

Science Siftings

Bye-Volt

The tail of a fish.

A fish's tail is its wings. Thanks to the machinery of muscle set along its spine, and to its cleaving form, a trout or salmon can dart through the water at a tremendous pace, though its rapid flights, unlike the bird's, are not long ones. It is soon dead beat. The water is not so friendly to flight as the air. The stroke of the fish's tail is one of great power, and by means of it and the writhing, snake-like flexion of the body, high speed is reached.

A bird's nest of steel.

In the Museum of Natural History at Soleure, in Switzerland, there is a bird's nest made of steel. There are a number of clock-making shops at Soleure, and in the yards of these are often found lying disused or broken springs of clocks. One day a clock-maker noticed in a tree in his yard a bird's nest of peculiar appearance. Examining it, he found that a pair of wagtails had built a nest entirely of clock springs. It was more than four inches across, and perfectly comfortable for the birds. After the feathered architects had reared their brood, their nest was taken to the museum, where it is preserved as a striking illustration of the skill of birds in turning their surroundings to advantage in building their nests.

The Vision of birds.

Birds have very acute action, perhaps the most acute of any creature, and the sense is also more widely diffused over the retina than is the case with man. Consequently a bird can see sideways as well as objects in front of it. The simple fact, that the eye of a hawk and a pigeon is larger than their whole brain gives some idea of what their powers of sight must be and of how easily they can fly hundreds of miles, if they have marks to guide them. A bird sees, showing great uneasiness in consequence, a hawk long before it is visible to man. So, too, fowls and pigeons find minute scraps of food, distinguishing them from what appear to us exactly similar pieces of earth or gravel. Young chickens are also able to find their own food, knowing its position and how distant it is, as soon as they are hatched, whereas a child only very gradually learns either to see or to understand the distance of objects. Several birds, apparently the young of all those that nest on the ground, can see quite well, directly they come out of the shell, but the young of birds, that nest in trees or on rocks are born blind and have to be fed.

Origin of the sugar-cane.

The origin of the sugar-cane has always been a debatable point. As wild animals are found even now to be fond of sugar-cane, and quite destructive to it in some localities, it is fair to infer, that mankind ages ago discovered the merits of the plant, and found it was good. As sugar came to Europe from the Far East, it would seem probable that the sugar-cane was indigenous in some localities in the East Indies. Claims for its origin in the South Sea Islands of the Pacific have also been made, and certainly sugar-cane was found in some of these islands at an early date. Ritter is quoted as saying in 1840, that all the varieties of the sugar-cane, known as Saccharum, were found in India, excepting the variety which was found in Egypt. As Egypt for so many centuries has been producing many of the coarser kinds of the sorghum family; some confusion may have arisen as to the quality of the sugar-cane there first discovered, which perhaps belonged to the sorghum family, and was not a true sugar-cane. Ritter says that the origin of the sugar-cane was almost surely in Asia; if any conclusion can be drawn from botanical geography. In the old caravan days sugar is said to have been brought across Asia to Europe, freighted on camels, and later, when Columbus discovered America and Vasco da Gama circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope, and transportation throughout the waters of the globe became possible, the culture, or at least the growth, of sugar-cane at once became widely spread, and is now carried on in a greater or less degree in all of the tropical and in most of the semi-tropical regions of the globe.

The quantity of gold exported from New Zealand during the past nine months was 382,081oz., valued at £1,527,526, being a decrease of 29,948oz., valued at £135,311, compared with the corresponding period last year.

Intercolonial

Madame Butt's advice to young Australian musicians or singers who desire to go to England is 'Dont.' Some of them are good domestics spoiled.

The Postmaster-General, Mr. Mauger is responsible for these figures:—Victoria's drink bill in 1890 was £6,730,430; in 1905 it had been reduced to £3,991,673; or from £6 0s. 7d. per head to £3 5s. 10d.

A special gold medal for teachers was awarded to Brother Casimir, of the Marist Brothers' School, Parramatta. His pupils won six first and four second prizes in the School Court of the Parramatta Exhibition.

Mr. Justice O'Connor intends to pay a brief visit to Ireland, almost immediately. At a meeting of the Commonwealth Executive Council his Honor was given leave of absence from October 1 to the date of the first meeting of the High Court in the new year.

The appointment of Mr. Frank McDonnell to the Legislative Council of Queensland was marked by a presentation at Brisbane recently, by the Queensland Irish Association, in the shape of a shamrock made of Queensland gold.

The Very Rev. Father Fogarty, of Burrowa, who has been for some time under treatment in Dr. O'Hara's private hospital, (says the Melbourne 'Tribune') has left for Lewisham, where he will remain during convalescence at the Hospital of the Little Company of Mary, before returning to his own parish.

The Rev. J. P. M. Connolly, pastor of Sandgate (Q.), for twenty-six years, died on Sep. 23. For the past eighteen months, he had been ailing. Father Connolly was born in the North of Ireland in 1831, and was educated in France. He arrived in Brisbane in 1863, and was the first priest sent to North Queensland.

Marie Narelle's many friends throughout Australia (says the 'Catholic Press'), will be pleased to hear that she is almost completely restored to health. She is looking better now, than she has looked for many years. At present she is at Medlow, and she intends shortly to leave Australia, continuing her tour of the world.

Madame Melba attended the concert given in Ballarat to aid Mr. Percy Jones, the leader of the Geelong Orphanage Band, to proceed to Europe, for the purpose of completing his musical education. The diva was very gracious in her manner. She gave the bandsman an invitation to attend her home at 'Ercildoune,' and promised to give him letters of introduction to all the leading music circles of Europe. About £400 of the £500 required to send the talented young artist home has been subscribed.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of St. Ursula's College, Armidale, was celebrated recently, (says the 'Catholic Press'). The festivities were participated in, not only by the people of the vicinity, but representatives were present from distant parts of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, all eagerly enthusiastic in manifesting their esteem for the good Sisters of St. Ursula, and offering their congratulations on the progress made by the Order in Armidale during the past 25 years.

A handsome new Convent at Koroit, was blessed and opened on Sunday, September 29, in the presence of about 5000 persons. At the conclusion of the ceremony addresses were delivered by his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, and his Lordship the Bishop of Ballarat. The Rev. Father Lennon, pastor of Koroit, announced that the sum of £5,493 9s. 11d. had had been expended on the convent to date, excluding furniture. The receipts amounted to £2,738 9s. 4d., leaving a debit balance of £3,255, including £2500 for furniture. The collection was then taken up, and resulted in the substantial amount of £712 10s. being realised.

On September 28, Mr. and Mrs. P. MacMahon of 'Firgrove,' Willoughby, celebrated the 50th anniversary of their marriage. On September 26, 1857, old St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, was the scene of the ceremony, when Patrick MacMahon, second son of Patrick MacMahon, of Cloonteen, near Six Mile Bridge, County Clare, Ireland, was united to Dora MacDonough, second daughter of Patrick MacDonough William-street, Limerick City. The officiating priest was Father John Eugene Gourbeillon (popularly known at the time as Father John), who, besides being a pious Benedictine, left his mark upon the old building in sculptured figures, which are still on the College street facade of the Cathedral.

DEAR ME!

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