

"ASTRA'S" TALKS WITH GIRLS.

(Correspondents seeking information in this department should address their queries to "ASTRA," Progress, St. John.)

B. L. VAN E, San Jose, California.  
I do not know whether you intended me to use your name or not, and you do not say whether this is a *nom de plume* or not, so I only use the initials. So Phoebe is a welcome guest far out in California, and you look for it eagerly, even though it is always a week old when you get it? Well I am not surprised it does seem like a dear gossip old friend when one is away from home, it brings so much home news. (1) No, it is not at all proper, and it he knows she is engaged it is really not right. I do not think I would take the extreme measure you suggest, but I should tell him kindly, and firmly that as I was engaged I did not care to accept any attentions whatever from gentlemen. If his self esteem is proof against that—well—just set the dog on him, and let them settle the question of supremacy between them. (2) If she knows all about him, and either she or her family have shown him sufficient kindness to make him feel that he would like to make some little return, she might accept the book, or the box of candy, but no present of any greater value. (3) "Dear Mr. Smith" is always correct. You asked very few questions, and very easy ones to answer, so it is needless to say that I shall be very glad to hear again from the "Garden City of the Golden West" whenever you care to write.

SALT, St. John—No my dear I don't, I think he is a mean boy, and he ought to be ashamed of himself to begin in his early youth that wicked game of hearts, that, his sinful—has been playing ever since Paris left poor (Enone, for another girl not half as nice, or as fond of him either, for that matter. He is a bad boy.—Salt, and he deserves to be peppered well, so don't have anything more to do with him, and if he asks you why, tell him he must make up his mind, choose which he likes best and "stick" to her. That is my advice, my child, but I don't believe you will take it.

BUTTERFLY, St. John—I think he does not deserve the name, and the proprietor should speak to him, but perhaps he does not know any better. It is a horrid practice I think, just about ten degrees more than gum chewing, and that is bad enough. Suppose the next time he does it, you fix him with "a strong British stare" or the best Canadian imitation of one that you can assume, curl your lip slightly, not too much you know because that is so unbecoming, and gaze steadily, at his cheek, the one which you know contains the tobacco, look disgusted if you can, and very indignant and if he has any feelings at all I am sure that will crush him. Try it and see. Write again some time, I shall be glad to hear from you.

BUD, St. John—No, I blush to confess that I have not heard a word about it; dances are a little out of my line, and I have been so busy lately that I have had very little of anything. It does seem rather an odd idea but still, a very delightful one for those dear little buds who have not yet blossomed out into society roses. Who gives the dances, and where is it to be held? I have been in for so long now, that I have serious intentions of coming "out" afresh, and if I could get an invitation to the dance you speak of, what a grand opportunity it would be for me to make a second entrance into the world of fashion and be once more a blushing debutante! Are you going yourself, if so I hope you will have a glorious time? No girl should come out before she is eighteen, that is the usual age I believe for a girl to enter society. Dance with everyone, who asks you until your card is full, you are in a certain sense the hostess, or at least the heroine of the evening, and although you must not monopolize too much attention in your own house and dance constantly while your guests are sitting down, still a girl at her own coming out dance is relieved from many of the obligations which will be laid upon her later on, she is more free to enjoy herself than she will ever be again for at all subsequent parties given by her parents she will have to think almost entirely of her guests enjoyment instead of her own. But it is far better for her to divide her attention amongst the gentlemen present, than to allow herself to be monopolized by two or three. Of course you understand that this advice applies to a dance given in your own house for the purpose of introducing you into society, but the latter part of it will answer equally well for any party, as nothing can be in worse taste than dancing for a whole evening with two or three partners, and thereby rendering yourself not only conspicuous, but actually a mark for ridicule.

