

THE INDISPENSABLE NAPKIN.

It Was First Used Only by Children and Scorned by Elders.

Curiously enough that article now considered almost indispensable, the table napkin, was first used only by children, says the Youth's Companion, and was only adopted by elder members of the family about the middle of the fifteenth century. In etiquette books of an earlier date than this, among other sage pieces of advice for children, are instructions about wiping their fingers and lips with their napkins.

It seems that the tablecloth was long enough to reach the floor and served the grown people in place of napkins. When they did begin to use napkins they placed them first on the shoulder, then on the left arm, and finally tied them about the neck. A French writer, who evidently was conservative and did not welcome the napkin kindly, records, with scorn:

"The napkin is placed under the chin and fastened in the back, as if one were going to be shaved. A person told me that he wore his that way that he might not soil his beautiful frills."

It was a difficult matter to tie the two corners in the back, and it is said that thence originated our expression for straitened circumstances: "Hard to make both ends meet." This custom led to the habit of the table waiters of carrying a napkin on the left arm.

Napkins became popular in France sooner than in England. At one time it was customary at great French dinners to change the napkins at every course, to perfume them with rose water and to have them folded a different way for each guest.

About 1650 Pierre David published the "Maistre d'Hostel," which teaches how to wait on a table properly and how to fold all kinds of table napkins in all kinds of shapes.

The shapes were: "Square, twisted, folded in bands and in the forms of a double and twisted shell, single shell, double melon, single melon, cock, hen and chickens, two chickens, pigeon in a basket, partridge, pheasant, two capons in a pie, hare, two rabbits, sucking pig, dog with a collar, pike, carp, turbot, miter, turkey, tortoise, the holy cross and the Lorraine cross."

WONDERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

Soap Bubbles Photographed in the Act of Bursting.

Electricity has been doing some pretty work in the photographing of drops of water, and Prof. C. V. Boys in a recent lecture gave illustrations of what had been accomplished, says the Detroit Free Press. He first showed photographs taken by the electric spark of soap bubbles in the act of bursting, and explained the process by which it is possible to ascertain the respective speed at which different soap bubbles burst. One photograph showed an issue of liquid from a very small pipe, which to the naked eye appeared to be a perfect stream, but which, on an electric photograph being taken, was resolved into a beautiful and regular series of drops. In connection with this Prof. Boys remarked that the science of liquids and of the forces involved in the phenomena of the surface of liquids was one of the most interesting branches of physical science. The effect on a fountain of playing or singing was to change its appearance into one, two or three apparently separate, clear streams of liquid, but a photograph taken as a tuning fork was struck demonstrated that the water was disposed in drops in perfect regularity. A picture of a rifle bullet, passing through the air at the rate of two thousand feet a second, was also exhibited. Prof. Boys, however, showed that if it were wished to investigate what was really happening when a rifle bullet was being projected through the air at the maximum possible speed, it would be necessary to have recourse to a method of illumination infinitely more rapid than the electric spark. For this purpose a mirror of steel, about the size of a twenty-five cent piece, is now used. It is so mounted as to revolve with ease without getting hot at the enormous speed of one thousand times a second, and the end of the beam of light given off from this mirror passes across the screen at such a rate that it enables photographs to be taken in about one ten-millionth of a second.

FRENCH WOMEN OF BUSINESS.

Fortunes Made by Some of Them—Mme. Boucicault and Mme. Coquelin.

The Frenchwoman, unlike her English sister, has, as a rule, a very good business education. In the common schools, says the Chicago Herald, she has been taught household book-keeping and has been given lessons in purchasing and useful expenditure. As a wife, she is expected generally to help her husband in his business, and sometimes she manages it entirely for him. In the small stores she acts as clerk for him and in the larger ones she is an equal partner. The Bon Marche was made famous by Mme. Boucicault, who helped her husband found and maintain the establishment, and after his death she took entire charge of it. Her system was one of so much kindness and consideration toward her employes that they called her "the Lady of the Bon Marche," and looked upon her as almost a saint. She was very prosperous in the business, and associated with herself as stockholders the chiefs of the various departments who had been faithful in their service, that they might share in the profits. Then she wished to include as many of the other employes as possible, so she ceded a part of her shares to a common fund subject to their purchase. In her will she left the rest of her shares to the stockholders. She also gave one million dollars of her own private fortune for a pension fund for those of the employes who from age or illness were unable longer to work. There are many other large establishments in Paris managed by women. Mme. Coquelin, it is said, invests all her husband's money for him, and many of the wives of the artists manage the selling and exhibition of their husbands' works, and attend to the collecting and paying of debts, obtain orders and call upon the newspaper men, doing all of the necessary work to make their husbands' artistic efforts profitable.

WHAT THE VOICE SHOWS.

Upper Notes of the Register Characteristic of Savage Tribes.

Man inherited from his immediate ancestors, the apes and monkeys, a voice of considerable altitude, in which the lower tones were almost wanting. The monkeys chattered to their fellows from tree to tree in shrill head tones, the natural vocal expression of a weak and timid race, in whose physical formation the head had begun to hold an important place. The upper notes of the register were characteristic of the first men, as they still are of savage tribes and peoples and of the half civilized members of modern society, whose voices have never been subjected to discipline.

The voices of country people accustomed to magnificent distances and conversation at long range are, if not keyed higher, oftener used in the upper ranges than those of the city people, who feel obliged by the necessities of good breeding to moderate their tones. When a man is self-contained he uses the middle and lower tones of his voice; when angry the voice mounts gradually to the head. If the gentler sex would oftener bear in mind the eulogies of Shakespeare and Scott of that voice gentle and low which is an excellent thing in women, they would more rarely have occasion to wonder why they have ceased to be attractive.

The music of the Chinese, Japanese, and of all wild tribes is keyed high and sung usually in falsetto, the lower notes being obtained by drums, tom-toms, or some other instruments of the kind. Although their songs are far from agreeable to the ear, they still think they sing, an illusion shared, it must be confessed, by a considerable number of persons in the most refined modern society.

California's Big Trees.

The vandal woodcutters in the California sequoia forests used to cut the trees at a distance of from a dozen to twenty feet above the ground in order to avoid the gnarled and knotted base. But it has lately been found that these stumps are as valuable as the straight wood. The gnarls present most beautiful figurings and the wood is sawn into thin sheets and used for interior decorations. Now, these stumps are being dug out, and soon not even a vestige will remain to show what was the appearance of some of the most majestic natural monuments of this wonderful continent.

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