

"ASTRA'S" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

I must have had a retrospective fit the other day, girls, because I began to think about all the correspondents I had had since I first started this column, and how many of them I had lost sight of! One by one, their names came back to me, the small flock of friends who first surrounded me, when I began my literary career, and whom I have never forgotten! I wonder what has become of them, and where they are now? There was "Butterfly," and "Polly," and "Gladys," and a whole group of "Fannies," "A Canadian in B. C.," "Three little maids from school," and "Wanderer,"—I thought so much of "Wanderer," too, and "Lochinvar," who was such a constant friend, and "Rail,"—but Rail died a natural death as far as her literary career was concerned, caused by a letter some saucy boy wrote to me, about her, and then there was dear little "Robin" whose cheery voice has been silent for so long, that I have come to the conclusion I shall never hear her voice again, and that she is singing in a brighter land. Well, I shall be getting low spirited if I look back too far, so I had better take up my present duties and get a few letters answered. Only I do not like to think that the old correspondents with whom I started out in life, as it were, have quite forgotten me, and lost their interest in my special corner of Progress.

EMMANUEL B. Yarmouth.—Is that your real name, I wonder? and if so, why did you not give me some other, lest pre-adventure I let the captive pussy out of her bag, and then you straightway fall upon me and rend me, therefore? You really made me feel quite wealthy and important by addressing me as "Mrs. Astra," there was only one little insignificant letter between myself and affluence, had you used an o, instead of an e, I might easily have imagined that I was Mr. John Jacob Astor—it I "made believe very much" as "The Marchioness" said. You are a clever boy, Emmanuel! But yet methinks the literary female who ariseth early in the morning and hieeth herself to her task betimes is a little bit clever too, and peradventure she arose first. You have my deepest sympathy, my dear boy, and you shall also have the benefit of my counsel, such as it is. When a man has reached such years of discretion as you have attained, when he has touched the Rubicon of eighteen, and left all boyish and youthful things behind, his judgement must be sufficiently matured for him to rely upon it implicitly, without, of course any regard for such a mere trifle as the opinion of your parents, which cannot matter to you one way or the other. True, they may possibly "forbid the banns," as you say, and even go to such cruel extremes as kidnapping you at the very altar, tearing you from the side of your weeping bride and keeping you in close confinement in the dark, noisome, rat haunted paternal cellar, on a simple but nourishing diet of bread and water until your twenty-first birthday sets you free; but you will be upheld by the knowledge that the course of true love never did run smooth, and also the still more important fact that your parents have the law on their side. Besides that, you can obviate any such unpleasant contingency by not having any banns to forbid! Be married by special license, which is expensive of course, but then so much more secure, and as the young lady is five years older than you, why not borrow the requisite three years from her and then she will be 22 and you 21? I really think that is a brilliant idea. Judging from your rapturous description the young lady must indeed be a wonderful girl. It is not often one has the privilege of meeting a lady who possesses "rich wavy and shining raven locks of dark brown hair" and as she is so charming, the slight tinge of African blood need not be any drawback; such things are largely a matter of taste. I don't think the difference in age matters very much, but I do decidedly think eighteen too young for any boy to marry. Think the matter over until you are of age, and if you are of the same opinion then you can please yourself, but your plain duty now is to obey your parents. I think "shade" a very nice word, and most expressive. The language your parent used was strong, certainly, but no stronger, I fancy, than he thought the occasion warranted. I had not the slightest intention of publishing your letter, so you may set yourself at rest, as your "reluctant consent" will not be required. I certainly do think "attached," or "in love," would sound much better. Your letter was fairly well written and spelled, but the composition might be improved upon. Well, I don't know that I particularly wish you to write to me again, but you may, if you like, and I shall be interested in knowing how your rather peculiar love affair turns out.