STAR, St. John—So you are a sister star, and probably some one's bright particular star too, just as I am Geoffrey's, only that the practical Geoff never put it in that romantic manner. Yes, I remember the letter very well, but it was not typewritten, and it was very foolish. Of course her mother was right, mothers cannot be too particular about their daughters, especially when they are so young; and if I may judge from the letter I received, the writer would not be a particularly improving companion for anyone. I do certainly think they were silly, if there were two of them, I thought there was but one, and I am sure you do not lose anything by not knowing the other. Thank you for the kind wish.

I had a very pleasant Christmas indeed, and quantities of lovely presents, I hope you were as fortunate.

VERE, Nova Scotia—I think we most of us have the same experience, it is so easy to write the address and date, even "Dear so and so," is a simple task, and then the real trouble begins. Why bless your heart Vere I don't possess a pen handle that is not chewed almost to rags. I absolutely browse on my pen holders until I succeed in catching an inspiration, then I chain it, and get along beautifully for a while, but you write as if it was very little trouble to you. Yes we had rather an escape from that bloodthirsty comet. I really think "Ouija" is uncanny, something like its elder sister "Planchette" it does say such extraordinary things it seems to take the thoughts of the persons; holding it out of their own control, and weaves them into words, I am positively afraid of it. I hope it told you the truth about "Chum" as you must miss him greatly. Do you know Vere that when I came to the postscript of your letter, to say that I was indignant would not express my feelings with sufficient strength, because I had not received any package from you, and I made up my mind that the gentlemen out in the business office had eaten it up, always supposing it was anything eatable, and I was just going out letter in hand, to fall upon them and rend them when the package itself arrived and poured oil upon the troubled waters of my soul. It was a lovely package Vere, and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart; as soon as I "sampled" the contents I felt as if I wanted to write a free advertisement for Ganong Brothers at once, so you see how delicious I must have been. How very good you were, to think of me. You did indeed ask two questions about Ouija, and about the parcel. Thank you for the good wishes, I spent a quiet, but very pleasant Christmas, all my friends remembered me so kindly, that the day could not help being a happy one.

Will Blue Eyes, please accept warm thanks for the pretty card she so kindly sent to her friend ASTRA?

English Girls May Walk Alone.

The independence of action characteristic of the day as regards the feminine world exercises a marked effect upon the attitude taken up by young girls belonging to the upper classes.

Formerly they were hedged around by many restraints; they were not allowed to go here or there without being guarded by one of their own sex, either by mother or maid, says the Queen. Did they go shopping a maid must go to, and sit in the shop side by side with them; did they go out to afternoon tea or to make a call the maid must go too and wait in the hall. It is now considered quite permissible and quite conventional for a young girl to walk by herself through the streets of London. She may walk alone when shopping, when visiting, when attending classes or lectures, to early and late church services, to study at South Kensington and other museums, or travel by train on district, main, or suburban lines, or wherever engagements lead.

The line is certainly drawn at walking in Hyde Park alone, although some few independent maidens consider their pet dogs quite sufficient protection even there, but there is no restriction as to the length of time a young lady may look in at shop windows.

Real Courtesy.

She was a young girl from the country, and did not understand city ways; so when invited to a reception she went at an unfashionably early hour. Entering the drawing room she was dismayed to see not a cloak, not a wrap of any sort, only a well trained person, who took off our country girl's wrappings and then disappeared. "Oh, I dare not go down," the little thing said, pitifully. "I can't; I am the very first." But instantly appeared a radiant white vision—the daughter of the house. "Christine said you had come," she said, fluttering in, as if it were the pleasantest and most charming surprise in the world. "I am so glad. Mamma and I were waiting we had some one to help us receive. And you did not see papa the other day. You must come right down and see him, and be one of us." Tears were in the country girl's eyes when she told me this little story. "Don't you think it was the very loveliest thing?" she said. "There I was, an hour before every one else; and they made it seem as if I was their special friend and belonged to them; and everybody was introduced to me, and it was so lovely." Does it seem a little thing?

An Evening Musical.

