one of her own and two of her husband's. (7) It depends on the amount of time at their disposal; if the train by which they intend leaving goes soon after the ceremony the supper should be served immediately, but if there are several hours to spare the bride first holds a reception. Standing at the head of the room beside her husband and surrounded by her maids, she receives the congratulations of her friends, and after an hour or so the breakfast or supper is served. As your letter was not in the office within the prescribed time it was quite impossible to answer it "right away" but I hope the answer will not be too late to be of service to you. ASTRA.

Lace-Making in Ireland. Beautiful lace is made in the Presentation Convent at Youghal, the workers being Irish peasant women. Some of the most exquisite reproductions of Greek, old Venetian and Milanese laces have been reproduced; narrow colored linen lace, like fine torchon, is also made, and is much used for trimming handkerchiefs and linen baptisms. This lace wears admirably, Irish lace thread being used. Carrickmacross, Kinsale and Limerick lace is the kind most commonly seen; it is a kind of embroidery executed on a net foundation. Irish gaulpore is much in demand at present; exquisite church lace is made in Limerick, and is used for altar coverings and priests' vestments.

Work and Drudgery Differ. The Medical Record is responsible for the theory that to keep the complexion and spirits good, to preserve grace, strength, and ability of motion there is no gymnasium so valuable, no exercise more beneficial than sweeping, dusting, making beds, washing dishes, and polishing brass and silver. Still the country housewives who spend their lives in these health-giving pursuits as a rule grow old much faster, lose the bloom and freshness of youthful beauty much younger than do their city sisters, who have maids for every branch of work, and seek exercise on horseback and in the gymnasium.

Women as Gardeners. It is curious that when so many women are asking what they can do to earn money so few think of becoming amateur gardeners. Violets, pinks, chrysanthemums, and many other flowers are not difficult to raise, and when carefully packed and sent to a first-class florist bring good prices. It is said that a woman in the south makes a good income furnishing real orange blossoms to a famous florist, while five or six others dress themselves on the dollars produced from the violets that grow so profusely with so little care in the well prepared violet pit.

SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

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

[Correspondents seeking information in this department should address their queries to "Editor Seasonable Receipts, Progress, St. John."] Last Saturday week, when I visited my butcher, I was delighted to see our old friend, the sausage. He had made his first appearance that morning, and looked well after his summer holiday, but alas! things are not always what they seem. Instead of an unexpected treat on Sunday morning for those to whom I cater, I had to "mark them off" the bill of fare, as I found, after cooking them, that they were not fit to eat. A sausage is like an egg, in one respect—you can't tell much about it until you try it. In justice to the makers of the three leading brands made in St. John, I must say that these were not of their make.

I would like to say here for the encouragement of the respectable makers, that there is room for improvement in all. I tried them all last season and none were as good as they might have been. If it costs more to make a better article—make it, and charge the price. The man who does this will get the cream of the trade and make money. Of course, no one expects to get Porter House steak or sirloin pork chops in the shape of sausage, but let more care be taken in the selection and preparation of the meat. Tastes vary, and the quantity of seasoning must vary with them, but the process of manufacture should be always the same. It should be remembered that though scraps and trimmings of meat may very properly be used for making sausages, they should be perfectly sweet and palatable, and should be carefully freed from skin and sinew. Care should be taken to purchase sausages only of a thoroughly respectable dealer, as the mode of preparation offers peculiar temptations to the introduction into their composition of unpalatable meat which could not be otherwise used. Various kinds of meat are made into sausages, pork and beef being the most common, and the former, if properly made, are the best. For those who haven't sufficient confidence in the manufactured article, and who still love it, I would recommend the following:

Home Made Pork Sausage. The principle of making all sausages is alike, and consists in simply chopping the particular kind of meat employed, and seasoning it with spices, herbs of various kinds, bread crumbs and eggs, salt, mustard, or any of those ingredients mixed in such proportions as are agreeable. Then the whole is enclosed in portions of the prepared intestines of a pig, sheep, or calf. These casings can be bought ready prepared in large cities, and in places where they are not, it would be better to do without them than go to the trouble of cleaning them, for they are not altogether necessary. The following is for

Sausages Without Skins. Mince finely a pound of lean pork free from skin and gristle, add $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound of the inward fat of the pig, two large table-spoonfuls of grated bread, a plentiful allowance of black pepper, salt, and finely chopped sage, (or if not liked, thyme, marjoram, shallot, onion or parsley, or a combination of herbs to suit your taste,) a pinch of powdered allspice and a pinch of powdered cloves. Thoroughly mix the ingredients together, and bind them together with three well-beaten eggs. Make them into rolls or small balls flattened out, egg and bread crumb them, and fry them over a clear fire in hot fat until they are nicely browned. A good gravy should be served with them.