NEMO, N. B.—You are very kind to say so, and I think I have said before how much I appreciate such pleasant praise. I think I am always especially pleased when a man tells me he enjoys reading my column, as I know men usually steer very clear of anything like a "Woman's department." As you say my columns are always open to inquirers of both sexes. I feel highly flattered at your having "taken a fancy" to me, and can assure you that neither Geoffrey nor the pup will resent the fact in the least. Geoffrey has too good an opinion of himself to be jealous, and the pup is a dog now. He has celebrated his first birthday, wears his first collar, and has had his first real fight, from which he emerged semi-victorious, that is to say he hurt the other dog nearly as much as the other dog hurt him, so he is naturally inclined to put on airs. Of course I had patience to read your letter, and I enjoyed it very much too. Your story is very clear, and concise, and the only explanation I can give you of the young lady's conduct is that she never really cared for you. I suppose she imagined she did at the time but changed her mind; few girls of that age know their own minds and the very fact that she persisted in corresponding with another proves that her

heart could not have been entirely yours. You were perfectly right in expressing your disapproval, and she had no right to do as she did. I think she treated you very badly, and I cannot quite believe the story about being compelled to receive the attentions of the other, such things do not happen in these days, I think she was tired of the engagement and took that method of ending it. I may be doing her an injustice, but that is the way it looks to me. I am delighted with you, Nemo, for writing so spirited a letter, and telling her your opinion of her conduct! It won't do her any harm, and it may do her a great deal of good, such heartless behaviour is getting entirely too common amongst girls, and the worst of it is that it teaches men to think that we are all alike, and as you express it, "teaches them a lesson" which they should never have learned. I think, if I were you, that I would try to treat her in future exactly as if she were some stranger you were meeting for the first time and be simply courteous to her. If she wishes to offer you any explanation of her conduct, she can easily make an opportunity to do so, but I should not ask for one, it is her place to offer it. I did not see anything silly in your letter, but still I admit that you are very young, and I know that five years from now you will look back, and consider it all very silly yourself, one always does. I am sorry to say. You are perfectly right in what you say about kissing. When I read that extract in Progress I wished very much that I had written it, so entirely did the writer's ideas agree with my own; but yet, my dear boy, I wonder if you realize how much your sex is to blame in that matter? You kiss some trusting little damsel of sixteen, and she knows little of the world, and less of men; so she thinks you must be very much in love with her or you would never do such a thing, and considers it almost equivalent to a declaration of love, and when she finds out her mistake she learns a lesson also, and sometimes it does her more harm than good. I get such numbers of letters on this very same subject that I think it would be very difficult for anyone to identify the writer of any one of them; but you will see that I have been careful. Where did you get that last sheet of paper? I frequently use the same kind myself, but I thought I was a very privileged person indeed, and that very few could obtain it. I shall always be glad to hear from you, and you need not be afraid of making your letters too long.

GHENNON BARRETT.—Yes, so I see. "There you are again," and do you know I believe you are the agent for those typewriters? If you are not, you certainly ought to be, for the enthusiastic manner in which you discourse of their good qualities would carry conviction to the most sceptical mind. I am glad you are so pleased with it, and I should like to have one very much, the price you mention seems ridiculously cheap. You are quite mistaken about the pup, he is not ill at all, the cat is the sole sufferer, but I hope the warm weather will restore her to health. How much there is in that speech the old man made about Shakespeare and how many of us have felt when reading his works that he had some of our "ideas" and the same with James Whitcomb Riley. No, I never heard the little story you mention, about him. How fortunate you are to have the poem in his own writing. I am glad to hear that your cold is nearly well. The flaxseed is an old remedy of my mother's, but we leave out the boneset and licorice, and substitute lemon and rock candy. I really do think a sorely tried public will have to take the matter up and demand some reparation from the publisher of Progress for letting that song loose upon it, without the music the words would have been comparatively harmless, but publishing them together was the last straw. Could we not punish them in some way without resorting to dynamite? Will Helen, St. John, please read philtre, for philtre, in her answer of last week? ASTRA.

AN OFFICER'S STRANGE BET.

