

Science Siftings

By 'Volt'

Snake-bite.

The poison of a snake, taken internally, isn't much worse than a dram of bad whisky composed of wood alcohol and fusel oil. It doesn't enter into the circulation unless it comes in contact with a sore or wound. If your friend is bitten don't be afraid to suck the wound—unless your lips are bleeding.

Extraordinary Qualities of a River.

There is a river in Spain called the Tinto, which has very extraordinary qualities. Its waters, which are as yellow as a topaz, harden the sand and petrify it in a most surprising manner. If a stone falls into the river and rests upon another they both become perfectly united and assimilated in a year. It withers all the plants on its banks as well as the roots of trees, which it dyes the same hue as its waters. No fish live in this stream.

A Strange People.

One of the mysteries of Mexico is presented by the Maya Indians, who inhabit the Sierra Madre mountains in the lower part of Sonora. They have fair skins, blue eyes, and light hair, and students of ethnology have always been puzzled to account for them. There is a tradition, however, that these Indians are the descendants of the crew and passengers of a Swedish vessel wrecked on the Mexican coast centuries before Columbus discovered the New World, but this tradition is founded on nothing more substantial than a folklore tale current among them that their ancestors came over the big salt water hundreds of moons ago.

American Woods.

The strongest wood which grows within the limits of the United States is that known as nutmeg hickory, which flourishes on the lower Arkansas river. The most elastic is tamarack, the black or shellbark standing not far below. The wood with the least elasticity and lowest specific gravity is the *Fiscus aurea*. The wood of the highest specific gravity is the blue wood of Texas and Mexico. The heaviest of the foreign woods are the pomegranate and the *lignum vitae*, and the lightest is cork. Four hundred and thirteen different species of trees grow in the various sections of the country, and of this number sixteen, when perfectly seasoned, will sink in water. These woods of high specific gravity grow mostly in the arid regions of New Mexico and Arizona.

Animals of the Past.

Compared with their extinct allies of earlier periods of the earth's history, it may be laid down as a general rule that the large animals of the present day are decidedly inferior in point of size. During the later portion of that remote period, for instance, before the incoming of the glacial epoch, when mammals appear to have attained their maximum development, there lived elephants alongside of which ordinary individuals of the existing species would have looked almost dwarfs, while the cave bear and the cave hyena attained considerably larger dimensions than their living representatives, and some of the sable-toothed tigers must have been considerably larger than the biggest African lion or Bengal lion. Again, the remains of red deer, bison, and wild oxen disinterred from the caverns and caves of North America indicate animals far superior in size to their degenerate descendants of the present day, while some of the extinct pigs from the Siwalk hills of Northern India might be compared in stature to a tapir rather than to an ordinary wild boar. The same story is told of reptiles, the giant tortoise of the Siwalk hills, in spite of its dimensions having been considerably exaggerated, greatly exceeding in size the largest living giant tortoises of either the Mascarene or the Galapagos Islands. The latter rocks have also yielded the remains of a long-snouted crocodile, allied to the gavia of the Ganges, which probably measured from fifty to sixty feet in length, whereas it is very doubtful if any existing member of the order exceeds half the smaller of these dimensions.

Very special attention is directed to the announcement on page 32 by Messrs. W. Strange and Co., of Christchurch, referring to their December Fair, which promises to attract visitors from all over Canterbury.

Intercolonial

The Melbourne City Council has fixed the allowance of the Lord Mayor at £1500 for the current year.

The Rev. Father Cooney, the Inspector of, Catholic schools for the diocese of Bathurst, is a native of Gul-gong. At the recent ceremony in connection with the laying of the foundation of the Gulgong Convent his Lordship Dr. Dunne spoke in very high terms of Father Cooney as a scholar and a clergyman.

Thomas Craven, a veteran of the diggers' insurrection at Eureka Stockade, died recently at Traralgon (Vic.) at the age of 84. Mr. Craven was a Clare man, who came to Australia 64 years ago. After the turmoil of the goldfields he resided at Geelong, and 24 years ago he went to Gippsland, where he resided till his death.

By the 'Bremen,' which reached Port Melbourne on November 17, three priests arrived for the Australian mission: The Rev. M. Dunne for the diocese of Sandhurst; Rev. P. J. O'Keefe and Rev. Thomas A. Simington for the diocese of Rockhampton (Queensland). Father Dunne was ordained at St. Peter's College, Wexford, Ireland, Fathers O'Keefe and Simington at St. John Lateran, Rome.

The solemn blessing and opening of the new St. Augustine's Church, Balmain East, was to take place on last Sunday. The church, a memorial to the venerated Father Therry, is a handsome edifice, erected at an approximate cost of £8000, and is a landmark visible for miles around. It is meet that it should be erected to his memory on the very spot where he passed away as a testimony from Australians of their admiration for his zeal, sanctity, and heroic virtues.

St. Patrick's Cathedral was packed to the doors at the 11 o'clock Mass on Sunday, November 17 (says the Melbourne 'Tribune'), when the first Provincial Council to be held in Australia was opened. Prior to the celebration of Mass, his Grace the Archbishop, the Bishops of Ballarat, Sale, and Sandhurst, the Knights of St. Gregory, Hon. N. Fitzgerald, Dr. A. L. Kenney, Dr. N. O'Sullivan, and the clergy marched in procession from the Palace, through the main door of the Cathedral to the altar. Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by the Right Rev. Dr. Corbett. At the conclusion of Mass his Grace the Archbishop preached the occasional sermon.

The splendid demonstration of Catholic faith and piety witnessed at the Cathedral on Sunday morning, November 17 (says the Melbourne 'Advocate'), when a large number of young men (1500) approached the altar rails in a body, attests the value of the Catholic Young Men's Society in keeping its members in touch with their obligations as practical members of the Church. The dominant note of the speeches of his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, of the visiting prelates, priests, and laymen at the C.Y.M.S. Communion breakfast in the Cathedral Hall was one of triumph and of thankfulness. Certainly, the remarkable progress of the Church in Victoria during the past 60 years, and especially since the advent of the present Archbishop (20 years ago), affords abundant reason for gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts. Religion and education have, hand in hand, gone forward by leaps and bounds.

The Christian Brothers of Perth will celebrate on November 21 the golden jubilee of one of their numbers in the person of Rev. Brother J. P. O'Mullane, who joined the Order on the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary fifty years ago (says the 'W.A. Record' of November 16). Brother O'Mullane belongs to a Cork family, where he was born in 1841. He entered the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers in Dublin, when he was little more than fifteen years of age. Some time after he was sent to Cork to complete his novitiate, in which community he remained for about a quarter of a century. He conducted the principal school of the Brothers there for upwards of 20 years. He was also stationed in Limerick, New Ross, and Dublin. On coming to Australia in 1884 he was located in Melbourne, and afterwards in Brisbane and St. Kilda. In 1891 he was appointed Inspector of all the Christian Brothers' schools in Australia, which office he resigned in 1894. Since then he has spent varied time in the Ipswich, Adelaide, and Perth communities. Educationally, Brother O'Mullane has few equals. He is deeply versed in Latin, Greek, French, German, mathematics, and science. He has devoted much time to the study of music. He has always been a close student. At his present age he devotes several hours daily to the study of mathematics.

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