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POTATOES IN THEIR JACKETS.

"Should potatoes be peeled before cooking, or should they be boiled in their jackets? I say most decidedly in jackets," writes Professor Mattien Williams, "and will state my reasons. From fifty-three to fifty-six per cent. of the saline constituents of the potato is potash, and potash is an important constituent of the blood—so important that in Norway, where scurvy once prevailed very seriously, it has been banished since the introduction of the potato, and, according to Lang and other authorities, it is owing to the use of this vegetable by a people who formerly were insufficiently supplied with saline vegetable food. Potash salts are freely soluble in water, and I find that the water in which potatoes have been boiled contains potash, as may be proved by boiling it down to concentrate, then filtering, and adding the usual potash test, platinum chloride. It is evident that the skin of the potato must resist this passage of the potash into the water, though it may not fully prevent it. The bursting of the skin occurs only at quite the latter stage of the cookery. The greatest practical authorities on the potato—Irishmen—appear to be unanimous; I do not remember to have seen a pre-peeled potato in Ireland. I find I can at once detect by the difference of flavor whether a potato has been boiled with or without its jacket, and this difference is evidently saline."

A NOVEL TIME-PIECE.

A man who was appointed watchman at a mine on the Comstock had no watch. He did not wish to buy one, yet was desirous of knowing how the time was passing. He borrowed the watch of a friend for one night. On returning the watch next day he told his friend that he was all right now, that he had a timekeeper of his own. He then unrolled a strip of paper some four inches in width from a stick and exhibited it as his clock. On the strip of paper he had marked down, as they rose above the horizon, all the stars and constellations within a narrow belt. Opposite each star was the time of its making its appearance—hour and minute. The watchman says his watch is a fine time keeper. He has recently improved it somewhat. The slip of paper now runs on two small rollers that are placed in a small box, which has a sliding lid of glass. As the night wears away and the stars pass over, he now turns the crank of his watch and looks at the time marked by the side of each. To wind up his watch he runs the tape back upon the initial roller.

THE SYRTOS.

Every one knows the beauties of the Greek *syrtos*, as the dance goes winding round and round the plane tree in a village square, now fast, now slow, now three deep, now a single line, and then the capers of the leader as he twists and wriggles in contortions. Here in Amorgos the sight was improved by the brilliancy of one or two old costumes. One lady especially was resplendent; her *tourlos* was of green and red, her scarf an Eastern handkerchief such as we now use for antimacassars, coins and gold ornaments hung in profusion over her breast, her stomacher was of green and gold brocade, a gold sash round her waist, and a white crimped petticoat with flying streamers of pink and blue silk, pretty little brown skin shoes with red and green embroidery on them. She was an excellent dancer, too, a real joy to look upon. The men wore their baggy trousers, bright-colored stockings, and embroidered coats; but the men of Amorgos are not equal to the women. The beauty of an Amorgiote female is proverbial.

☞ Correspond with P. N. Nicholas & Co. if you want steady work with a good firm. See adv.

ELECTRIC EEL SIX FEET LONG.

A very interesting addition has recently been made to the Zoological Gardens in the shape of an electric eel—*gymnotus electricus*. It is said to be nearly six feet in length, and must therefore be one the very largest specimens of its kind. Those who remember the palmy days of the old Polytechnic may recollect a diminutive electrical eel which used to deal out very decided shocks to visitors who had the temerity to touch it, and which used to kill, or at any rate to stun, the live fish which were put into its tank for food. The newcomer is altogether a more formidable fellow, and when he has had time to recruit after the long voyage from South America, during which he was rather cruelly coiled in a vessel in which he could not move without chafing himself raw in several places, it will be anything but wise to venture on any liberties with him.

Humboldt, when in the native home of this fish in and about the Rio Colorado, measured some that were five feet five inches in length, but though the Indians said there were larger, he himself saw none. The captive in Regent's Park is no doubt therefore a very big specimen, and there can be little doubt of its power. Humboldt thought that the Indians of the locality referred to had exaggerated ideas on this subject, but they no doubt had had practical experience, with the illustrious traveller seems to have prudently refrained from testing the matter except in the case of an eel in a somewhat exhausted condition. He admits that it would be temerity to expose one's self to the first shocks of a large and strongly irritated gymnotus, and though he does not mention life being lost by a shock from the fish, the mode of catching them adopted by the Indians seems to render it by no means incredible that as some have asserted, this fish is capable of killing a man.