In giving a successful musical there are almost as many things to be avoided as there are to be accomplished, and it would seem almost that it might be wise to voice the suggestions which it is proposed to give here in the negative form. There are, in any case, a few important, if general, "don'ts" that may well preface the more detailed suggestions which will be found below, and these are addressed to those contemplating the holding of a musical evening, either large or small. Don't invite people if you cannot make them comfortable; remember that their homes are places of rest and ease, and that unless you can give to them entertainment and comfort they will grudge the hours spent away from their own vines and fig trees. Don't include mediocre talent among your performers on such an occasion; avoid your best friend, if he or she thinks, without proper foundation for the belief, that musical ability is his or hers.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Why She Hesitated.

"Be my wife?" he implored; "be my wife, my adored one. See! I have had my life insured for \$1,000 in your favor," and he flourished the policy in the air. She pondered a moment, then, raising her large and lustrous eyes to his, she said: "Before I give you an answer I would like to know the state of your health."

SEASONABLE RECIPES.

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

(Correspondents seeking information in this department should address their queries to "Editor," Reasonable Recipes, Progress, St. John.)  
Bavarian Orange Charlotte.  
This is made of the grated rind of two oranges and the juice of six, one cupful of sugar, one-third of a box of gelatine, two quarts of whipped cream, drained, two-thirds of a cupful of water, and enough stale sponge cake or lady fingers to line a three-pint charlotte-mould. Soak the gelatine for two hours in one-third of a cupful of cold water. Grate the rind—only the yellow part—into a bowl, and squeeze the juice of the half dozen oranges into the same bowl. Now whip the cream, and let it drain on a sieve turned bottom up over a dish. Next cut the cake, and line the mould. When the gelatine has been soaked sufficiently, pour upon it one-third of a cupful of boiling water. Stir the gelatine until it is completely dissolved; then pour it into the bowl with the orange juice. Strain this mixture into tin or granite-ware basin; and after placing the basin in a pan of ice water, stir the contents constantly until they begin to thicken. When the mixture is slightly thickened, add the whipped cream gradually, gently stirring all the while from the bottom of the pan.

After a little stirring take up a spoonful of the mixture and pour it back. If it does not immediately sink, the mixture will be thick enough to turn into the mould. Be careful not to pour in it before it is of the proper consistency, yet be equally careful not to delay pouring after it is just thick enough. Set away for an hour or more, to harden. At serving time loosen the charlotte from the sides of the mould and turn out on a flat dish. To enable any one not experienced, to turn out charlotte of any kind quickly; and without any possibility of breaking it, line the mould with a piece of cheese cloth or muslin wrung out in cold water first. It is a plan that never fails to give satisfactory results.

The Other Side of the Oatmeal Question.

The Practitioner's Monthly states another side of the oatmeal question, tersely and clearly as follows:

A paragraph has been going the rounds of the medical press in which Benjamin Ward Richardson affirms that oatmeal is a frequent cause of dyspepsia, and he gives examples of heartburn and pyrosis caused by an oatmeal diet, which nothing could relieve until that article was banished, and which returned immediately it was used. The inference to be drawn from the report of these cases is that oatmeal is unwholesome and is a direct and exciting cause of dyspepsia. This we believe to be an unwarranted assumption unsupported by facts. There are many varieties of oatmeal and many ways of cooking it, for as a matter of fact, it is frequently not more than half cooked. Richardson does not mention whether the oatmeal was thoroughly cooked or not, which makes all the difference in the world.

That oatmeal may disagree with some persons, we are prepared to admit. The same may be said of almost any article of diet in general use. But that oatmeal of good quality, properly prepared and thoroughly cooked, is unwholesome and directly responsible for many cases of dyspepsia, we do not believe.

Forty years ago dyspepsia was a much more common affection than it is now. At that time every other person suffering from chronic disease was supposed to have, or believed himself to have dyspepsia. At that time oatmeal was scarcely used as an article of diet in this country, save by a few of foreign birth. Now it has become an article of almost universal use, like bread and potatoes.

In very many homes breakfast is not complete without it, and yet dyspepsia does not begin to be so common a disease now as it was before oatmeal came into general use.

