

Science Siftings

By 'Volt'

Rubber Shoes.

In 1820 a pair of rubber shoes was seen for the first time in the United States. They were covered with gilding, and resembled in shape the shoes of a Chinaman. The rubber was in some parts of the shoes from an eighth to a quarter of an inch thick.

A Remarkable Journey.

Numbers of experiments have been made to test the speed and destination of corked bottles thrown in the sea in various parts of the world. The most remarkable example ever heard of was that in which a bottle travelled 6000 miles in about two years and a half; roughly, at the rate of $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles a day.

Naval Torpedoes.

Torpedoes for the destruction of vessels were first used in the spring of 1861 by the Confederates in the James river. In 1865 the secretary of the navy reported that more ships had been lost by torpedoing than from all other causes. General Rains, chief of the Confederate torpedo service, put the number at 58, a greater number than has been destroyed in all the wars since.

Summer Ice.

The peasants of Pongibaud, in the mountains of Auvergne, are acquainted with a singular summer formation of ice, presumably due to evaporation of underground moisture and consequent fall in temperature. Of this phenomenon they have for many years taken advantage to cool and harden their cheeses, which are deposited in certain caverns where this ice is found to be present, and thus keep good during the hottest summer months.

Deep Sea Measuring.

Great Britain and America do more deep sea measuring than all the other nations put together. More than one-half of the sea floor lies at a depth of a little less than three miles. Some of the deepest places are holes in the ocean bed. One of these in the south Atlantic covers 7,000,000 square miles, or 7 per cent. of the surface of the globe. The Indian ocean is a great place for deep waters, twenty-four out of the known forty-two holes lying at the bottom of that body of water.

Silver Mines.

The process by which nature forms her silver mines is very interesting. It must be remembered that the earth's crust is full of water, which percolates everywhere through the rocks, making solutions of elements obtained from them. These solutions take up small particles of precious metal which they find here and there. Sometimes the solutions in question are hot, the water having got so far down as to be set boiling by the internal heat of the globe. Then they rush upward, picking up the bits of metal as they go. Naturally heat assists the performance of this operation. Now and then the streams thus formed, 'perpetually flowing hither and thither below the ground, pass through cracks or cavities in the rocks, where they deposit their lodes of silver.

History of the Potato.

The common potato was, at the time of the discovery of America, in cultivation from Chili, to which it is indigenous, along the greater part of the Andes, as far north as to New Granada. It was introduced from Quito into Spain about 1580 under the name of 'papa,' which, in Spanish, it still bears. From Spain it found its way to Italy, where it became known as 'tartuffalo,' and thence was carried to Mons in Belgium by one of the attendants of the Pope's legate to that country. In 1588 it was sent by Philippe de Sivry, Governor of Mons, to the botanist de l'Ecluse, professor at the University of Leyden, who, in 1601, published the first good description of it, under the name of 'Papas Peruanorum,' and stated that it had then spread throughout Germany. Recommended in France by Caspar Bauhin, the culture of the tuber rapidly extended in 1592 throughout Franche Comte, the Vosges, and Burgundy; but the belief becoming prevalent that it caused leprosy and fever, it underwent an ordeal of persecution from which it did not recover until three-quarters of a century afterwards.

Intercolonial

St. Carthage's Cathedral, Lismore, is to be solemnly dedicated on Pentecost Sunday.

Mr. John Meagher, M.L.C., is returning to Australia by the 'Orontes,' which left London on December 28. He has spent some time in Ireland and on the Continent.

The Victorian Government tobacco expert reports that during the year the Government farm at Edi produced 2000lb of cigar and 1500lb of pipe tobacco. It sold at prices higher than any obtained for the last five years, and there was a ready demand.

The Sisters of St. Joseph, in charge of the Forest Reefs Convent, while spending their Christmas vacation at Perth, had their premises broken into. On their return on January 15, they found nearly all the school windows smashed. Entrance had evidently been gained through the kitchen window. On examination it was found that the intruders had left traces of their visit in every direction.

The priests of the Goulburn diocese met at St. Patrick's College, Goulburn, on January 18 and presented the Rev. Father O'Leary with a purse of sovereigns and a complimentary address. Father O'Leary leaves Australia to join the Vincentian Order in Ireland. The Rev. Father Fallon, P.P., Temora, presided, and all the speakers expressed their warm regard for Father O'Leary.

A large number of the ex-students of St. Joseph's College, St. Patrick's Schools, and St. Mary's High School assembled in the Federation Hall, Sydney, the other day to say good-bye to Brother Wilbred, who has been transferred to Largs Bay College (S.A.). For the past 25 years Brother Wilbred had endeared himself to the pupils who came under his control, and that feeling of comradeship was manifested at the meeting called under the presidency of the St. Joseph's Old Boys' Union. Several eulogistic speeches were made during the evening, and a travelling bag and a collection of books were presented to Brother Wilbred.

Miss Amy Castles (says the London correspondent of the 'Argus') has been selected as the leading soprano for the Harrison Concert Company, in succession to Madame Patti. Miss Castles has signed a contract, on a rising scale of salary, for the next four years, for all provincial tours. She has just completed a very successful series of concerts under Mr. Harrison, appearing in most of the chief English cities, and in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Glasgow. Mr. George Castles, her brother, has been engaged by Mr. Seymour Hicks to appear with Miss Marie Studholme in a new musical comedy, to be shortly produced at the new theatre he is building in London. The engagement is for three years, and will necessitate Mr. Castles surrendering his position on the staff of the Victorian Agency-General.

Prior to his departure on a visit to Europe, the parishioners of St. Kilda West (Melbourne) entertained their pastor, Rev. W. Ganly, at the Sacred Heart Hall. Mr. James Hogan presided, and there was a very large attendance, including the Hon. N. Fitzgerald, M.L.C., and Judge Casey. In the course of an address the chairman said that their pastor had endeared himself to the people, who all held Father Ganly in the highest affection and respect. The rev. gentleman had done much since his appointment as parish priest. With the co-operation of the people, he had paid off a debt, and erected a fine presbytery and a parochial school in which the children were receiving a secular and religious education second to none in the Commonwealth. Father Ganly had also had the church renovated and painted, and they had now a parish fully equipped for the promotion of religion and Catholic education. Eulogistic speeches were also delivered by the Hon. Mr. Fitzgerald, Judge Casey, and others. Father Ganly, in replying, said he deeply appreciated the kindness of his parishioners on the eve of his departure, and it was only in keeping with what he had at all times received from his own people and the members of other denominations. St. Kilda was an ideal district in regard to the cordial relations which existed between all denominations. The successive mayors of the borough and the councillors treated all classes of citizens alike, and they recognised that religion was a question between man and God. He thanked those who had organised the greeting on the eve of his departure.