

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—

What a pleasure and advantage it is to be able to converse freely, and how difficult it is for many that are well educated to express their views for the simple want of practice. Now good conversation should by no means be confined to literary, political or high social circles, but be cultivated in every home, and the prized accomplishment of every class of society.

Now, dear nieces, why not endeavor during our long winter evenings to have conversational parties, to bring young intellects in friendly collision, and enable each other both to give and get a portion of intellectual wealth. They would serve to loosen the tongue, which in so many seems utterly tied when they attempt to speak in company. Conversation well directed might become a great means of exercising their intellectual powers, and the exchange of thought and information benefit one another and acquire a fluency of speech which is so necessary in life. Parents may do much to encourage in their children the faculty of talking by teaching them to think and reason as well as speak. In teaching the art of conversation certain dangers have to be avoided—all formality and everything priggish or conceited, and that frivolity of speech and manner which infests every class of society. The use of slang terms should not be tolerated, but plainness and purity of speech, which always mark the true lady or gentleman.

The kind of conversation that generally goes on, even in polished and cultivated circles, would make a very poor appearance in print. This fashionable repugnance to anything like solid conversation springs from stupidity or sheer affectation, and is one of the worst faults of the reigning frivolity of the day. With rare felicity Cowper describes conversers and conversations which are quite common at the present day. His satire was never more needed than now, and we would like to draw our readers' attention to the perusal, or reperusal, of his conversation. Denouncing the fierceness of some kinds of wordy war, he exclaims,

"Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate,
A duel in the form of a debate!"

Then passing from the ferocious to the timid and hesitating talker, he tells us,

"Dubious is such a scrupulous good man—
Yes, you may catch him tripping if you can—
He would not with a peremptory tone
Assert the nose upon his face his own;
His evidence, if he were called by law
To swear to some enormity he saw,
For want of prominence and just relief,
Would hang an honest man instead of a thief."

Then your positive people are thus characterised—

"Without the means of knowing right or wrong,
They are always decisive, clear and strong,
Where others toil with philosophic force
Their nimble nonsense takes a shorter course,
Flings at your head conviction in a lump,
And gains remote convictions in a jump."

The poet thus touches up some well meaning but afflicting personages—

"But sedentary weavers of long tales
Gives me the fidgets, and my patience fails.
'Tis the most asinine employ on earth
To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
And echo conversations dull and dry,
Entertained with, "H. said," and so said I."

And then he gives some excellent directions to story-tellers—

"A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct,
The language plain, the incident well liked;
Tell not as new what everybody knows,
And, new or old, still hasten to a close."

The following picture will remind many of what they have felt and seen:

"The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose
In contract inconvenient, nose to nose,
As if the gorman on his neighbor's phiz
Touched with the magnet attracted his.
His whispered theme, dilated and at large,
Proves after all a wind gun's airy charge."

MINNIE MAY.

Answers to Inquirers.

MISS NELLIE.—The letters "I. H. S." signify, "Jesus hominum Salvator"—Jesus the Saviour of men. "In hoc salus"—In Him is salvation.

M. A. J., Kingston.—The best thing to do is to take the shawl to a professional dyer, who will treat it to a mordant that will fix the color. The next best plan is to dye it again, being careful to follow a recipe which will insure a fast color.

RALPH, N.S.—We believe steel, or rather iron, pens were made in Holland as early as the seventeenth century, but it was not until 1824 that they were produced in quantities as regular articles of manufacture.

MRS. CARSON.—Bird fanciers advise for lice or mites rubbing a little Persian insect powder under the bird's wings. Also apply sweet oil to the end of the perches and that part of the cage on which the perches rest; here it is the lice are liable to breed. At night cover the cage with a piece of white cloth—flannel is the best—and remove early in the morning. The insects will leave the bird to go to the cloth, which in consequence should be washed each day previous to using again at night.

J. C. G.—A man of thirty is certainly not too old to marry a girl of nineteen.

EFFIE M.—The mere proffer of a nosegay, and the dancing three or four times with you, should not lead you to rush at the idea that the swain is enamoured. Wait till his attentions become unmistakably pointed, before you give way to such deliberations.

JANE G.—You should certainly accept the apology offered by your young female friend, under the circumstances. She did not know of your engagement to the gentleman all the time she joked with you upon the subject; and, after all, the jest was a trivial one.

ROSE.—It is not good to habituate yourself to take citrate of magnesia every morning. For obstinate pimpular eruptions a person should go through a regular course of medicine, relative to which a proper practitioner should be consulted.

JERSEY.—The words "warm" and "hot" do not express the same meaning, the former expressing only a moderate degree of heat, and the latter a great degree.

RECIPES.

PRESSED VEAL.

