

"ASTRA'S" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

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

GRISelda, St. John.—"Was I ever in love?" Really Griselda, I am surprised at you; of course I was in love half a dozen times, and so was Geoffrey. How many of us marry our first and only love, do you think? And if we did would we not lament the fact in sackcloth and ashes very often. I believe I was Geoffrey's sixth or seventh love, and I know he was my fourth, but I was quite satisfied to be his last love as long as I could not be his first. I am sorry to say he is not so magnanimous, and frequently remarks in my hearing that he does not consider it respectable for any girl to have more than one lover. Such is the selfishness of the best of men. I think our taste changes so much between the years of eighteen, and twenty-five, that it is well we so seldom marry our first loves.

"Whom first we love you know, we seldom wed."

And it is much better so. It very often happens as you say, but not always. Don't you know that it is said, by good authorities on the subject that "any woman can marry any man?" I would not go so far myself, but yet, I believe to a great extent in the idea it conveys, no woman ever won the love of a man who was worth having, by making open love to him; but by studying his tastes, never forcing her society on him, or giving him an opportunity of growing weary of her, never letting him see that she has more than a friendly preference for his society, and always being bright, entertaining, neatly dressed, and above all good natured, because every man loves a sweet tempered happy girl—many and many a woman has won the man she cared for, though at first he may have never given her a thought. And just here, my dear Griselda let me give you, and all other girls a little bit of advice. If you want to win a man's love never be foolish enough to adopt the roll of the strong minded cynical woman of the world, so many girls are fond of assuming. Men see enough of that amongst their own sex, and they want something different in the girl they love. Every man loves a womanly woman and the girl who hustles the children out of the room, chases the cat out of doors, hates the dog, and then expects men to admire her for her common sense is usually left to wonder why her less attractive sisters have all been married, and she is left, like the last rose of summer,—"to pine on the stem," while the happy little maid who loves babies, and puppies and kittens, who runs out to the stable to look at the new brood of chickens, and the mere sight of whom starts the horse and cow whinnying, and lowing, with pleasure, is snatched up by some sensible fellow almost before she has time to grow up. There! You see how much time, and space I have given you, so you may rest assured that your letter did not weary me. You were perfectly right about the letter, never allow yourself to be persuaded to write to him, and if things don't turn out just as you wish now, you will no doubt be very glad of it, in a few years.

ELISIA.—I should think her most unprincipled as well as deceitful and treacherous. (2) No, how could I, or anyone else possibly consider such a girl a friend; she is beneath contempt. (3) How can you ask me such a question? Of course she should not encourage his intentions, no girl would. (4) I am sorry I cannot place the quotation, and I cannot find it in any of my reference books. I do not think it is by any of the most widely quoted poets. (5) Your writing is good, and you did not ask many questions at all.

EGlantine, St. John.—(1) I have searched faithfully for the lines you ask about but failed to find them; I fancy the poem must be a very beautiful one, judging from your description, and perhaps some correspondent can tell us where to find it. (2) Which legend do you mean, there are so many? Eros, you know is but another name for Cupid, or love, and Psyche was the goddess of pleasure; she was also Cupid's bride and they loved each other devotedly. One legend says that Psyche was a mortal maiden and the boy god fell in love with her, but as no mortal must look upon one of the gods, he could only look on her at night, until Juno would change her into a goddess. Psyche accepted her unseen lover, and promised never to try and find out what he looked like, until he gave her leave. But after they were married, her mother persuaded her that she had married some horrible monster, who was afraid to be seen, and her curiosity was too much for her; so one night when Cupid was asleep, she lighted a candle and peeped at him. She saw such a beautiful boy, that she bent over him fascinated, and in doing so, let a drop of burning wax fall on his shoulder. A wound received by a god while in mortal form is incurable, so Cupid fled shrieking from his earthly bride, who was left to moan her indelible for the rest of her life; but I really forget how she came to be a goddess in the end. (3) There are many legends about the aspen, but the commonest is that our Saviour's cross was made of the wood of the aspen, and ever since the tree has never ceased to shiver with shame and remorse. A pretty idea, is it not? Thank you for your kind words about our column. I answered your questions with pleasure.

FORGET ME NOT, Tacoma.—No indeed I have not forgotten you, I am glad to hear that you are so fond of Progress and

"would not be without it" it is indeed like seeing the face of a friend when one is away from home, to get it. You might write us a little note some time, and tell us about the country then we could all enjoy it. Use tepid water for washing your hands and rub them well every night with rose water and glycerine, in equal parts; keep them out of very hot water, if possible. That is all you can do, unless the redness comes from tight lacing, or tight sleeves, either will make the hands very red. I shall always be glad to hear from you.

