

## Science Siftings

By 'VOLT.'

### Where Radium Comes From.

Hitherto the greater part of the radium in use has come from Bohemia, but pitch blende occurs in Cornwall, generally in small veins crossing the tin-bearing lodes, and it is stated of the Trenwith mine, near St. Ives, which is worked by the British Radium Corporation, Ltd., that the deposit is a guarantee of an assured supply of radium in large quantity.

### The Toad's New Garments.

Before toads are full-grown they often shed their skins. After that four suits a year is the family custom. When a toad wishes to change his clothes, he humps up his back, puts his head down and draws his feet under him. Straightway his old coat splits through the middle of the back. Next he pulls his legs out, then his arms, draws his skin into his mouth and by a great effort, swallows it. Although the swallowing process must be unpleasant, it is soon over and the toad finds himself arrayed in bright new garments.

### Use of Licorice Root.

Thousands of tons of licorice root, an article that by the natives generally is esteemed a pest and worse than worthless, are annually gathered in Turkey for exportation to America for use in the manufacture of chewing and smoking tobacco as well as for flavoring confectionary and beer. The principal collecting stations are Bagdad, Alexandretta, and Smyrna, at which places the exporters maintain offices, hydraulic presses, and warehouses. The business is largely controlled by an American concern.

### Two Leaning Towers.

The leaning tower of Pisa is world-famous, but there are two leaning towers that are seldom heard of, though they are certainly marvels of architecture and worthy of much attention. They are to be seen at Bologna, at a spot where five streets join. The taller of the two is 320 feet high, and is 4 feet out of the perpendicular. The shorter of the two is unfinished, and, though only 156 feet high, is no less than 8 feet out of the perpendicular. There is no doubt that if it had been completed it would have been the most marvellous leaning tower in the world. There is nothing beautiful about the towers, for they are built of ordinary bricks. Both, however, are eight hundred years old, which speaks wonders for the workmanship. For what purpose they were erected is a matter of doubt, but as watch-towers they cannot be beaten, for the view from the summit of the taller is magnificent and extensive.

### Profitable Ideas.

A large fortune was realised by the inventor who patented the idea of making umbrellas from alpaca instead of gingham, and Samuel Fox, the patentee of the improved paragon frame, left by will about £87,000 from the profits of his invention.

Enormous sums have been reaped from the mechanical contrivances for carpet-beating, convenient boxes of various kinds for packing goods, to say nothing of those wonderful inventions connected with electricity and the manufacture of indiarubber.

Indeed, the patents on small articles have always been most lucrative. The rubber tip at the end of lead pencils has yielded well over £25,000. A large sum was gained by the man who conceived the idea of an inverted glass bell to hang over gas jets, and thus prevent the ceilings from being blackened, and the gimlet-pointed screw has been worth thousands of pounds.

The inventor of the safety-match—or rather the prescient person who protected the idea—made a huge fortune; so did the owner of the first safety-pin patent.

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## Intercolonial

The Rev. T. R. O'Grady, of Kalgoorlie, is to be the new manager and editor of the *West Australian Record*.

Prior to his departure on a holiday trip to Europe, the Rev. P. J. Power, of the Sacred Heart parish, Darlinghurst (Sydney) was presented by the parishioners with an illuminated address and a substantial cheque.

The Hon. John Meagher, M.L.C., who has left for Europe, has been selected by Bishop Dunne to represent the Diocese of Bathurst at the celebrations in honor of Home Rule in Ireland this year. After the business of the meeting of the St. Patrick's Day Committee in Bathurst had concluded opportunity was taken of the occasion to wish Mr. Meagher bon voyage.

A large and representative gathering assembled in the convent schoolroom, Narrandera, on Wednesday, February 11, and made a presentation to Very Rev. Father Gray on his departure for the Old Land, after some 20 years' strenuous labor in the parish. The Mayor said that Father Gray had been for over 19 years in Narrandera, and as a result of his efforts the school, convent, and church had been erected. Father Gray was about to return Home after an absence of 30 years, and he had the greatest pleasure in handing him a cheque for 200 guineas. This amount was later supplemented, making the total £250.

The District Secretary, H.A.C.B. Society, Adelaide (Mr. P. F. Kiley), has received from the National Directory in Fremantle a communication in reference to the proposal to charter a vessel for visitors to the opening of the Irish Parliament. This states that the White Star line is prepared to place the entire passenger accommodation of a one-class liner at the disposal of the Directory, on giving them six months' notice, accompanied by one quarter fare, amounting to £12 8s per head. This sum, with the names of those requiring accommodation, must reach the Directory by May 31 next.

The Hon. J. Gavan Duffy, K.S.G., referring at the opening of a new school hall in Balaclava, Victoria, to a recent attack on himself from an Orange platform, said that he himself took no thought of these matters—he could knock the noxious things away as he might a creature that crawled upon his sleeve. They did him no harm, rather good, because he felt, when attacked in this way, that he had brought forward some argument which the other side found so unanswerable that they had to descend to personal abuse. If they praised him, then he might feel that he was on the wrong tack. Every Catholic of prominence, every Irish Nationalist, who spoke what was in his heart, was a target for the attack of every blatant Orange ranter, clerical or lay; a target for every smug, oily, sanctimonious, insignificant hypocrite, whose interest it was to revile the Church of Rome and the country that gave him birth. This was outside the pale of reputable controversy. He could argue with many men who differed from him in religion and politics, and they could conduct their talk with the courtesies of gentlemen. His public life before the State for 30 years ought to be an answer to any attacks men like these could make. One of the counts was true. He might be old and feeble—so was the gentleman who had been good enough to say so—but it was not good taste to bring that forward as an argument against Home Rule. He was not too old to stand up for the country from which he came, and for the grand old Church, against which the gates of hell and all the Orange lodges would never prevail.

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