

Science Siftings

By 'VOLT.'

Wood-Reinforced Concrete.

An English engineer has suggested a novel type of reinforced concrete, in which wooden beams and laths take the place of iron rods and wires. The new material, which its inventor calls ligno-concrete, is intended as a substitute, not for ferro-concrete in general, but chiefly for wood as employed in the construction of roofs, footways, posts, etc. The wooden parts act as traction members, and the concrete as a compression member. It has been demonstrated by many tests that ligno-concrete is as strong as ferro-concrete, when the wooden beams of the former have a cross-section which makes them as strong as the steel bars of the latter. The tractile strength of steel is eight or nine times that of wood, but steel is ten to fifteen times as costly as timber. Hence ligno-concrete, if it proves durable, may advantageously be substituted for ferro-concrete in many cases. The question of durability can be decided only by time and experience, but the many known instances of the permanence of wood protected by cement indicate that the decision will be favorable.

The Dodo.

We are all familiar with the phrase 'as extinct as the dodo,' and there are uninformed folk who believe that it was as fabulous as the phoenix. Certain it is that it became extinct almost as soon as it became known. It was found in the island of Mauritius by the earlier explorers, first the Portuguese and then the Dutch. The bird—which resembled in appearance an unfledged duckling—was unwieldy and incapable of flying, and it was too fat for its little wings to lift it from the ground. It was knocked on the head by the sailors and worried by the pigs they introduced, and so was soon exterminated. About the beginning of the seventeenth century, between 1610 and 1620 specimens were brought alive to Europe, and were exhibited as a show. Oxford once possessed a stuffed specimen at the Ashmolean Museum, but as it became mouldy and eaten by insects, it was destroyed. The curator cut off its head and one foot and kept them. The head and foot, together with another foot in London, and skull in Copenhagen, are about all we have left of dodos seen in a living state by Europeans. Another bird, the great auk, came to an end only about sixty years ago. It used to be observed on the rocky islands of Scotland, Iceland, and Greenland, but now it is 'as extinct as the dodo.'

How to Float an Invention.

Some years ago an American promoter went to Berlin to sell the patent rights of a new bottle-making machine which made 20,000 bottles a day, replaced hand labour, and lowered cost of production. He found the German bottle manufacturers all bound up in a 'verein.' They considered the state of the bottle trade very good, liked their present methods of manufacture, and did not respond at all to the suggestion of this new Yankee machine being worth a million and a-half marks to them. Instead of going back home after this rebuff (says the *World's Work*), the American visited one of the largest mineral-water companies in Germany and asked how many bottles they bought yearly. They told him a matter of millions. Then he asked how much they were paying for bottles, and when they gave the price, offered to install in their own plant a machine which would turn out all they could possibly use at less than half their present cost. The offer was accepted, and when the machine began work the mineral-water people were delighted. The loss of this important customer brought the bottle manufacturers around in a hurry. They bought the German rights, and that machine is being built and used to-day in Germany.

Intercolonial

The particulars of the will of the late Mr. Thomas Garrett Dalton, of Orange, have just been made known. The estate is valued at £52,990, of which £34,140 is in shares in public companies. Among other bequests he left £100 to the administrators of St. Joseph's Church, Orange, to be expended on improvements.

Addressing a meeting of past students of Loreto Convent, Albert Park, some little time ago, the Very Rev. Dean Phelan, V.G., and the Very Rev. J. O'Dwyer, S.J., emphasised the influence that women have in keeping offensive plays from the stage and bad literature from the home.

The appointment of Acting-Judge Walter Edmunds as District Court Judge and Chairman of Quarter Sessions for the State has been approved by the Executive Council (says the *Catholic Press*). For a considerable time past Mr. Edmunds has been more before the public as a Royal Commissioner, and as chairman of numerous wages boards. He is a prominent Catholic, and an ex-student of St. John's College, of which he is a Fellow. The new judge, who is one of the leading barristers in N.S.W., is also keenly interested in literature and art.

The late Mrs. Dalton, of North Sydney, who died on board the Eastern while on her return from a visit to Japan, was born in Ardfinnan, County Tipperary. She arrived in Queensland about 45 years ago, and subsequently went to Orange. For some time she stayed with her brother, the late Rev. Father T. J. Walsh, P.P., of Townsville. She first married Mr. Ahearn, and 11 years after his death she married the late Hon. Thomas Dalton, K.C.S.G., M.L.C., of the well-known house of Dalton Brothers, of Sydney. The late Mrs. Dalton took the greatest interest in charitable work, and many institutions will sorely miss an ever-generous benefactor.

Sir John Madden, as Chief Justice of Victoria, has special opportunities of seeing the deplorable effect of paternal repudiation of their obligations. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Victorian Neglected Children's Aid Society, his Honor is reported to have said—'Such pitiful cases as the society was caring for ought not to be found in a country like this. Some people would rather help a favorite dog than one of their own children. From 1905 to 1909 the number of neglected children in Victoria had risen from 4813 to 6007.'

Carmelite Nuns were a quarter of a century in Australia last year, and in connection with the silver jubilee of their arrival (says the *Catholic Press*) a movement, approved of by his Eminence the Cardinal, was started a few months ago to raise funds to enable the Sisters to enlarge their convent in Wardell road, Marrickville, which is sadly inadequate for the accommodation of the members of the community. An appeal on their behalf has been made through the *Catholic Press*, and so far £1000 has been subscribed. In the presence of a large gathering the Cardinal on Sunday afternoon (July 30) blessed the foundation stone of the additions. The Carmelites commenced their history beneath the Southern Cross on July 30, 1885, the foundation being made from Angoulême, in France. To-day there is but one community—that at Marrickville—numbering 17 religious, the majority French, but seven Australians.

The Newman Society (writes the Melbourne correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*) is doing much to keep the idea of a Catholic College affiliated to the University before the Catholic body. The hon. secretary, Rev. W. Mangan, recently urged the importance of the matter before a meeting of the Melbourne branch of the C.Y.M. Society. He spoke as one having confidence in his object, and outlined a scheme which is certainly worthy of attention. It is understood that his Grace the Archbishop is keeping the matter in view, and has approved of the action of the Newman Society in making the project one of the planks in its platform.