

Science Siftings

By 'Volt'

Peat in Europe.

The world's peat centre is not in Ireland—which, however, has more than 3000 square miles of bog—but in the north of Germany and the adjacent parts of Denmark and Holland. A square mile of bog ten feet deep is estimated to have a heating power equal to more than 300,000 tons of coal. Single bogs in Friesland are found to cover 1500 square miles, and Germany has more fuel in peat than in coal.

Flight of Birds.

This is the result of calculation by recent American, English, and French observers, taking the carrier pigeon as a base of comparison; tests made on extended level tracks, where timekeepers with stop watches stand on the lines, at given distances apart, and time the shadows of the flying birds as they pass from one line to another, recording the miles per hour—Swallow, 65; marten, 60; carrier pigeon, 50; teal duck, 50; mallard, canvasback, 45; wild goose, eider duck, 40; pheasant, 38; quail, 25; crow, 25. Small birds appear to fly more rapidly than the large ones, and deceive many observers. The humming-bird does not fly as fast as many very much larger, slow-flapping birds. Birds in rapid flight must overcome an atmospheric pressure of from 112lb to 130lb to the square foot of flying surface.

The Art of Cheesemaking.

The art of the cheese-maker now depends to an ever-increasing degree on bacteriology. While bacteria seem to play a smaller part in the ripening of cheese than was formerly supposed, lactic bacteria are found necessary for acidifying the milk, and specific moulds are essential for the flavors characteristic of some kinds of cheese. The newest discovery is that of certain bacteria, known in Holland as 'langvey,' that tend to prevent deterioration of cheese. These harmless organisms appear to exhaust the food of objectionable forms, and thus give a good product where without them no cheese at all could be made.

Mystery of the Diamond.

The origin of the diamond, the hardest and in some ways the most remarkable of minerals, is one of the perplexing problems of geology. The idea has been held that great heat played an important part in its formation, and Moissan has confirmed this theory by causing small diamonds to crystallize out from fused iron on suddenly cooling the surface of the latter. Some recent observations, however, seem to indicate that such crystals have formed at ordinary temperatures, growing to large size like ordinary water-deposited crystals. For instance, apophyllite, a silicate of lime and potash containing 16 per cent. of water and easily fused by the blowpipe, has been found inside a diamond, and gold also has been reported as an inclosure in the centre of a crystallized Brazilian stone.

The First Starcher.

Starch originated in Flanders. It was introduced into England, with the big ruff, in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It was like our starch of to-day, except that it was made in colors—red yellow, green and blue. The effect of this was to tint delicately the white linen to which the starch might be applied. Before Queen Elizabeth's time ruffles were made of fine holland, which required no stiffening. Then the ruffs of cambric came, and these must of necessity be starched. It is recorded that when the Queen had ruffs made of lawn and cambric for her own royal wearing there was no one in England could tell how to starch them, but the Queen made special inquiries for some woman that could starch and Mrs. Guilham, wife of the royal coachman, was the first starcher. In 1564 a Flanders woman, Frau Van der Plasse, came to London and established there a school for the teaching of starching. The school succeeded, and the Flanders frau got rich. She charged £5 a lesson and an extra 20s for a recipe for the making of starch out of wheat, flour, bean, and roots.

Though Boreas on biting blast
Howls from the Frozen Pole,
And swept before him, flying past,
The sullen storm-clouds roll.
* Though coughs and colds are in his wake,
Yet still I feel secure,
And fear him not, because I take
My WOODS' GREAT PEPPERMINT CURE.

The Home

By Maureen

Cabinet Bread Pudding.

Butter the sides of a pudding mould and arrange crystallised fruit on the bottom and sides of the mould. Place a layer of stale bread, rolled fine, then a layer of fruit, and so on until the dish is full, the top layer being crumbs. Make a rich custard and pour it over the top of the pudding, and bake three-quarters of an hour. To be served with whipped cream.

Banana Fritters.

Select very ripe bananas for this purpose. Pare these and cut them in small pieces. Beat the yolks of three eggs very light and add to the bananas, and beat to a pulp. Then add a tablespoonful of sugar, a tablespoonful of butter, a tablespoonful of lemon juice, a little grated nutmeg, a cup of milk, and one and one-half cups of flour, or enough to make a batter thick enough to drop easily from a spoon. Sift a teaspoonful of baking powder in the flour before mixing. Beat the white of the eggs to a stiff froth, and fold into the batter. Drop from a spoon into hot fat, and fry a light brown.

A Good Cleaning Mixture.

For tin covers, etc., the following mixture is excellent—Shred half a pound of soap into a bowl with a large ball of pounded whiting, and add enough warm rain water to make a paste of the consistency of cream. Take a little of this paste on a piece of clean flannel, and with it, rub the metal. When dry, polish with a leather and a little dry whiting.

In Cooking Pies,

To prevent the juice from running out while baking make an opening in the centre of the upper crust and insert a little roll of brown paper perpendicularly. The steam will escape from it as from a chimney, and the juice be retained in the pie.

A Remedy for Toothache.

Fill a small cup with boiling vinegar. Dip a piece of cotton wool into the vinegar and rub the gum; let the vinegar be as hot as you can endure. Stop the aching tooth with some wool. Toothache caused by a cold in the facial nerves may often be relieved by wringing a soft towel out of cold water and sprinkling it with strong vinegar. This should be laid on the face like a poultice, and it will often be followed by refreshing sleep.

How to Serve Toast.

There is hardly a well-appointed table to-day on which toast is not served at each meal. It is the fashion to place a tiny toast-rack before each person—a truly dainty custom and one to be commended. The little silver racks, too, are pretty, and add much to the appearance of a table. But what of the toast which they hold? Toast wants as much care in its preparation as any article of the menu, and much that passes for toast is unworthy of the name.

It is not sufficient to cut a slice of bread, more or less thin (generally less than more), and hold it to the fire so that part is scorched while the rest is not baked, then to put three or four of these pieces in a rack, where by close contact they quickly become sodden and unwholesome.

Good toast is a dainty which is worthy the cook's best attention. For its achievement take a tin loaf and cut from it a thin slice. Place this for a few minutes on the rack over the range or in the mouth of the oven to dry; then toast it lightly or evenly on both sides before a clear fire, put it on the rack again to keep hot and be quite crisp before serving.

Trim it neatly, cut into three-cornered pieces, and serve. The result will be excellent, and the difference between it and the thick, sodden stuff generally served as toast will be as wide as the poles asunder. The one is wholesome and delicious; the other, alas! is too often met with to need description here.

Maureen

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