CHUM, St. John.—Christmas always takes us by surprise I think, especially when the autumn is as long as it has been this year. I do not think there is the least harm in a girl offering some little Christmas gift to an old friend, even if he is a man; friends expect to exchange little presents on that day, but still there is always the danger of a man thinking a girl expects something in return, and when he has nothing for her, it is very likely to make him feel uncomfortable. If he is in the habit of giving you some present every Christmas, of course that objection is removed, and yours will be only a pleasant exchange. Yes, my dear little girl I can understand perfectly, and it is the most natural thing in the world. When we grow to like a person we begin to see charms in them, that we never saw before, and I think it is such a blessing that it is so, as the plainest people are often the most lovable.

DICKEY BIRDS.—I suppose you know I was a friend of all birds, and so you chose the name that would be sure to win a cordial reception for you. You are most welcome to the girls' corner, I am always glad to extend the circle. Yes, many of my correspondents write so nearly alike that I find it difficult to distinguish their letters, until I see the signature. (1) Look in another column for suggestions about Christmas presents for gentlemen. (2) If they are old and intimate friends, and the gift is a small one, such as some of her own work, it is quite correct. (3) I really think it is a matter of taste, and entirely his own concern, men often prefer girls very much younger than themselves. (4) If she is a large girl and looks grown up I should think it high time to wear her hair in grown up style. (5) I think girls cannot be too careful about giving their photographs and the fewer of them that are floating around the country in the possession of young men, the better they will feel when they are either engaged, or married. (6) I think he was either sadly deficient in knowledge of the ways of the world, or else he had very little respect for the girls; perhaps he really did not know what an extraordinary thing it was to do. (7) I think boys and girls had better be thinking about their lessons, than about "flirting," and "paying attention to" each other. It he is, as you say, "a young boy" he would be better employed in skating or playing polo, than flirting. (8) Your writing is very pretty, and legible, and I blessed you in my heart for the careful way your questions were written, and numbered.

PAULINE.—A very good income can be made by teaching music if you have any aptitude for teaching, because I really think that is as necessary to a teacher's success as the requisite knowledge itself. I would suggest telegraphy, because although it takes a longer time to learn it, the pay is much better and I think the work is easier. Yes, I do think you silly, and I don't think you acted wisely at all; and when I tell you Geoffrey's hair, no matter how closely he has it cut, the ends will turn back and try to curl, you will see what a tender point you touched upon, and what good grounds I have for my opinion, since Geoffrey is about the least effeminate man I know. Seriously, my dear girl, think of the man himself and never mind his appearance. It would be the height of folly to allow any one personal characteristic to weigh against a man in your esteem. The words are from Whittier's poem, "Maud Muller." Have dark brown by all means—brown and gold is lovely. A yellow cashmere vest, collar and cuffs would be just the thing; but don't get chamois, as it soils so soon. No letter is ever answered in this column the week it is received, but I hope next Saturday will do as well. Write again. I will be glad to hear from you.

ASTRA.

The French Girl and Her Father.

A French girl feels that there is just one companion as delightful as her mother, just one friend in the world as trusty, just one confidant as sympathetic, and that is—her father. He is her hero and the knight of her dreams. Often and often have I seen the girls at school hiding their father's photograph in the leaves of their school books, kissing it enthusiastically on the sly, pressing it to their hearts when they go to chapel to say their prayers, sewing his last letter into their dresses, treasuring some little keepsake in their pockets. And when they meet one can see how the father returns his daughter's feeling by his tender clasp of her pure, young hand and the adoring affection with which he looks down into her eyes. He allows nothing to keep him back from meeting her as she comes from school, and giving her his arm—for every French gentleman extends this mark of protection and respect to the women of his family—they start off on their long, happy walk, and many a merry romp, many a tender confidence, do they have in the short evening that follows till her early bedtime at eight o'clock. In France the son belongs peculiarly to his mother; till he marries she is the "lady on his shield," but the daughter is two-thirds her father's. The effect of this intercourse can be traced in their characters. Under a modest exterior, the French girl hides an element of masculine strength, while the active, self-reliant French lad has an almost feminine refinement and tenderness of disposition.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Bibulous Bibbins, his wife to cheat, Would steal to bed in his stocking feet; But the lady smart, strewed o'er the tracks A dressing of sharply-pointed tacks. Bibulous B., not a bit afraid, Soft slippers with inch-thick soles had made; And now he relates (and his fat sides crack) How well he evaded the income tacks.

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Consomme a la Royale.

(Xmas Menu.)