How He Made a Ball-room Full of Ladies Show Their Feet.

The writer recalls the circumstance of a bet made by an officer of the Guards. This was in the period of the full skirts worn over extensive crinolines, producing an effect which caused a lady's foot to be rarely visible. The officer wagered that he would instantaneously cause every lady in a certain well-known dancing-hall near Portland-place to display her dainty feet. The bet was really taken up, feminine fashion of the day seeming to render the feat impossible. Rat-baiting was then popular in certain London circles, and there was a noted dealer in rodents who was the name of Bill George. Bill received a commission to deliver a two dozen rats in good condition. Inverness cloaks were then in vogue, and the rats having been secured in two bags, the bettor and a confederate each concealed a bag under his cloak, and at the hour when London society had gathered in the stately mansions of Belgrave quietly made their way to the scene of operations. As they entered the dancing-hall a quadrille was just being concluded. The bettor stationed himself near the door, and his confederate went to the further end of the room. Neither removed his cloak, and when the music ceased two ladies who had just been dancing approached the bettor and entreated him to remove his cloak and join in the next dance. Their distended bell-shaped gowns as they stood beside him afforded a good shield, and he let slip his bag of rats close to the wall. His confederate at the end of the room had done the same thing, and then both gentlemen announced their intention of dancing. The music began, but the band was soon drowned in the chorus of female shrieks which now filled the air. "A rat! a rat!" was echoed from one point to another, and soon they were seen running all over the floor. Chaos ensued, and every lady in the room, regardless of appearances, was hysterically scrambling to a place of safety, until benches, chairs, and tables were densely populated with shrinking femininity, and the bet was won.

SEASONABLE RECEIPTS.

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

Frog Eating.

At this season of the year, caterers in the large cities are on the look out for the first supply of frogs' legs, and while the supply of this delicacy is becoming greater every year, frogs are sufficiently high priced to be accounted an article of luxury. During the summer months they fill a void left by the vacation of the oyster. The frog is one of the regular kinds of meat now kept in stock in all good restaurants and clubs during the season. There are two kinds eaten—the small green marsh frog and the large bull frog. They resemble chicken's legs in appearance and taste, only they are whiter. The legs only are eaten. They are caught with a rod and line, and also by nets drawn along the margin of the ponds. When caught they are skinned; the body thrown away; the feet are chopped off and the legs with enough of the spine or saddle to hold the two together are reserved for cooking. Plentiful as they appear to be—in the marshes and ponds—the market supply is seldom equal to the demand. They are best fried, or fried and broiled. When they appear in our market it will be time enough to tell how to prepare them. I notice that one or two other delicacies are conspicuous by their absence in this market. I have not in three seasons seen a bunch of native asparagus, a fresh mushroom, or a brussels sprout, in their respective seasons, except the mushrooms, which last fall were brought from Nova Scotia in considerable quantities, but not sufficient to find a place in the market. Can anyone tell me if water-cress is to be found anywhere near here? I should be glad to know.

Dandelion.

It is to be feared that if it were suggested to a certain class of people that they would do well to cut young dandelions and eat them when they cannot afford to buy spinach or other vegetables, that the man who ventured to give such advice would be considered as execrable as the Frenchman who told the starving peasants that they would soon have a good crop of grass; and yet it is a fact that most poor people disdain such advice. Educated people, of course, know the value of the dandelion, not only as a vegetable, but that it has the place of honor in the salad-bowls of the rich. They are even cultivated in gardens, straw being used to make the stalks long and white. As far as quantity goes, it will not be many days after this rain before they can be had in plenty, for the picking.

Dandelion Greens.

Gather the young green leaves, and cook the same as spinach, with a pinch of soda in the water, to keep the colour, drain, chop, and season with butter, pepper and salt.

Dandelion Salad.

The young tender leaves as well as the upper white part of the roots, cut into inch lengths and eaten with a dressing made of three parts oil, one part vinegar and pepper and salt to taste.

