

Science Siftings

By 'Volt'

Land Basins.

The ocean basins and the land basins—the latter being regions without any surface flow of water toward the sea—are shown in a hydrographic chart lately prepared by a Swiss geographer. The greatest region without a flow seaward extends from the neighborhood of the Baltic Sea through Russia and Central Asia nearly to the Yellow Sea; and a smaller closed basin embraces part of Asia Minor and Arabia. Africa has three such basins, Australia has one, including its western part, North America has four—two east of the continental divide at the latitude of the Gulf of California, and two others more to the north and to the west of the divide. South America has two closed basins in the region of the Cordilleras.

Giant Trees.

The distinction of being the oldest living thing undoubtedly belongs to some giant tree, and many attempts to locate it and determine its age have been made. A century ago De Candolle found two yews—one at Fortingal, in Perthshire, and one at Hedsor, in Bucks—that were estimated to be respectively 2500 and 3240 years old. Both are still flourishing, and the older tree has a trunk 27 feet in diameter. A gigantic baobab of Central America, with a trunk 29 feet through, was thought by Humboldt to be not less than 5150 years old. Mexican botanists believe they have now discovered a life-span even greater than this, and from the annual rings a cypress of Chepultepec, whose trunk is 118 feet in circumference, is assigned an age of about 6200 years.

The Fuel of the Future.

This name is given by 'Popular Mechanics' to compressed briquettes of peat. One-seventh of the area of Ireland, it says, consists of peat bog, at present unprofitable, but soon to be worth as much as so many coal-mines, owing to improved and cheapened methods of collecting, drying, and preparing peat for fuel. Even now Sweden uses 2,000,000 tons of peat briquettes yearly, while within 50 miles of Chicago are unused fields of the substance containing enough to supply that city for a century. Of a new method of preparation the writer says:—

'In this new process the peat is excavated by machinery, and conveyed directly to the plant without the long delay of air-drying. Here it is packed into rotary cylinders, which are revolved at great speed, the peat being beaten by an interior heating device while the cylinders rotate. The centrifugal force expels the moisture, so that it is a very low percentage. Then, by means of electrodes connected by conductors with a dynamo, the centrifugally dried peat is included in an electric circuit; the resistance of the peat generates heat, and it is carbonised. A mass of black globules represents the results and retains all the valuable properties of the raw material. It then passes to kneading machines, and after being well kneaded it is either moulded into briquettes or left to dry and harden, in which latter case it is afterwards broken, screened, and graded.

'As has been stated, the value of this process lies greatly in the fact that in climates where the drying season is short it can be prepared despite the weather conditions. In Alaska a supply could hardly be prepared after other methods, and what a boon prepared peat fuel would be in that climate! It is a fact that the peat supply increases proportionately with the distance from the equator, and, under the eternal law of compensation, there must be some means by which it can be utilised in those cold countries where it abounds. Again, in the electrical process there is no loss, no escaping of valuable elements in the form of gases.

Prepared peat is an almost smokeless fuel. It burns to the last vestige, leaves a clean, white ash and no clinker.'

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The Home

By Maureen

Choking.

Small children are very liable to choking, but instead of the old-fashioned thumping them on the back, a more simple remedy is to lift the little sufferer's left arm as high as possible. This affords relief more quickly than the thumping.

How to Poach Eggs in a Ball.

To poach eggs in a ball is a knack known to all clever cooks. The water is heated to boiling, and then rapidly stirred till a small whirlpool is produced, in the hollow part of which maelstrom the egg is cleverly dropped. The motion of the water crystallises the white instantly into a circular covering for the unbroken yolk.

The Use of Onions.

Onions, when roasted, make one of the best poultices for a sore throat, and are almost an unfailing remedy, when so applied, for that distressing but common complaint—during the winter—known as earache. Children often suffer cruelly with it; and mothers will find an onion poultice a safe and speedy cure. When boiled to pulp and strained, the juice being mixed with brown sugar, it forms an excellent syrup in cases of croup, or may be used with advantage for a cold when attended by an irritant tickling cough. Onions are a very safe but somewhat powerful narcotic, exercising a quieting influence on the nerves, so that a person troubled with wakefulness may often ensure a quiet night's rest by simply eating a couple of small onions before retiring to bed. The only pickle that may be taken at night without disastrous results to the digestive organs is the pickled onion, and even this should be sparingly eaten. A boiled onion, thoroughly soaked in milk, is about the best inward poultice for a sore chest, rivaling the world-famed bread and milk or gruel itself.

Putting on Gloves.

If there is anything that mars a woman's appearance it is a glove with the seams twisted and all the fingers awry. Here is the correct way to put on gloves. The first trying on of a glove is the most important, because by this the glove is set. First shake some powder into each finger of the glove, then place your elbow firmly on a table, with the hand upright and the thumb extended towards the palm. Draw the body of the glove over the fingers, and, after seeing that each seam of the body of the glove is straight with the lines of the finger, coax each finger into the finger of the glove. Be sure in the meantime that the stitching on the back of the glove is also straight. Next insert the thumb, and look once again to see if the seams are all straight; if not, pull the glove off and begin again. The seam at the tip of the thumb should be in line with the middle of the thumb-nail. Smooth the wrist neatly, and fasten the second button before the top one, which will not then suddenly burst off.

How to Act in Case of Fire.

At a recent lecture the following concise and simple directions how to act on the occurrence of fires were given:—Fire requires air, therefore, on its appearance, every effort should be made to exclude air—shut all doors and windows. By this means fire may be confined to a single room for a sufficient period to enable all the inmates to be aroused and escape; but if the doors and windows are thrown open, the fanning of the wind and the draught will instantly cause the flames to increase with extraordinary rapidity. It must never be forgotten that the most precious moments are at the commencement of a fire, and not a single second of time should be lost in tackling it. In a room a tablecloth can be so used as to smother a large sheet of flame, and a cushion may serve to beat it out; a coat or anything similar may be used with an equally successful result. The great point is presence of mind, calmness in danger, action guided by reason and thought. Always endeavor to attack the bed of a fire; if you cannot extinguish a fire, shut the window, and be sure to shut the door when making good your retreat.

Maureen

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