So much work is required to prepare this soup that inexperienced housekeepers hesitate to try to make it. It is worth while, however, to learn, because it is of all soups the most useful. When you have made your consomme you have made twenty or more different soups, which take their names from the floating garnish that is put into it at the last moment. Last week I promised to explain some of the principal dishes suggested in the Christmas menus. This is one of them:—Use for a gallon of soup four pounds of beef cut from the under part of the round, four pounds of shank of veal, a fowl weighing about five pounds, six quarts of cold water, a large onion, four tablespoonfuls each of chopped carrot, turnip and celery, two sprigs each of parsley, thyme and summer savory, three bay leaves and one large leaf of sage—all these herbs being tied in a piece of muslin—forty pepper-corns, half a dozen cloves, a three-inch piece of cinnamon, a tiny bit of mace, ten allspice, two level tablespoonfuls of salt, four tablespoonfuls of butter, and the whites of two eggs.

Cut the beef and veal into small pieces and put them in a soup-pot. Fry these dry over a rather hot fire for half an hour, stirring often; then add the six quarts of cold water, and let the contents of the soup-pot heat slowly to the boiling point. Skim carefully and set the pot back where the soup will only just bubble, but bubble it must all the while, and in every part of the kettle. Cook for three hours, and then add the fowl, first cleaning it thoroughly. When the soup has been cooked for five hours, put the butter, the onions cut fine, and the chopped vegetables into a frying pan and cook gently for half an hour; then turn these ingredients into the kettle, and add also the spice, herbs, and salt, cook for an hour and a half longer. When the fowl has been cooked for two hours and a half, see if it is not tender enough to take up, as it need be cooked in the soup only long enough to make it tender. In that time it will impart a good flavor to the stock. After the soup has simmered in all for six hours and a half, put it through a fine sieve and set it away in a crock to cool. In the morning there will be a jelly, from which every particle of fat should be, and can, easily be removed from the top. Put the jelly stock into the soup pot again, with the whites of eggs well beaten, and heat slowly to the boiling point. The instant the stock begins to bubble, set it back where it will just keep at the boiling point for half an hour. Strain it at the end of that time, through a napkin or piece of canton flannel, when it should be as clear as amber and of the same color.

To make the floating custards, take three or four yolks of eggs, raw, and mix them up with a spoonful of the consomme. Pour into a slightly buttered soup-plate, and steam for ten minutes by setting the plate over a sauce-pan of boiling water. The plate need not be covered. Cut the custard into strips half an inch wide, and then into diamond shapes. Drop four or five into each soup-plate as it is being served, or put them all in the tureen with the soup.

Clam Bisque.

(Xmas Menu.)

