

Science Siftings

By 'VOLT.'

A Lofty Building.

The Woolworth building in New York has reached its highest point—55 stories—750 feet. From its top people walking on the street look like ants, and street cars hardly as large as children's toys.

A Wonderful Arch.

A marvellous arch still stands in the desert about 40 miles south of Bagdad, on the east bank of the winding Tigris River. It is part of the crumbling summer palace of the ancient Parthian kings, only a portion of the facade and the great vaulted arch, 96 feet in height, remains standing.

The Supply of Rubber.

About one-half of the world's supply of rubber comes from the Brazilian sections of Ceara, Manaos and Para. Their product sets the price for the raw material in the consuming markets. The trees grow wild. No systematic preparation of the ground has ever been necessary, and the entire care of the rubber gatherers has been given to obtaining only the juice from the rubber tree and getting it to market.

Cost of Minting Coins.

Judge Rentoul, examining a mint official in a coinage case which came before him, elicited the fact that a crown piece costs the mint 1s 6d in the making, leaving a clear profit of 3s 6d. But, indeed, the profit of the silver coinage is exceedingly handsome all round. Five shillings and sixpence weigh one ounce, the metal value of which is 2s 3d. To this there is, of course, the cost of minting to be added, but that is a mere fraction. The profits on bronze coinage are not less attractive, and account for the jealousy with which a recent incursion of French bronze was peremptorily stopped. On every ton of penny pieces taken out from the mint there is a profit of £382.

Development of the Piano.

Have you ever thought, when looking upon a beautiful piano, that the instrument, as it is to-day, is the perfection of centuries of invention? In the beginning it was a harp-shaped piece of wood, having two or three strings. From time to time more strings were added, until the cithara was invented. This was an instrument in the shape of a capital 'P,' with ten strings stretched across the open space. Many centuries afterwards musicians conceived the idea of stretching strings across an open box. About the year 1200 this was done; the dulcimer made its appearance, and the strings were struck with hammers. For another hundred years or so these hammers were held in the hands, and then some genius invented a keyboard, which, being struck by the fingers, caused the hammers to strike the strings. This was called a clavicytherium, or keyed cithara, and from time to time it was modified and improved. During Queen Elizabeth's time it was called a virginal, and then a spinet, because the hammers were covered with the spines or quills, which struck and caught the strings and produced the sound. During the period between 1700 and 1800 it was much improved and enlarged, and was given the name of harpsichord. It was in 1710 that Bartholomeo Christofori, an Italian, invented a keyboard similar to the one we have now, which causes the hammers to strike the wires from above, and thus developed the piano. During the last century the inventive genius of musicians the world over has revised and improved it until it has reached the present-day perfection.

When Ruby coughs and Fanny chokes,
And Ruthie hangs her head,
And mother sighs and father snorts
'I wish that I were dead,'
Then Grannie reaches for the shelf,
A bottle to secure,
And gives us life—man, child, and wife—
With Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

Intercolonial

The Very Rev. Father Nicolas, Provincial of the Marist Fathers, left Sydney on April 16 for New Caledonia and the Hebrides. He will be absent for a period of five months.

Adelaide is making great preparations for the celebration of the silver episcopal jubilee of his Grace Archbishop O'Reilly. The presentation of a testimonial and an address has been decided on.

A monument to the memory of the late Hon. J. R. Dacey, Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales, was unveiled at Yarra Bay cemetery, Botany, on Sunday afternoon, April 20, by Mr. J. S. T. McGowen (State Premier).

The Very Rev. Dean Butler, who for the past three years had had charge of the Tumut and Adelong parishes, passed away on April 21. The deceased priest labored in the Goulburn diocese for the past forty years, and was sixty-six years of age.

Widespread regret was felt in Melbourne at the death on April 22 of Mr. Ronald Stewart, who for 22 years had been employed in the Post Office, latterly in the correspondence branch. He was born in the Warrnambool district 42 years ago. He was a man of very exceptional literary ability, with a wide historical knowledge, and the services he rendered with his pen in the field of Catholic journalism won for him some years ago the Papal decoration, *Pro Ecclesia*. Some two years back he was stricken with an illness, and was operated on twice, and since before Christmas he had been confined to his room. A few months ago a 'Ronald Stewart Testimonial Fund' was inaugurated by Bishop Phelan, and in round figures £1000 has been already realised, which will be vested in trustees for the benefit of the widow and eight young children.

By the death of Dr. John Joseph Donovan, K.C.S.G., K.C., is removed one of the leading Catholic men of New South Wales. Born in Sydney in 1837, the deceased was educated at St. Mary's Seminary, and afterwards at Lyndhurst College. Proceeding thence to the University, he commenced a most brilliant career as a student, taking in turn the degrees of B.A., M.A., and LL.D. On being called to the Bar, Dr. Donovan practised his profession in the Equity jurisdiction, and soon made his way to the front by the qualities which made him famous as a counsel. For the last 17 years he had lived privately, and devoted himself to the cause of charity, assisting largely in the development of the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth. For his services to the Church he was made a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory, and Pope Leo XIII. bestowed the Cross of Leo upon him. To the many charitable institutions of the Catholic Church in New South Wales he was a generous benefactor.

The golden jubilee of the Right Rev. Monsignor Beechinor, of Tasmania, occurs this month. The members of his congregation and his friends outside the Church have expressed their desire to mark the occasion by some personal gift, but the Monsignor, while highly appreciating the good intentions of the people, has determined not to allow their generosity to be called upon for his personal benefit. The people are, however, anxious to celebrate a double event, the golden jubilees of the Monsignor and his brother, Archdeacon M. J. Beechinor, of Latrobe, and it has been decided that a movement be put on foot in honor of the two eminent clerics, to erect a high school in Launceston, at the suggestion of the Monsignor, and of a church at Devonport, in the Archdeacon's district. In response to invitations issued by Mr. J. V. Sullivan, a large number of residents attended a meeting held recently. The Archbishop was present, and was supported by a great many prominent priests and laymen. A subscription list was opened, and generously supported.

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