Doing One's Part.

A witty and miserly gentleman who accepted many invitations without returning them, but who contributed greatly to the general entertainment by his bright conversation, once defended himself by saying:

"My friends give the dinners, but I furnish the salt."

If he was parsimonious in the matter of dinners he was generous with his best thoughts, his most cheerful and entertaining stories, fulfilling one social duty although he neglected another.

This social duty of giving in conversation one's brightest and best, of making an effort to be interesting, and being cheerful when it is not possible to be brilliant, is often selfishly neglected.

Life is an affair of mutual obligations. We have to thank most of our friends for kindness and patience and encouragement, and we owe it to them to remember that often, unknown to us, they are in need of being made to forget some trouble or grief, or are in need of some fresh, cheering thought, and when we give them our conversational best we are doing what we can to supply that need.

Many persons who would not think of going anywhere with a bandaged head or a disagreeable cold or a disturbing cough, carry a gloomy face, a fit of the blues or an ill tempered mood on a visit or to a party, without thinking that there is no excuse at all for their being a skeleton at the feast. They disturb their hosts and hostesses by making it evident that they are not having a good time, and they have a depressing effect on every one else.—Youth's Companion.

Earthquakes and Vegetation.

When people tell us that earthquakes are capital things we may reasonably be allowed to entertain suspicions regarding their sanity, but if they follow up their assertions with reasonable argument then we must perforce give them some attention. Signor A. Gioran has been collecting a number of observations, from which he deduces that the effects of siesmic shocks upon vegetation are to favor a more rapid germination of seeds and a more rapid growth of the young plants, thus resulting in a greatly increased luxuriance. These results he believes to be due not to the direct influence of the tremor, but to three secondary causes, among which is the production of electricity, which always accompanies stresses in the earth's crust.

In connection with this we may notice some experiments by Professor A. Aloi, on the influence of atmospheric electricity on the growth of plants. From observations made chiefly on Lactuca scariola, Zea mais, Triticum œstivum, Nicotiana tabacum and Vicia faba, he concludes that this influence is distinctly beneficial. Further experiments have demonstrated that the electricity of the soil has a similar influence on the germination of seeds.—Electrical Review.

The Handkerchief in Public.

It was not until the reign of the Empress Josephine in France that the pocket handkerchief was tolerated at all as an article for public use. No lady would have dared use one in the presence of others. Even the name was carefully avoided in polite conversation. An actor who would have ventured to use one on the stage would have been hissed off the boards. It was only in the beginning of the present century that Mlle. Duchesnois, a famous actress, dared to appear with a handkerchief in her hand. Having to speak of it in the course of the play she could only summon courage to refer to it as a "light tissue."

A translation of one of Shakespeare's plays by Alfred de Vigney was acted, and the word was used for the first time upon the stage, and provoked a storm of indignant hisses from all parts of the house.

The Empress Josephine, although really a beautiful woman, had very bad teeth, and to conceal them she was in the habit of carrying small handkerchiefs, trimmed with costly laces, which she raised gracefully to her lips to conceal her teeth. The ladies of the court followed her example, and handkerchiefs rapidly became an important part of the feminine toilet.—New York Herald.

The "Seven" in Neck Vertebræ.

In a recent study of the anatomical structure of the neck I was struck with the remarkable fact that men and animals alike are almost invariably provided with seven neck vertebræ or segments. Man thus possesses this number in common with the giraffe, whose extraordinary elongation of neck is produced, not by the introduction of other vertebræ, but by the greater length of the normal number—seven. The only exceptions to this rule of seven are found in two species of sloth, one of which has six and the other nine vertebræ, and in the sirenia or "sea cow," a species of whale, which is also provided with a six segmented elongation or extension of the spinal column.

In view of the fact that the seven invades every department of life, is it any wonder that the orientals have founded a regular system of philosophy based upon that mystic number?—St. Louis Republic.

Where Lightning Strikes.

Lightning, as it appears to the eye of an observer, is usually classified into different forms, as sheet lightning, zigzag lightning and ball lightning. People may be struck by lightning almost anywhere—in houses, out of doors, under trees, in open fields and on board ships at sea. Cases, however, are of most frequent occurrence out of doors and under trees. Sailors on board ship are peculiarly liable to lightning strokes. Metallic objects carried in the pockets or about the body render any one more liable to be struck.—Exchange.

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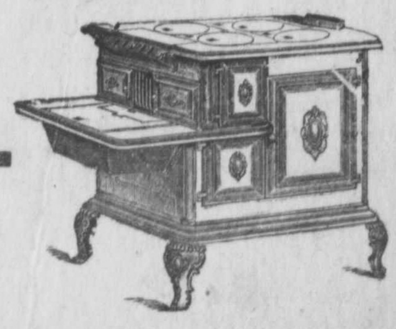
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