Damp Cellars.

In this damp climate, and especially at this season of the year it may be well to know that the damp air of a cellar or store room may soon be dried by placing in it a peck of fresh lime in an open box. A peck of lime will absorb seven pounds, or more than three quarts of water.

Fontenelle

was a great epicure, and inordinately fond of spinach. He had a friend who frequently dined with him who was equally partial to the succulent vegetable, but they differed in their preferences of the mode of dressing, for while Fontenelle preferred it *a la creme*, his friend chose it dressed *au beurre* (with butter). In consequence it was customary when they dined together to have the spinach divided and dressed differently. One day Fontenelle was awaiting his friend's arrival and the spinach was ready for the final dressing when instead of the one expected there came a messenger saying the friend had suddenly dropped dead. Fontenelle thought for a moment, then turning towards the kitchen he said, "Tell the cook to dress all the spinach *a la creme*," and without further comment he went to dinner.

Croquettes of Calves Brains.

This is a delicious entree and cheap at this season, also easily obtained and easily made.

1 set of brains.
1 cupful, loose measure, of white bread crumbs.
1 ounce of butter.
1 egg yolk.
1 tablespoonful of chopped parsley.
1 teaspoonful of mixed salt and pepper.
Little lemon juice and slight grating of nutmeg.
Simmer the brains in salted water for about twenty minutes, then put them into cold water and peel off the dark outside, cut them up and mash with the bread crumbs and all the other ingredients. Roll up into shapes like corks with flour on the hands to prevent sticking, coat well with flour, or egg and bread crumbs them, and fry in hot lard, a nice yellow colour. Let them get well done. Serve with french green peas or tomato sauce. The peas simply need warming up in a little of their liquor, a little butter, salt and pepper.

Prune Pudding.

This is worth trying, even if you "do not like prunes." It is not often met with in cooking books, much less in practice. Use only the best prunes. Wash and stone a pound of prunes, break the stones and blanch (in boiling water) the kernels, and put them into a stew-pan with the fruit, a tablespoonful of sugar, half a pint of water, and, if liked, a glassful of port. Boil the prunes to a thick paste. Roll out a piece of paste, such as is used for a roly-poly, a third of an inch thick; spread the fruit upon it, moisten the edges with water, and make it into a roll. Fasten the ends securely. Tie the pudding in a flannel cloth, plunge it into boiling water, and boil it quickly till done enough. A wine sauce is the proper thing to serve with it, but a very nice sauce can be made with some of the syrup the prunes were stewed in, to which add the juice of a

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lemon, enough water to thin it, a small strip of the lemon peel and a pinch of powdered cinnamon. Simmer for a minute or two, and serve with the pudding. This pudding needs only to be known to be loved. The same may be said of

Prune Pie.

If the paste be good and the prunes prepared exactly as for the above pudding. Do not neglect to stone the fruit. It is very easily done after they are washed or even stewed for a short time.

I notice that rhubarb has made its appearance in the market. Rhubarb and prunes are so common, and yet so little understood that it is seldom one finds either properly prepared. They are both healthful foods, and cheap, and they both seem to share the fate of the potato, too little attention being paid to their preparation because they are common. Thoughtful housekeepers do not need to be reminded of this, but those who complain of the "sameness" in cooking would do well to give more attention to these three articles of diet. Next week I will give some points on rhubarb that are not generally known.

Don't

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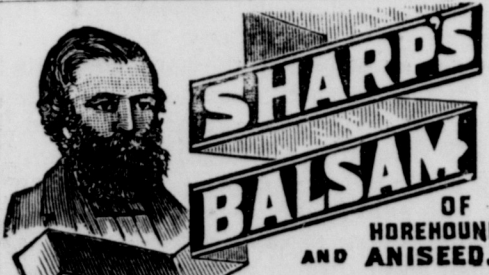
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Spring Arrangements.
TWO TRIPS A WEEK FOR BOSTON

UNTIL further notice the Steamer of this Company will leave St. John for Eastport, Portland and Boston every Monday and Thursday Mornings at 7:20 Standard Time. Returning will leave Boston same days at 8:30 a.m., and Portland at 5 p.m., for Eastport and St. John.