Take 8 lbs. of veal; hash the meat; 3 eggs beaten, pepper and salt, and nutmeg to taste; 3 tablespoonfuls of butter melted. Roll 8 crackers; mix half with the meat; the other half to be put on the outside. After making the meat in a form, bake two or three hours, basting with butter. Half fill the pan, in which the loaf is baked, with water when it is placed in the oven.

MOON-SHINE.

Beat the whites of two eggs very light. Sweeten to taste. Then slice in very thin pieces one banana and stir into it; or if you choose take two oranges, or any kind of fruit will do. Do not make it until just before going to table. It is a handsome dish, and delicious for tea.

HOMINY GRIDDLE-CAKES.

To one pint of warm, boiled hominy add a pint of milk or water, and flour enough to make a thin batter; beat up two or three eggs, and stir them into the batter with a little salt. Fry as any other griddle-cakes.

WAFFLES AND CORN-BATTER CAKES.

Two eggs well-beaten, stir in a little flour, then one teacup of buttermilk, in which has been dissolved one teaspoonful of soda, one teacup of sweet milk, then the remainder of one quart of flour. For batter-cakes, stir in meal instead of flour. Use plenty of lard in baking—or gravy, or butter.

BREAKFAST BISCUIT.

Take a piece of risen bread dough and work into it one beaten egg and a tablespoonful of butter, or lard and butter mixed. When these ingredients are thoroughly amalgamated, flour your hands and make into balls the size of an egg. Rub a tin baking pan over with butter, and set them in a quick oven for twenty minutes, when they will be ready for the table. Always break them open, for to cut would make them tough.

POT-AU-FEU.

Into four quarts of cold water put two pounds of "round;" bring very slowly to the boiling point and boil slowly till the meat is about half done, then add salt and a few vegetables at a time, so as not to stop the boiling—three or four carrots, a cabbage cut in quarters and tied together, potatoes, half a dozen onions, a bouquet of herbs—celery, parsley and sweet basil tied together. When the pot-au-feu is nearly done, toast slices of stale bread crisp and brown and put them in the soup tureen. Pour the broth over them when done and serve; arrange the meat on a platter with the vegetables around it. This is the French method of cooking what in America is called a "boiled dinner."

MAKING VINEGAR.

Mix five quarts of warm rain-water with two quarts of New Orleans molasses and two quarts of liquid yeast. In a few weeks you will have strong vinegar.

PICKLED NASTURTIUMS.

Soak them twelve hours in brine, drain, and then pour on them boiling vinegar, with whole black pepper and allspice.

HORSE-RADISH SAUCE.

Grate the horse-radish after it has been well cleaned and the outer skin peeled off, cover it with vinegar, and bottle for immediate use. As a condiment for soups, fresh meats and boiled cabbage, horse-radish sauce is highly regarded by epicures. Some persons prefer to cut the root in long thin strips, and boil it in milk.

CHOPPED PICKLE.

Pare and cut cucumbers into pieces an eighth of an inch thick, and prepare some onions in the same way. Place a layer of each in a jar, sprinkling lightly among them salt, white mustard seed, red pepper and cloves. When the jar is nearly full, boil vinegar enough to cover them, and then fasten the vessel so as to exclude the air as much as possible.

TO MULL CIDER.

If your cider is hard, reduce it with water to a palatable strength, and set it on the fire to boil, with the addition of a few grains of allspice. To each quart of cider take eight eggs and beat them in a large pitcher, with as much sugar as you may deem sufficient. By the time the cider boils the eggs will be light; then pour over them the boiling liquid, and continue to pour it from one pitcher to another until it has a fine froth on it. When you put the cider into glasses, grate nutmeg over the top.

CLOSING CRACKS IN CAST-IRON STOVES.

If finely pulverized clay and a little salt are mixed with an equal quantity of wood-ashes, sifted through a fine sieve, and made into a paste with water, and then filled into the cracks of a stove when the stove is cold, it will effectually stop the cracks. It makes a cement that will not pull off or break, and soon assumes, after being heated, a great degree of hardness. This can also be used with good results in setting the plates of a stove or fitting the pipe, making all the joints perfectly tight. This is a useful hint to country housekeepers, who cannot always get repairs done in short notice.

TO REMOVE WARTS.

The best application is said to be that of monohydrated nitric acid. The ordinary acid should not be used, because its caustic effects extend much farther than the points touched, while the action of the stronger acid here recommended is limited to the parts to which it is actually applied. Nitrate of silver is also frequently used with advantage, and of late a concentrated solution of chloral has been spoken of as efficient in destroying warts.

Grace Greenwood relates as an instance of the extravagance of New England humor, that when a young farmer's wife made her first boy's pants precisely as ample before as behind, the farmer exclaimed: "Goodness, he won't know whether he is going to school or coming home!"

A little fellow, on going for the first time to a church where the pews were very high, was asked on coming out, what he did in the church, when he replied: "I went into a cupboard, and took a seat on a shelf."