

## Science Siftings

By 'Volt'

### Origin of the Metric System.

Some very interesting facts have lately been collected about the foot, the most widely used measure of length in modern times. The measure is derived from the length of the human foot, but apparently has varied more than that portion of the skeleton can possibly have done in historic times. The ancient Welsh foot, for instance, was 9in long, whereas the Piedmont foot was 20in. In modern times it has varied from the Spanish foot of less than 11in to the Venice foot of more than 13in. Almost every country has used a foot measure of a different length. It was this confusion which led the French to devise the metric system.

### Dead Sea Disappearing.

A phenomenon of extraordinary geographical and historical interest is announced from the East. The recent notable perturbations that have taken place on our planet have had a curious effect upon one of the earth's famous places. The geologists now announce that the Dead Sea is on the point of disappearing. An English savant has just established the fact that the sinister lake of Biblical annals has been steadily diminishing year by year, and that at the present time its greatest depth does not exceed three metres. The water, which is so rapidly evaporating, deposits chunks of salt upon the banks, and in time these salt heaps assume a picturesque and beautiful aspect, shining in the sun like gems and pearl. The conclusion which the scientists have reached from this phenomenon is that the Dead Sea is destined to become a desert of salt.

### Wasting Soil.

The preservation of the soil itself as well as its fertility seems to be a problem to which man must give early attention. Professor N. S. Shaler, in calling attention to this, points out that under savage life the undisturbed roots and stems of the wild plants bound the soil to the rocks, and the average washing away in four or five centuries would not equal the inch that may be carried to the sea from a modern ploughed field by a single rain-storm. To this latter-day waste must be added cropping that takes away soluble minerals faster than they are formed. The soil is thus being reduced both in quantity and in quality, and the results are to be seen in the lessened productiveness of lands in Italy, Greece, Spain, and most other parts of the world. The remedy to be sought is some means of preventing the loss of the soil at a greater rate than the decay of the rocks restores it.

### Floated 662 Days.

When Colonel 'Swalm, the American Consul at Southampton, was journeying from Montevideo to England via New York, in May, 1903, he placed his card, together with those of several other passengers on the steamship Tennyson, in a bottle, and stated that the finder, on returning it, would receive a reward of a sovereign. The bottle was thrown overboard in latitude 29 degrees, 30 minutes, north, and longitude 68 degrees, 10 minutes, west. Nothing had since been heard of it until a few months ago, when Colonel Swalm received word that it had been found on the Donegal Coast of Ireland, near Arranmore, by a man named Call, who returned the cards. The bottle had evidently been carried by the Gulf Stream along the north of the American coast, then by that 'river of the sea' across the Atlantic to the Irish Coast, to reach which point it had taken 662 days, the journey being made at an approximate rate of five miles a day.

### Why Heat Reddens the Face.

The effect of radiated heat on the nerves which control the small blood vessels of the skin makes the face flush. These tiny vessels, which are normally in a state of moderate contraction, under exposure to the heat relax and become distended with blood. In regard to exposure to direct heat, the reddening of the skin, together with the uncomfortably warm feeling accompanying it, may be looked upon as one of the useful little 'danger signals' by which we are surrounded.

When from any cause a person has lost this susceptibility, as in some forms of paralysis, he may expose a limb to heat until serious injury results. The face flushes when near the fire because it is directly exposed to the rays of heat, while most of the body is protected by the clothing. Besides, the nerves of the face are particularly sensitive, and the skin there is most abundantly supplied with blood vessels.

## The Home

By Maureen

### Avoid High-heel Shoes.

The results of the evil of wearing high-heel shoes are quite serious. The weight of the body is thrown on the toes and against the upper leather of the shoe, crowding the foot and shutting off the blood circulation. The feet become badly nourished and the nerves diseased, and the body is thrown in such an unnatural position that the whole nervous system is injured. The effort of the body to balance on these heels often results in curvature of the spine and displacement of other organs. Frequent and severe headaches and early failure of eyesight, due to the nerve strain, are among the resultant evils.

### To Keep a Dish Hot.

When it's required that a dish or plate of food be kept hot for half an hour or so, waiting, perhaps, for a tardy diner, a better plan than putting it in the oven is to set it with its contents on a saucepan of boiling water, and let the saucepan stand on the top of the oven or covered part of the stove. The plate should be covered with another plate or close-fitting metal cover, and to prevent the food from becoming over-dry plenty of gravy should be added to it, also an extra bit of butter if it is anything too dry. A little milk added to a boiled pudding that is to be kept hot is sometimes an improvement.

### Women Who Worry.

A well known nerve specialist has given it as his opinion that more women go into nervous prostration as a result of idleness than of overwork. 'It is a rest from petty worries,' he said, 'that most women need, and this they can give themselves. The woman who does the least has usually more worries than the woman who works.' The physician further says: 'A woman has wonderful powers of endurance when it comes to great things. She can work and support her family if need be; she can bear griefs with heroism; she can come out of hardest work and heaviest sorrow with health unimpaired, but she cannot stand the little things, the molehills that grow to mountains when she has nothing to do but think of them, without suffering a collapse.'

### Table Etiquette.

Perhaps in no department of life does good breeding show itself as quickly as in questions of table etiquette, and in habits and manners during meal times.

Well-dressed people, whose outward appearance seems to claim for them the title of lady or gentleman often show signs of want of good breeding the moment food is placed before them.

The knife is used only to cut or spread with, and never to convey anything to the mouth. It is always held in the right hand.

A spoon is used also in the right hand, but a fork may be used in either.

People who make mistakes in regard to their use usually do so through carelessness rather than ignorance.

Occasionally people get into the way of playing and fidgeting with their knives, forks, spoons, and dinner napkins during the intervals between the courses. This is a very bad habit, which is likely to annoy other people, and it should be checked.

Crumbling the bread and playing with the food in any way are equally objectionable.

A hostess must always remember that her actions at the table give the key to her guests. If she uses a certain article for a particular dish they will follow her example. If she folds up her dinner napkin, no guest may feel at liberty to leave an unfolded napkin on the table, and no lady will rise from the table until the hostess gives the signal that the meal is finished.

*Maureen*

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