Like all starchy foods oatmeal requires thorough, prolonged and careful cooking, and even the steam cooked brands, which are much to be preferred, should be boiled fifteen or twenty minutes, notwithstanding the claims of the manufacturers that three or five minutes are sufficient. Oatmeal has come to stay and on no amount of sophistry will ever be able to banish it from the American breakfast table.

How to Choose Oranges.

The expert orange buyer does not select the smooth, clean-skinned fruit invariably, nor does he object to a heavy percentage of rough, dirty skins. The latter are not always easy to sell, but they invariably give the greatest satisfaction. This is because in the case of oranges, as with almost any fruit, beauty is only skin deep, and the insects which infest orange groves and extract sweetness from the fruit much as bees draw honey from the finest flowers, only attack the sweetest and choicest to be found. The effect of their efforts is to roughen the skin by perforating it, and hence dust is retained, instead of either falling or being brushed off the untouched skins. The fruit within the latter having been rejected by the insects on account of a lack of sweetness is not so palatable as that in the rougher-looking skins; and it is decidedly a good plan to follow in the footsteps of the busy little creatures who can tap an orange and ascertain how sweet it is in a manner no man could attempt.

Celery Salad.

Celery is now very seasonable, and there can be no more excellent salad than that afforded by the roots of this plant, which is also efficacious in repelling rheumatic attacks. The roots are boiled in salt and water, cut in slices while still hot, and dressed with the contents of the crust. Or if they may be allowed to become cold and then served with a dressing composed of four hard-boiled eggs, made into a paste with four tablespoonful of Lucca oil and a desert-spoonful of mustard. A whole, a little parsley, and a handful of watercress leaves are chopped small and added to the mixture, with pepper, salt, a teaspoonful of brown sugar, and vinegar to taste. Americans put a piece of rye bread into salad dressings of this kind, asserting that

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It imparts a peculiarly palatable flavor. The bread is removed before the mixture is sent to table. They also often add a spoonful of light wine to their dressing. Cold boiled potatoes mingle very pleasantly with sliced celery roots in a salad.

Easy Welsh Rarebits.

Welsh rarebits are tempting as well as palatable prepared in the following manner and it is a form in which the dainties may be freely eaten without danger to digestion.

With a large old-fashioned No. 5 biscuit cutter cut out the centre of as many thick slices of bread as you care to have rarebits. Butter each round of bread with butter partly melted. Sprinkle on a little salt, and spread over with a very little made mustard.

Now grate thickly over the rounds fresh moist cheese and which can be grated nicely, other authorities to the contrary; also, the moist cheese is better because it melts more rapidly and completely.

Place your rarebits on a buttered pan, and put them into a very hot oven just in time to arrive at perfection for immediate serving. Serve two or three to each person on a small hot plate. Rarebits are much more tender made this way than when the bread crust is left on.

Hotton Drippings.

Clarified mutton dripping answers admirably for frying purposes of all kinds, provided it is heated as it should be before being used. It can be used for sweets as well as savoury dishes over and over again, so long as it is not allowed to burn and is strained through fine muslin after it is used. Any crumbs of bread &c., which may be left in the grease are liable to burn, and will then spoil the appearance of the next dish.

Brown Sauces.

The original of all brown sauces properly made in Espagnole, for which purpose stock carefully flavoured with lean ham, a savoury bouquet, spring onions, and, if liked, tomatoes, with a due proportion of spice, is necessary. Stated in this way, its manufacture sounds both costly and troublesome; as a matter of fact, it is neither.

How to use Salsify.

Salsify, known as the vegetable oyster, from its fancied resemblance in flavour to the popular bivalve, is but little known to caterers and their customers. It dipped in batter and fried it is a good luncheon dish, and also a capital adjunct to roast wild duck, or it can be scalloped and served for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

THINGS OF VALUE.

Charity knows how to forget. In order to have good government for all it is absolutely necessary that there should not be special privileges for any.

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