

Science Siftings

BY VOLT

Starboard and Port.

Why do the sailors call the right hand side of the ship 'starboard' and the left hand 'port'? For the answer it is necessary to go back to the days of the Norsemen and Saxons. In the viking ships the warriors hung the 'bords,' or shields, on the side of the ship above the places for their oars. The viking himself held the steer oar, which was fastened to the right hand side of the stern. Thus, the right hand side of the ship became known as the steer side, and as the bords of the warriors were hung there it was called the 'sterbord,' or starboard side, while the lower, or lurking, side became the larboard. Bord eventually became corrupted into port.

Earthquakes.

A scientist who has made a special study of earthquakes says:— 'Let us imagine the influx of the sea into one of the fissures formed in the earth's crust. On coming into contact with molten matter it would instantly be changed into gaseous steam, expanding to more than 18,000 times its original bulk. This would press with enormous force upward upon the crust of the earth and downward upon the surface of the liquid lava. If there were then no vent for the lava to escape an earthquake would result.' There are other ingenious theories which have weight, such as that of Davy, who when he discovered the metallic bases of the earths and alkalis, conceived that water may penetrate to these metals if they exist underground in an unoxidised state, and so set free sufficient gaseous matter to cause an earthquake. Shrinkage of the earth's crust is also to be taken into account.

Concerning the Ocean.

The oceans occupy three-fourths of the surface of the earth. A mile down the sea, the water has a pressure of a ton to every square inch. If a box 6ft deep was filled with sea water, which was then allowed to evaporate, there would be 2in of salt left in the bottom of the box. Taking the average depth of the ocean to be three miles, there would be a layer of salt 440ft thick covering the bottom, in case all the water should evaporate. In many places, especially in the Far North, the water freezes from the bottom upward. Waves are deceptive things. To look at them, one would gather the impression that the whole water travelled. This, however, is not so. The water stays in the same place, but the motion goes on. In great storms waves are sometimes 40ft high, and their crests travel 50 miles an hour. The base of a wave (the distance from valley to valley) is usually considered as being 15 times the height of the wave. Therefore a wave 25ft high would have a base extending 375ft. The force of waves breaking on the shore is 17 tons to the square foot.

A Curious Tree.

The Welwitschia mirabilis is a wonder of the vegetable kingdom. It grows on the barren land of the western side of Africa, where rain is almost unknown, and the only moisture is that from dews which fall at night. This plant was discovered in 1860 by Dr. Welwitsch, an eminent scientific traveller. The welwitschia is a tree which lives for many years, many specimens being estimated as more than 100 years old. Every year of its life increases its size, yet it never grows higher. Rising just above the ground, this strange plant, looking like a rough round table, regularly enlarges by adding concentric layers to its circumference. The flat upper surface of the trunk is very hard and dark, resembling in color and texture the crust of an over-baked loaf. The trunk attains the size of from fourteen to eighteen feet in circumference, but is never more than a few inches above the ground. The welwitschia is remarkable in the fact that it never loses its first two leaves and never gets any more. These leaves increase in size year after year until they attain the length of six or eight feet or more. They are flat and leathery, and frequently split into numerous straps.

Woods' Great Peppermint Cure for Coughs and Colds never fails. 1s 6d and 2s 6d.

Intercolonial

The Peter's Pence collections taken up at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on Sunday, July 5, realised £125.

To meet the wonderful expansion of Australian telegraphic and telephonic business, £2,000,000 will be needed covering the next three years.

His Lordship Dr. Olier, Bishop of Tonga, who is on a visit to Sydney on account of ill-health, is making rapid progress towards recovery.

The New South Wales Government proposes to create a dozen new Legislative Councillors. Of the 53 members at present in the Council over one-third top the three-score age limit, and the number on active service is only between 40 and 50 members.

Mr. Louis Brennan, of torpedo fame, at the instance of Mr. Deakin, forwarded to Australia official descriptions of the mono-railway invented by him, and has asked for assistance from the Commonwealth towards the expense of the development of the invention.

Mr. Percy Jones, the young Geelong musician who was so successful as conductor of St. Augustine's Orphanage Band, and was sent to Europe to continue his musical studies, is now settled in Vienna. In a letter recently received by the Rev. Brother Kerins, of St. Augustine's Orphanage, he says that he expects to remain in Vienna for two years.

The Very Rev. T. F. O'Neill, of Gawler, S.A., who is on a visit to Ireland for the benefit of his health, has had a serious illness since his arrival at Dublin. He was a patient in a private hospital conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, and sufficiently recovered to travel to a health resort located near Dublin. The latest advices state that he is slowly regaining his health.

There was great rejoicing at St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, when the results of the recent final examination of nurses were made known. This examination was held by the conjoint Board of Examiners of the R.V.T. Nurses' Association. Nineteen candidates (including four Sisters of Charity) presented themselves from St. Vincent's Hospital, and all passed, one of the Sisters obtaining (out of 80 candidates) the highest number of marks for the surgical paper.

The erection of two steeples in front of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Bendigo, has just been completed, at a cost of over £3000. Later on the principal part of the main building and side chapels will be erected. It is also intended to carry out some extensive additions to St. Aiden's Orphanage, at Grassy Flat. All these works are being carried on by funds provided by the estate bequeathed to the Church by the late Rev. H. Backhaus, the pioneer priest on the Bendigo goldfield, who was also well known in South Australia.

Mother M. Joseph Sherlock, of the Nicholson Street Convent of Mercy, Melbourne, passed to her eternal reward on June 27. The deceased was a daughter of the late Sir Robert Sherlock, of Dublin—a family distinguished in military and naval circles. She was born on August 4, 1828, and was one of three sisters who gave their lives to God in religion. She entered the parent house of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy at Baggot street, Dublin, on September 8, 1847, and made her religious profession on May 14, 1850. Deceased was one of the pioneer Sisters who came to Perth in 1856, and the last survivor of the three Sisters who founded the Convent of Mercy at Nicholson street, Fitzroy, on March 7, 1857.

The repatriation of kanakas from Queensland is now practically completed, 4197 having been returned to their homes. Meanwhile the Queensland sugar-fields, which were to be ruined by white labor, seem to have survived the repatriation of Tommy Tanna. The Government Statistician has just issued his report on the sugar crop for 1907. The output has a record for the State. The area under cultivation was 126,810 acres; crushed, 94,384 acres; yields, cane 1,665,028 tons; and sugar, 188,307 tons. The yield of cane per acre was 17.64 tons; sugar per acre, 2 tons; tons cane to tons sugar, 6.84. The consumption of sugar in the Commonwealth is put down as 191,416 tons; New Zealand, 42,673 tons. The consumption of the different States was:—Queensland, 27,543 tons; New South Wales, 72,873 tons; Victoria, 53,437 tons; South Australia, 17,486 tons; Western Australia, 12,754 tons; Tasmania, 7323 tons.

DEAR ME!

Forgotten that SYMINGTON'S COFFEE ESSENCE! Whatever shall I do? Call at the nearest Store and ask, THEY ALL KEEP IT