

Science Siftings

BY 'VOLT'

Spiders' Webs.

The strength of some of the spiders which build their webs in trees and other places in Central America is astonishing. One of them had in captivity, in a tree there, not long ago, a wild canary. The ends of the wings, the tail, and the feet of the bird were bound together by some sticky substance, to which were attached the threads of the spider, which was slowly but surely drawing up the bird.

A Submerged Forest.

It is not often that one hears of timber being dug out of the ground. It is, however, being done in the far east. At Annam in Tonquin an immense wood mine has been discovered. The wood was originally a pine forest, which the earth swallowed up in some cataclysm. Some of the trees are a yard in diameter. They lie in a slanting direction and in sandy soil, which covers them to a depth of about four fathoms. As the top branches are well preserved, it is thought the geological convulsion which buried them cannot be of very great antiquity. The wood furnished by these timber mines is imperishable.

A Very Useful Tree.

The carnahuba palm of Brazil is the world's most useful tree. A department store tree you might well call it, for it gives everything from medicine to cattle food. Its roots make a very valuable drug, a blood purifier that is prescribed a good deal in the spring. Its timber takes a high polish, and is in demand among cabinetmakers for fine work. The sap becomes wine or vinegar, according to the way it is prepared, and starch and sugar are also obtained from this sap. The fruit of the tree is a cattle food; the nut is a good coffee substitute; the pith makes corks. There, can you beat it—medicine, sugar, coffee, starch, wine, corks, cattle food, lumber, and vinegar all from this one tree, the carnahuba palm?

Electricity and Amber.

The term 'electricity' is derived from the Greek word meaning amber. It was supposed by the ancients that amber had power to attract straw and dry leaves. Mention is made of this by Theophrastus as early as 321 B.C. No doubt he founded his conclusions on the fact that amber when rubbed vigorously does develop electrical phenomena. Amber is a sort of fossilised resin, yellow in color; it is found in large quantities on the Baltic coast, and sparingly in other localities near the ocean. Insects, leaves, twigs, and other objects are frequently found embalmed in amber, which helps to establish the theory that it is an exudation from the pine tree.

How Finger Nails Grow.

It has been computed that the average growth of the finger nail is 1-32 of an inch per week, or a little more than an inch and a half per year. The growth, however, depends to a great extent upon the rate of nutrition, and during periods of sickness it is retarded. It goes on faster in summer than in winter, and differs for different fingers, being most rapid in the middle finger and slowest in the thumb. According to the rate of growth stated the average time taken for each finger nail to grow its full length is about four and a half months, and at this rate a man of seventy would have renewed his nails 186 times. Taking the length of each nail at half an inch he would have grown seven feet nine inches of nail on each finger, and on all his fingers and thumbs an aggregate length of 77 feet and 6 inches.

A Substitute for Leather.

The discovery has just been announced in Scottish newspapers of a substance composed of a mixture of seaweed, carpet dust, goat's hair, Irish moss, and gums, together with some secret chemical ingredient or process, which produces a composition said to be a good substitute for leather and various other materials, as it can be used equally well in a fluid, pliable, or hard state. It is admitted by the discoverer that his composition is not equal in quality to the best materials imitated; but he claims as to leather that it provides an excellent substitute for the manufacture of articles of the cheaper grades of goods. The product has already been made up into boots and shoes, and its durability successfully tested by policemen, postmen, and others whose duty involves a large amount of walking. Two or three thousand feet of belting in machine shops is also in use at the present time, to which purpose it is said to be especially well adapted, as it is impervious to oils and acids, is non-inflammable, and does not shrink under the varying conditions of the atmosphere.

At the present time in the Dominion there are 120 industrial unions of employers, having a total membership of 3699, and 308 employees' unions, having a total membership of 54,519.

Intercolonial

The Very Rev. Father E. Bertreux, S.M., Prefect Apostolic of the Solomon Islands, is at present the guest of the Marist Fathers at St. Patrick's, Church Hill. He is visiting Sydney in connection with his mission, which is suffering badly from malarial fever.

