

Science Siftings

BY 'VOLT'

About Bread.

Bread was first made without leaven, heavy and solid. Then yeast was discovered, and yeast-risen bread came into use throughout the civilised world. Finally baking powder was devised, the most healthful, economical, and convenient of all leavening or lightening agents. Yeast is a living plant. Mixed with the dough it causes fermentation and destruction of a part of the flour, and this produces carbonic-acid gas. The bubbles of this gas become entangled in the dough, swelling it up and making it spongy. In this process, however, a part of the most nutritious elements of the flour (estimated at 10 per cent) is destroyed in producing the leavening gas; there is always danger of sour dough, and there is a delay of many hours for the sponge to rise. Perfect bread is that in which wheat is transposed into an available food without loss of any of its valuable properties. Baking powder is now largely used in place of yeast to leaven bread. It does precisely the same work—that is, swells up the dough and makes it porous and spongy. But the process is not destructive; the baking powder by itself produces the leavening gas. No part of the flour is decomposed or destroyed. Moreover, there is no mixing or kneading with the hands, no setting of sponge overnight, as the loaf is mixed and ready for the oven at once. Bread thus made cannot sour, but will retain its moisture and freshness, and may be eaten while hot or fresh without distress even by persons of delicate digestion. The ease with which baking powder bread is made, its cleanliness and healthfulness, have caused it to supersede yeast bread with many of the best pastry cooks.

The Breeding of Oysters.

The care of the breeding oyster and the plans adopted by the owners of oyster-beds for catching the 'spat,' or young oysters, when they fall to the bottom, by placing movable tiles or frames for them to fix themselves to, form an important part of the craft of the oyster man. It is a difficult business, and is variously carried out in England, France, Holland, and America. The young oysters, when they have fixed themselves, are carried on the movable tiles or frames from one region to another for the purpose of encouraging their growth and avoiding a variety of dangers to their life and health (sometimes from the Bay of Biscay to the mouth of the Thames!). They are often, but not always—finally fed up in sea ponds or inlets, which are peculiar in containing an enormous number of those very minute microscopic plants, with beautifully shaped siliceous shells, which are known as diatoms. These are so abundant in such ponds as to form a sort of powder or cloud near the bottom, and the oysters draw them, day and night, by their gill-currents into their mouths, digest them, and grow fine and fat. The district of Marennes, on the West Coast of France, is celebrated for having sea-ponds or tanks in which a wonderful diatom of a bright blue color abounds; so abundant are they that the cloud produced by them in the pools is of a deep cobalt blue. When oysters are placed in these tanks to fatten, their gills or beards become rich blue-green in color. They lose the color after ten days, when removed to ordinary tanks. These are the celebrated green oysters or 'Marennes vertes' of French restaurants. The coloring matter of the little diatoms—swallowed by the million and digested—is taken up by the blood of the oyster from its stomach, and is excreted by certain corpuscles on the surface of the gills, just as red madder is deposited in the bones of a pig fed upon madder, and as the feathers of the canary take up the color of cayenne pepper when it is mixed with the canary's food. It used to be thought that the green color of the green oyster is due to copper—and that opinion was supported by the curious fact that the blood of all oysters and other molluscs, and also of lobsters, scorpions, and king-crabs, does really contain a minute quantity of copper, just as our blood contains iron.

It may not cure the housemaid's knee,
Gout or appendicitis;
But ills and chills before it flee,
Dyspepsia or bronchitis;
It is a fact, it will not act
To polish furniture,
But to polish off a cold or cough
Take Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

Intercolonial

Very little hope is now entertained for the recovery of the Right Rev. Dr. J. Murray, Bishop of Maitland.

The Catholics of Ballarat intend to give a very hearty reception to his Lordship Bishop Higgins on his return to his diocese early next month.

Another Eureka Stockade veteran, Mr. James Hefferman, of Kyneton, has passed away at the age of 81 years. He arrived in Victoria in 1850.

Bishop Reville has received from Italy the magnificent painting of Pope Pius X., the work of the foremost painter in Rome, which he ordered for the Bendigo Art Gallery.

Prior to his departure for a new parish, the Rev. J. H. Morris was entertained by the parishioners of St. Francis' (Haymarket), Sydney, and presented with a purse of sovereigns.

The opening of the third Australasian Catholic Congress in the last week of September next will be signalled by the ceremony of the laying of the first stone of the portion of St. Mary's Cathedral, yet to be built.

A new presbytery, which had been erected at a cost of over £1800, was blessed and opened on Sunday, May 9, at Tumut, by the Right Rev. Dr. Gallagher, Bishop of Goulburn. The building was opened free of debt.

Mother Clare, a few years ago Superior of Nazareth House, Ballarat, has been appointed Mother-General *pro tem* of the Order of the Sisters of Nazareth. It is probable she will shortly be permanently appointed to the position. She is now working in England.

Rev. Father P. J. Roche, Muswellbrook, was welcomed home by his parishioners after an extended European tour. He declined to accept a presentation of a purse of sovereigns, and suggested that the money offered should be used for the nucleus of a fund for the improvement of the presbytery.

The Very Rev. Dean Phelan, V.G., has received a cable message stating that his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne sailed from London for Melbourne on Friday, April 30, by the R.M.S. Ortona, which is due in Adelaide on the 7th prox. A committee has been formed to organise the reception arrangements, but its members have been disappointed to learn that the Archbishop has, in a letter to Dean Phelan, given strict injunctions that there shall be no testimonial or presentation of any kind on the occasion of his homecoming. The Right Rev. Dr. Higgins, Bishop of Ballarat, is also a passenger by the same vessel.

Miss Agnes G. Murphy (private secretary to Madame Melba) writes as follows to the Sydney *Freeman's Journal*: The paragraph in a recent issue of the *Freeman*, and which paragraph has been widely circulated any time these eight years, in which Madame Melba is made to say, "Who is this Amy Castles?" is a graceless invention, unjust alike to Madame Melba and Miss Castles. Immediately after Miss Castles arrived in London, I myself introduced her to Madame Melba, who already knew all about her. Madame Melba was delighted with Miss Castles, heard her sing, and invited her to the opera at Covent Garden, also to her town house.

Bishop BoisMENU, of British New Guinea, who was in Sydney for some months, is on his way to Yule Island, his episcopal centre (says the *Catholic Press*). His Lordship is a member of the Order of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, whose Australasian headquarters are at Randwick, and succeeded to the charge of the Vicariate Apostolic of British New Guinea on the retirement, at the beginning of last year, of Archbishop Navarre, M.S.H., who still resides at Yule Island. In the vicariate 27 stations are established, each provided with church, schools, and residences. From the central stations 78 villages are regularly visited and instructed. Assisting his Lordship are 26 priests, 21 lay Brothers, 38 nuns. There are 38 schools, with an average attendance of 1400 children, and two orphanages. Dr. de-BoisMENU is a Frenchman, and was only 29 years of age when he was appointed Bishop of Babala and Coadjutor to Archbishop Navarre. He is about 38 years old, has been 14 years a priest, and has been a missionary in New Guinea for 11 years.

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