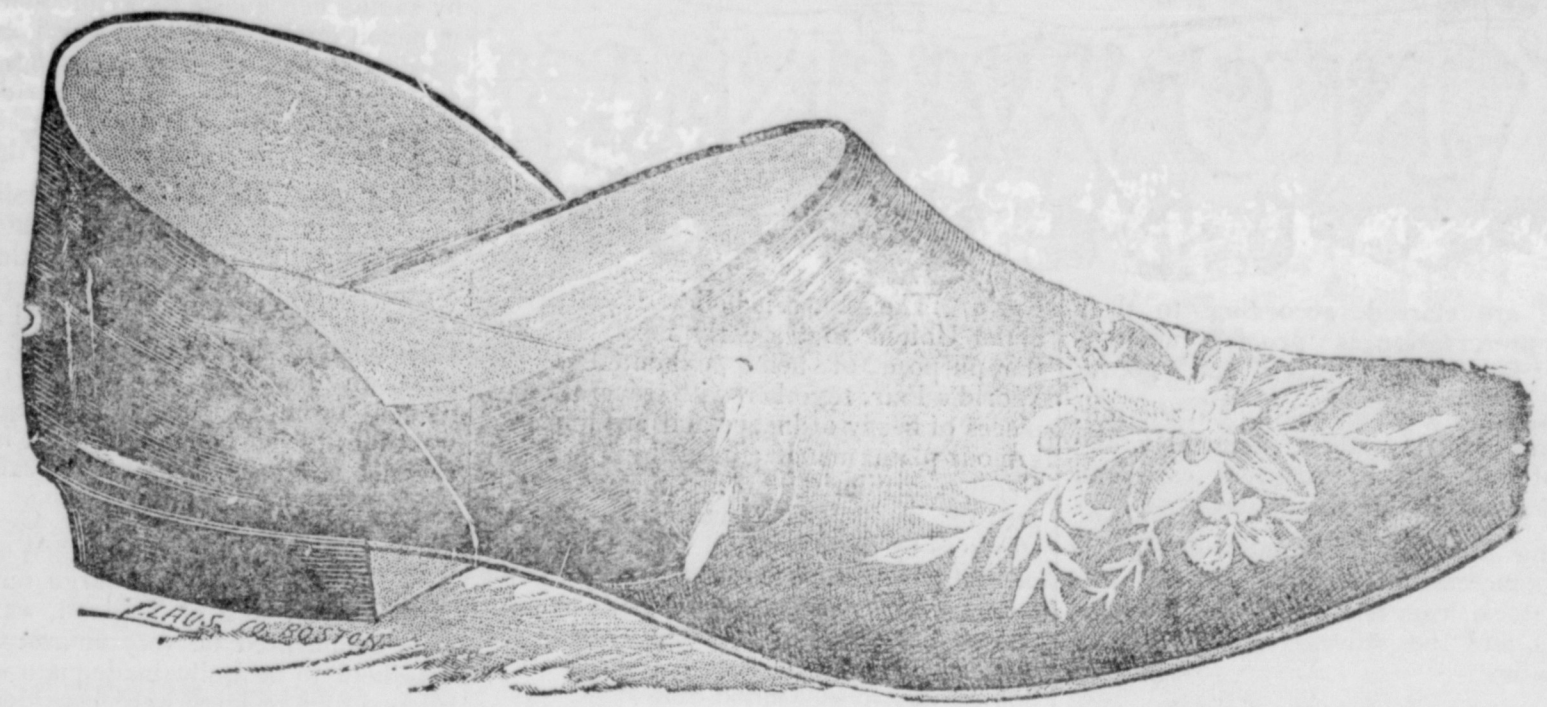
Chop a quart of clams rather fine, and putting them into a soup-pot with a quart of chicken stock, simmer for an hour. Cut an onion fine, and put it into a small frying-pan with three tablespoonfuls of butter. Cook slowly for a quarter of an hour, being careful not to brown; then draw the onion to the side of the pan, and after pressing out all the butter, put the onion into the soup-pot with the clams. Put two tablespoonfuls of flour into the butter remaining in the small frying-pan, and stir until smooth and frothy, then stir this mixture into the soup. Add a bay leaf, a sprig of parsley, a sprig of thyme, a blade of mace, a tablespoonful of salt and a quarter of a teaspoonful of white pepper. Simmer for ten minutes; then remove the herbs and spice, and rub the soup through a puree sieve. Return to the soup-pot and heat to the boiling point. Add a quart of cream; and when the bisque has been once again heated to the boiling point, put it back where it will keep hot, but not boil, until serving time. Beat the yolks of four eggs thoroughly, and add a pint of cold cream to them. Draw the soup forward, and let it boil. Stir the new mixture into it, and cook for twenty minutes stirring all the while. Taste, to be sure that there is enough seasoning, and if there is not enough, add salt and pepper. Serve immediately. This soup must not boil after the yolks are added. Sippets of toast, crackers, or fried crumbs may be served with it, but the soup is so delicate that the accompaniments should be prepared very carefully, or omitted.

Boiled Cod and Oyster Sauce.

(Xmas Menu.)

In boiling a cod, a few things must be remembered in order to have it in perfection. The water must be salted, and made acid with lemon juice which whitens the flakes of the fish and makes them firm, besides giving the fish a good flavor. If the fish is put into cold water, as many otherwise good cook books say, the juices will be drawn out, thus impoverishing the fish. On the other hand, if plunged into boiling water the skin is apt to break, and the appearance of the fish is spoiled. Therefore it is a good plan to put into the fish kettle less than half as much cold water as will be required; then put the fish in, and gradually add boiling water enough to cover it. By this method the skin will be made to contract slowly, and it will not break. When it is boiling, the water should never be allowed to do more than bubble, as rapid boiling breaks the fish and makes it unsightly. Too much cooking makes the fibres dry and woolly, but it should be cooked enough to have the flakes separate readily. In cold weather it is better for keeping a day or two after being caught, or it may prove watery. A large cod should not be cooked whole. The head and shoulders make a nice dish

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by themselves, though the middle contains more solid meat. Wash and cleanse the inside of the fish with great nicety, put it into water and boil as suggested above, allowing twenty to twenty-five minutes for a moderate sized piece, longer for a large one. When the fish leaves the bone easily it is cooked enough. Serve on a neatly folded napkin, and garnish with sprigs of parsley and slices of lemon.