Connections made at Eastport with steamer for St. Andrews, Calais and St. Stephen.

Freight received daily up to 5 p.m.

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SEASON 1892.

The following is the proposed sailings of the

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ROBERT H. FLEMING, Commander.

MAY.—From St. John—Monday, Wednesday and Friday; Annapolis and Digby—Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

JUNE.—From St. John—Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; Annapolis and Digby—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

JULY and AUGUST.—From St. John—Daily Trips, (Sundays excepted).

SEPTEMBER.—From St. John—Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; Annapolis and Digby—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Steamer sails from St. John at 7:30 a.m., local time, return trip, sails from Annapolis upon the arrival of the morning express from Halifax.

(Sgd) HOWARD D. TROOP, President.

Assessors' Notice

THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS OF TAXES OF the City of Saint John, in the present year hereby require all persons liable to be rated, forthwith to furnish to the Assessors

True Statements of all their Real Estate Personal Estate and Income, and hereby give notice that Blank Forms, on which statements may be furnished under the City Assessment Law, can be obtained at the office of the Assessors, and that such statements must be perfected under oath, and filed in the office of the Assessors within THIRTY DAYS from the date of this notice.

Dated this first day of April, A. D. 1892.

WM. F. BUNTING, Chairman, Assessors

JOHN WILSON, of

URIAH DRAKE, Taxes.

RICHARD FARMER, Taxes.

Extracts from "The St. John City Assessment Law, 1889."

SEC. 118.—"The Assessors shall ascertain, as nearly as possible, the particulars of the real estate, the personal estate and the income of any person who has not brought in a statement in accordance with their notice and as required by this law, and shall make an estimate thereof, at the true value and amount to the best of their information and belief; and such estimate shall be conclusive upon all persons who have not filed their statements in due time, unless they can show a reasonable excuse for the omission."

SEC. 119.—"No person shall have an abatement unless he has filed with the Assessors the statement, under oath, within the time hereinbefore required; nor shall the Common Council in any such case sustain an appeal from the judgement of the Assessors unless they shall be satisfied that there was good cause why the statement was not filed in due time, as herein provided."

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MONTREAL. ST. JOHN, N.B.

Intercolonial Railway.

After Oct. 19, Trains leave St. John, Standard

Time, for Halifax and Campbellton, 7:05; for Point

du Chene, 10:30; for Halifax, 14:00; for Sussex, 16:30;

for Quebec and Montreal, 16:55.

Will arrive at St. John from Sussex, 8:30; from

Quebec and Montreal (excepted Monday), 9:30;

from Point du Chene, 12:55; from Halifax, 19:30;

from Halifax, 22:30.

WESTERN COUNTIES R.Y.

Summer Arrangements.

On and after Monday 18th Jan., 1892, trains will run

daily (Sundays excepted) as follows:

LEAVE YARMOUTH—Express daily at 8:00 a.

12 noon; Passenger and Freight Monday, Wednesday

and Friday at 1:00 p.m.; arrive at Annapolis 5:45 p.m.

LEAVE ANAPOLIS—Express daily at 1:20 p.

5:20 p.m.; Passenger and Freight Tuesday, Thurs-

day and Saturday at 7:30 a.m., arrive at Yarmouth

12:35 p.m.

CONNECTIONS—At Annapolis with trains of

way, at Digby with Steamer City of Monticello to

and from St. John every Monday, Wednesday and

Saturday. At Yarmouth with steamers Yarmouth

and Boston every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

Friday and Saturday evenings; and from Boston

every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday

morning. With Stage daily (Sunday excepted) to

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J. B. BRIDGELL, General Superintendent

Yarmouth, N. S.

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