Sausage Rolls. Take an ounce of sausage meat prepared as above, form it into a long roll, enclose it in pastry six inches square and an eighth of an inch thick. Roll up, pinch the edges securely, and bake in a well heated oven for thirty minutes, one or two rolls for a portion.

Cucumbers. Are now in their prime and cheap. They are very wholesome, as well as tasty. As a rule, they are hardly ever seen on the table except in vinegar, but they are delicious stewed in milk, having been previously peeled and cut in slices and eaten hot. Another way is to peel them, remove the bitter ends, and then scoop out the seeds with an apple corer or a small teaspoon. Mix these seeds with a quarter of a pound of lean, cooked ham and the same quantity of cold mutton, both finely mixed, and to these add a small onion, also minced, a little chopped parsley, one desert-spoonful of chutney, and a seasoning of pepper and salt. Insert this mixture in the cucumbers; then place them in some good gravy in a baking dish, and leave them for about half an hour in a moderately heated oven. Serve hot.

The Banana. Our taste for this delicious tropical fruit has to be acquired. In countries where it flourishes, the banana is the principal article of diet, and the inhabitants have utilized it in various ways which render it at once nutritious and palatable. They boil it, and they bake it; they peel it, cut it in slices, and fry it in batter; they mash it into a paste, and dry it in the sun, as is done with apples and peaches. It is made into puddings and pies, comfits and preserves; smothered in sugar until it is candied fruit, and it is even made into bread. In every one of these modes it is both pleasant to the taste and wholesome as an article of diet.

Baked Bananas. This is a breakfast or supper dish. The skins are split lengthwise; the ends being cut off; laid in a pan with butter and sugar over, and baked for about fifteen minutes.

Fried Bananas. Peeled, whole or cut across, dipped in syrup, then rolled in flour and dipped into hot lard or butter until crisp on the outside. Very nice.

Banana Fritters. Peeled, cut in two across, dipped in a fritter batter and fried. Sprinkle powdered sugar over and serve.

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Banana Pie. Sliced, sprinkled with lemon juice, sugar, bits of butter, moistened with wine or brandy (optional), baked with bottom and top crust.

Green Corn Pudding. Here is something very nice for a change. It is not sweet, but a sort of vegetable side dish, a good supper dish.

One pint of grated green corn, or half a can. Butter the size of an egg. Half a teaspoonful of salt. Little white pepper. 3 yolk of eggs. 1 cupful of milk.

It canned corn is used, mash it a little; warm the butter and stir in. Beat the eggs, mix them with the milk, and stir all together. Bake in a pan the same as custard, only till it is just fairly set in the middle.

An Excellent Jam. Cheap.

Those housekeepers who have been unable to decide upon what kind of jam to make on account of the expense (aside from our "berries," we have to depend largely upon imported fruits, and they come high), and have been watching the various kinds as they come and go so quickly, are recommended to try the following:

Rhubarb Jam.

There is now some very fine rhubarb in the city market despite the lateness of the season. There is also some for sale that is not fit for food—get the best and prepare as follows: Wipe but do not peel the rhubarb; cut it into inch lengths and scald in two waters with a sprinkling of soda in the first, according to directions given in this column some months ago, when rhubarb first came in. (I have been told by many that they did not know the value of rhubarb until they read and practiced this method.) To every quart of cut up rhubarb allow half a pound or less of the best sugar. Put the rhubarb into an earthen or enameled vessel, sprinkle the sugar over it, and let it stand for twenty-four hours to draw out the juice. The sugar sinks but does not dissolve. Strain off the juice, or rather skim off the rhubarb, and boil the juice and sugar together for twenty minutes. After it begins to boil put in the rhubarb and boil slowly for twenty minutes longer. If only allowed to simmer gently it will not require to be stirred, and the pieces of rhubarb will thus remain separate, and the add to the appearance of the jam. A clove or two and a little orange peel will add to the flavor. This will keep good for a year if kept in a cool dry place.

To Boil Vegetables Green.

Be sure the water boils when you put them in. Use plenty of water to cover them with. Make them boil very fast. Do not cover the pot, but watch them! And if the water has not slackened, you may be sure they are done when they begin to sink. Then take them out immediately or the colour will change. Hard water spoils the colour of such vegetables as should be green. To counteract this put a teaspoonful of salt of wormwood into the water when it boils, before the vegetables are put in. A small lump of charcoal put into a pot of boiling cabbage will prevent a bad order from arising.

Tomatoes with Macaroni.

Boil the macaroni first in the usual way in salted water. Take a small quantity of tomatoes, dip them into boiling water, remove the skins, cut them up, drain off the watery substance, and put them into a saucepan with a small piece of butter, some pepper, salt, a bay leaf, and a little thyme; add a few spoonfuls of either stock or gravy; keep stirring over the fire until they are reduced to a pulp, pass them through a sieve, and dress the macaroni with this sauce. Sprinkle freshly grated cheese and a few bread crumbs on top and bake for ten or fifteen minutes.

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