TO MAKE THE OYSTER SAUCE.—Take a pint of freshly shelled oysters with their liquor. Selected oysters of a little less than medium size are the best for this purpose. Mix an ounce of butter and an ounce of flour smoothly together in a stew pan. Add the oyster liquor, a pinch of cayenne, the eighth of a small nutmeg, grated, and small teaspoonful of milk. Stir the whole gently over the fire until it is smooth and thick. Put the oyster into a heated metal strainer, and while in this hold them in boiling water for two or three seconds; put them into the tureen, pour the sauce over them, add a teaspoonful of anchovy essence, stir up, and serve.

Baked Chicken Halibut.

(Xmas Menu.)

Use young (chicken) halibut weighing about seven or eight pounds, which would be sufficient for a party of from 15 to 20. Into a shallow pan put a third of an inch of boiling water, and lay the fish in it black-skin side down. In about two minutes, remove the water and scrape off all the black part of the skin; then wash quickly in cold water. Place a tin sheet in a dripping pan and lay the fish upon it. Sprinkle over it salt and pepper, and on top of that put a thick sprinkling of bread crumbs with little lumps of butter on the top, cover the bottom of the pan with boiling water and bake in a hot oven for nearly an hour. Half an hour before it is done pour a little milk and put a few lumps of butter into the pan to make a gravy.

Potato Cubes.

These, like potato balls, are a very nice adjunct to fish, and are easily made, but to be effective great care should be taken to have them of a uniform size and cut perfectly square. Nothing but a common knife and a good eye for symmetry are needed to prepare this dish. Choose large, long potatoes, wash them well and commence by taking off a slab lengthwise. Then lay the potato cut side down, and cut it into slices a little more than a quarter of an inch thick. Cut these slices into strips as wide as they are thick and you have square sticks of potatoes which have now only to be cut off in lengths to make them into squares or cubes. As fast as cut, throw them into cold water. A quarter of an hour before serving time, put them into a sauce-pan with boiling water enough to cover them, and cook for twelve minutes. Pour off all the water carefully, dredge with salt, and set back of the range to dry off. Dish up on a napkin pour over a small quantity of melted butter and lightly sprinkle over with chopped parsley.

Potato Balls.

Are prepared in the same way. Only they have to be scooped out with a potato scoop.

Chocolate Mousse.

(Xmas Menu.)

A mousse is a dish that is made with whipped cream and frozen without being stirred. When the frozen mass is cut into, it has a texture like the fine moss found in deep woods. Among the definitions given for the word "mousse" are "mossy," "frothy," "foam"; hence the name. The labor of preparing it is slight, but it requires a long time to harden. In making a mousse, the first step is to whip the cream and drain it. Do not set the bowl of cream to be whipped, in your lap and stir it until your arm aches, and you wonder why it does not "come," but set the bowl of cream into a larger one, or in a pan of finely powdered ice; go at it with an egg whisk, and literally whip or lash it to a foam. This cannot be easily done without a proper beating bowl which is to be found in all good kitchens. As the foam rises, lift it with the whisk on to an inverted sieve to drain, for if there be any liquid cream in the mousse, there will be no mousse. Now pack the mould in salt and ice, using five pints of coarse salt and three times as much crushed ice for a gallon mould. Finish the mousse preparation, (see following recipe) and put it into the mould; cover and set away for five or six hours. If the mould be lined with soft white paper, the mousse will have a smooth and handsome appearance when turned out on a dish, but it takes a longer time



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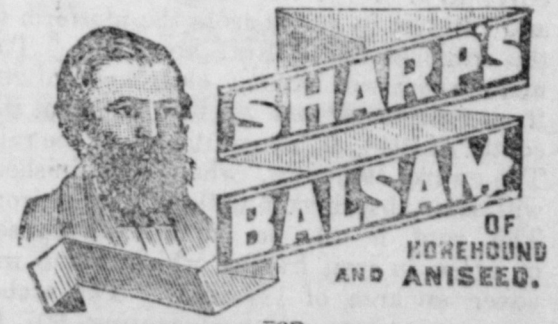
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to freeze. It is a great improvement to line the bottom and sides of the mould with a sheet that will combine with the flavor of the mousse. Remember that a mousse is not good unless it be properly frozen, and it is necessary to begin the freezing so early that there may be fully six hours for freezing. Now, then, having whipped and drained your cream, packed the mould in salt and ice, scrape fine an ounce (to a quart of cream) of chocolate and put it into a small frying pan, with three tablespoonfuls of sugar and one of boiling water. Stir over a hot fire until smooth and glossy—that is for about a minute; then cool and add six tablespoonfuls of whipped cream to it, and stir into the dish of whipped cream; add a scant cupful of sugar, and stir gently until the ingredients are well mixed; turn into the mould, cover and set away. Turn out the same as a jelly or ice cream, only with more care.



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