News has been received in Sydney of the arrival in Rome of the Rev. Father Gavan Duffy, grandson of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. Father Duffy was ordained at Freiburg a few months ago, and intends to continue his studies in the Eternal City for some time.

The Very Rev. Father D. A. McGrath, of Rockley, has been appointed Archdeacon of the diocese of Bathurst in succession to the late Archdeacon Kelly, who recently died at Carcoar. Archdeacon McGrath is one of the most beloved priests in the diocese, an enthusiastic and patriotic Irishman, and a capable administrator.

We (*Freeman's Journal*) understand that the Very Rev. Father Lawless, C.M. (Superior of the Vincentians at Ashfield), has been appointed Provincial of the Order in Australia. Father Walsh, the Irish Provincial-General, recently completed his Australian visitation, and on his departure a couple of weeks ago was accompanied by Father Quinn, who, after many years' missionary work in connection with Ashfield, has been transferred to Ireland.

Mr. John Bodey, who completed his hundredth year in May (says the *Argus*), was the guest of a unique celebration at the residence of his son, Mr. W. T. Bodey, of Jung Jung. About 150 persons, chiefly descendants, were present, and complimentary speeches were made. Mr. John Bodey is a native of Rathdrum, Wicklow, Ireland, and came to Australia in 1851. At his centenary he talked about the Irish potato famine and events which occurred between 1820 and 1830. His descendants number 112, of whom 67 bear the name of Bodey.

A fine property, known as 'Graham's Folly' (writes the Melbourne correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*), has been purchased by the Sisters of St. Joseph at Upper Hawthorn, Melbourne. The building originally cost £14,000, and was secured for about one-seventh of that sum. This is one more of the splendid properties obtained at a very cheap price for religious purposes. Others are at St. Columba's College, Essendon, presbyteries of Brunswick and Flemington, novitiate at Ascot Vale, Foundling Hospital, Broadmeadow, etc.

There was a large and representative gathering in St. Patrick's School Hall, Bega, on the evening of June 29 to do honor to the Rev. Father J. Gunning, P.P., on the occasion of his sacerdotal silver jubilee. Mr. T. J. Kelly presented Father Gunning with an illuminated address and a purse of sovereigns, on behalf of the parishioners of Bega, Candelo, Bemboka, Numbugga, and Brago. Mr. V. Rhenberger, on behalf of the A.H.C. Guild, also presented Father Gunning with a purse of sovereigns. Rev. Father Carrick said it was his privilege to represent the ladies of the Altar Society, and in their name to offer a present to Father Gunning. The gift, a gold chalice, was a suitable and worthy one for a priest.

Speaking at the Communion breakfast of the Adelaide Catholic Club on Sunday, July 3, Archbishop O'Reilly said that with the exception of a microscopic minority the non-Catholic citizens of South Australia had no desire to have the damnatory clauses of the Oath retained. To his mind the Oath contained all the elements of comedy; or there would be all those elements if the matters dealt with were not of such serious import. In not one of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan was there such a rank and tangled growth of absurdities as that which was furnished by the Coronation Oath. His Majesty was made to declare that he, a Protestant monarch, had not received from the Pope, in whom his Majesty did not believe, a dispensation to lie. That was a dispensation which every Catholic knew the Pope had not a shadow of power to grant.

After a short illness, the Rev. Father A. MacDonald, one of the brightest spiritual workers in the Archdiocese, died in Matron O'Keeffe's Hospital, Cooma, on June 29, at the age of 31 (says the *Freeman's Journal*). Although he was but eight months in Cooma, Father MacDonald was well known and greatly respected. The remains were conveyed to the local St. Patrick's Church, where a Requiem Mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. J. J. Norris. The funeral, which took place on Thursday, was largely attended. Rev. Father MacDonald was born at Kyneton some thirty years ago. He went to South Australia on his father being appointed manager of the Bank of New South Wales. He spent several years at the College of the Christian Brothers at Adelaide. In 1894 he went to Riverview, thence to Manly in 1896. He was ordained priest in 1905, and appointed assistant priest at Mosman; 1908, Moss Vale; 1909, October last he succeeded Rev. Father Conaghan to the assistant charge of Cooma.

For Chronic Chest Complaints,
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