

Ask Lady C

THE LETTERS PRINTED BELOW ARE TAKEN FROM A COLLECTION DISCOVERED IN THE ATTIC OF A KENTISH MANSION, ONCE THE PROPERTY OF A PERSON OF QUALITY CELEBRATED FOR THE SINCERITY AND FRANKNESS OF HER CHARACTER. IT HAS BEEN DEDUCED THAT SHE WROTE AN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADVICE COLUMN.

A family with whom I am intimate exhibits suppressed laughter whenever I say “flannel waistcoat.” I do not think they intend to mock me—in fact, I believe that they regard me with warm esteem and lively friendship. But I do not understand their mirth. Can you explain?—**Colonel (Rtd.)**

I am staying with friends who have cared for me since I was injured in a fall. I do not wish to go home because I am very interested in a young man who lives here. If I could remain over the Christmas I think that I could fix him. Please tell me how to seem too unwell to travel.—**Determined**

An acquaintance has asked me to recommend him to my colonel for a lieutenancy. I know him to be the worst rake imaginable, and fear that he may some day cause me embarrassment. He hints that, if I refuse, he will reveal certain indiscretions of my own. What should I do?—**Reformed**

I must soon attend a private ball, but cannot decide what to do for an ornament. Would it be permissible to wear an amber cross on a ribbon? I possess no gold chain. My best gown is white with glossy spots. I beg the favour of an early reply.—**Anxious**

I must beg that your ladyship will condescend to advise me concerning the prevention of mould upon cucumbers propagated under glass. The many pamphlets which I have studied have not supplied the information which I seek. Your ladyship’s superior knowledge is my last resort.—**General (RTD.)**

I have mislaid a receipt for spruce beer. Circumstances have arisen which preclude my applying to the person who provided the information in the first instance. Can you advise me?—**Vicar**