The Indians, it seems, are accustomed, when they want to catch gymnoti, to scour the country round for wild horses and mules, which they drive into the ponds where the fish are known to be, and so violent are the discharges of the pent-up lightnings to which these animals are exposed that, though they are not actually killed by electricity, they are so stunned and disabled that usually several of them are drowned. Humboldt once imprudently put both him feet on an electric eel just taken out of the water; and, though he does not speak of it as a large one, he says he never experienced from a large Leyden jar a more dreadful discharge than he lift on that occasion. He was affected all day with a violent pain in every joint of his body.

It seems to be generally agreed that the electric force of this fish is closely dependent on its general vitality, and as the new arrival is as yet only in a comparatively poor condition, perhaps no great harm would result from bodily contact with it.

SIXES AND SEVENS.

Many explanations have been attempted of the expression, "sixes and sevens," but none of them are so good as to make a new guess unnecessary. In the first place, it may be noted that the present form is a corruption of "at six and seven." So it appears in the "Towneley Mysteries," in Taylor, the water poet's works and in Shakespeare. We read in "Richard II (act 2, scene 2, ll, 121-122):

"All is uneven,
And everything is left at six and seven."

One earlier explanation of a still earlier form "set on seven" is that God appointed everything in seven days, and that the expression was originally used to indicate order, but afterward came the express disorder. This is not very satisfactory. Nares explained "sixes and sevens" by a reference to the game of back-gammon, but no explanation that I have seen is as good as one suggested to me by an ingenious friend. He says that if we write down the ordinary arabic numerals we shall find that all run evenly (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) until we come to six, when the upper stroke runs above the line, and to seven, when the stroke runs below the line: so that it may be said that "six and seven" irregularity begins. Of course this is a mere conjecture, and no explanation can be considered as thoroughly until historical evidence corroborates conjecture, but I think it is a suggestion that is well worth of consideration.

FUNERALS IN FRANCE.

There is one French custom we should like to see introduced into the United States, and become universal. In France, when a funeral passes, every man raises his hat to salute it. The deceased person may have been a child, a pauper, or a beggar; it is no matter; the cortege is saluted by every man, whether he be prince, millionaire, or mendicant. It is a good and lovely custom. Few things are more humiliating than to see a funeral trotting down Broadway, in New York, winding in and out among the vehicles and other obstructions, exciting no more remark or attention than if it were a procession of old hacks going to the repair shops. In New York, the rapid pace seems unavoidable, owing to the great distance to the cemeteries. Elsewhere, funerals at least move with a decent slowness, and the evident sorrow of the followers seems to plead to the passer-by for the sympathetic recognition. It were a mark of civilization in us to bestow it upon them.

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AFTER LONG YEARS.

A Young Girl's Sudden and Mysterious Disappearance is Solved.

Bellaire, O., October 31.—Some days ago a local paper published the fact that the bones of a human being had been found among the rocks of a stone quarry on the farm of Mrs. Darrah, a few miles west of this city, and the publication has brought to light an interesting story. It seems that about twenty years ago a young lady named Margaret Porter lived with a farmer named Jacob Long, residing two miles from this city. Becoming dissatisfied, she came to Bellaire, but afterward revisited Mr. Long's. One day she started on foot for the house of her former employer, but never reached it, and all efforts to find her proved unavailing. This story has been revived by the finding of the skeleton, and Harrison Porter, an aged gentleman, father of the long missing girl, is of the opinion the bones are those of his daughter. It is supposed the girl fell over the quarry, and was either killed, or being unable to escape because of injuries, starved to death.

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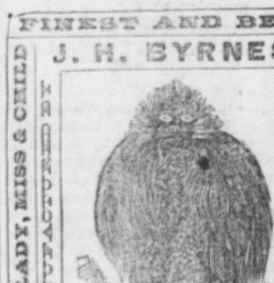

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