

TWO YEARS' HARD LABOR.

DESCRIPTION OF LIFE IN AN ENGLISH PRISON.

By One Who Has "Been There"—The Hardships of the Punishment—What It Means to One Who Has Been Used to Comforts—The Uneasy Plank Bed.

A good deal of attention has been drawn of late in England to the penalty most commonly visited upon law-breakers, and as I, unfortunately, was once included in that rather pitiable category, I have thought a brief but particular account of what I went through while in goal may just now possess some interest for the public. I do not wish to protest against my punishment; having offended against the code by which society chooses to be governed, in its own defence and supposed best interests, I will admit that I deserved it. I only desire to make a plain unvarnished statement of fact, to detail my own personal experiences exactly and truthfully, for I do not believe the actual meaning of imprisonment is much understood; least of all by the judicial authorities who are so ready to inflict it, and for such long terms.

Strange to say I heard my fate "two years' imprisonment," with a distinct sense of relief. It was the maximum sentence; two whole years were to be cut out of my life, years that I might never refer to afterwards, nor think of without pain, and yet I was absolutely pleased to think it was all over, and that I knew the worst—as I thought it then. It was only the beginning of the worst, however. I had surrendered to my bail in the dock. So as yet, except for a night in a police cell, I had no experience of duration. I went first into old Newgate with no great feeling of dread; nor did I quite realize my position when deposited half an hour later in "Black Maria" for my drive to Pentonville. It was only when the

GREAT GATES CLANGED

behind me, and I found myself in the reception ward that my courage began to ebb away. The warders were very brusque, and, I thought, overbearing. I was ordered very peremptorily to empty my pockets and gave up my watch and purse and cigarette case with reluctance. I did not like being told to strip; it was a blow to have to stand before the reception warder in my shirt, and submit to a minute examination of my "distinctive marks and peculiarities." I parted with my own clothes with regret, and after a bath—clean, hot and refreshing, I must admit—I viewed the prison uniform which had been laid out for me with positive disgust. They were not new clothes: some one—many probably—had worn them before. There was no pretence at fit, hardly as to size; the shirt was like sandpaper, the shoes broken, frayed—such respectable shoes were a great shock to a man who was rather proud of his feet.

But all this was as nothing to the next ordeal, the medical inspection, for on the flat of the prison doctor my future life and much of my comfort depended. Should I be found fit for first-class or second-class labor? It was a deeply momentous question. First-class hard labor at Pentonville means the tread-wheel, that useless, brutal, and degrading punishment, as it seems, but which perhaps sound worse than it is. The decision rested with the doctor, an abrupt-speaking, autocratic sort of man, with a very military manner, and the gray hairs that spoke of long experience. But he was not unkind, and he was most minute and painstaking. He thumped me, pummelled me, assailed me as carefully as though he was certain of his guinea at the end. I could have said, "God bless you!" when he clasped me "unfit for the wheel;" and I remembered him so gratefully that an hour or so later I begged to be allowed to consult him and he came, readily enough, to my cell.

In the meantime I had been passed into the main building,

THE PRISON PROPER,

and I had a glimpse of several long, narrow, dim corridors radiating from a general centre, an endless vista of doors opening on to galleries, and with circular staircases leading up to its four floors. I say dim, because this was autumn, the day was fading, and the gas was not yet on, and I could not realize the import of the netting stretched from gallery to gallery at the first flight. The death-rate should not be raised by suicide. The interior of my cell was still more gloomy when I reached it, and it was not till the small gas jet on the outer side of the thick, opaque pane was lighted that I could make out the contents. The furniture consisted of a table fixed in the wall under the gas light, two shelves, a few tin or zinc utensils, and the bed—the notorious, the dreadful, plank bed—which I confess I at once examined, and with great misgiving. It was nothing much to look at; it might have been six feet of floor with a raised ledge at one end, a dirty pillow, blankets, rug, and clean sheets. This was to be my resting-place for a month at least, and I may say at once that I hardly slept a wink all night, but turned over and over to rise in the morning as though every bone in my body was broken. Later I got more accustomed to it, but I must always protest against it as an instrument of torture. If a place had only been hollowed out where the hip goes it would have been less painful, the unpromising straightness made the wooden planks so much harder. I have been told that a "plank bed" is only the "guard bed" of the soldier, and that the latter sleeps on it fully accoutred; but then, I suppose, the soldier is only on guard about once a week, and has his own bed in his barrack-room on the other nights.

They brought me my "supper" a tiny brown loaf, like stone, and some unappetizing gruel, in a rather rusty can, and the fare was a little meagre and rough to one accustomed to a good late dinner every

night of his life. By this time the iron had entered into my soul. The miserable cell, THE TERRIBLE BED,

the nauseous food, the loneliness, for although there were occasional footsteps outside, I was as much alone as if buried in a crypt or hung at the top of a mountain—all this combined to drive me to something like despair. I paced my small cell furiously like a caged beast, I knew I could not sleep, and the impending horror of a nuit blanche drove me to ring the bell which every prisoner has at his hand, and which, as I afterwards learnt, he had better use sparingly if he wishes a quiet life. I asked for the doctor, it was my friend of the reception who listened patiently to my complaints, but positively declined to give me a sleeping draught. "You'll have to get accustomed to it," he said cheerily. "It's not so bad as you think. Take it all as inevitable. You know you might be worse off." Such is the effect of a few words of sympathy and encouragement that from that moment I began to view things with a more philosophic spirit.

But I shall long remember that first night in prison, and those that immediately followed. In the end I got so far accustomed to my plank bed that I could sleep on it for an hour at a time, but though I welcomed the thin mattress supplied after the first month for five nights a week, I found that its performance was not equal to its promise. All that first month I was gaining bitter experience, but growing gradually inured to discomfort, as they say eels do to skinning. The days which at first seemed interminable, began to slide by with the speed that comes of unvarying monotony, when one hour succeeds another without the slightest change. There was one thing, however, to which I found it impossible to get accustomed. Every prisoner was supposed to be able to leave his cell in charge of a warder if requisite, but, as I remarked before, it is as well to give as little trouble to the warder as possible. Consequently, the condition of affairs in the morning when the cells were cleaned out was little short of appalling. I was busy too, all my time, not with the work given me, which began with

OAKUM PICKING.

a most dirty, detestably irritating and difficult task to the new hand, and passed on into the stitching of canvas mail-bags for Her Majesty's Post Office. It was not the day's labor, although that was measured with a full measure that kept me so busily employed. My hardest work was to keep straight with my masters, and I had a dozen of them at least—warders always "on to me," as they call it, watching for a crooked answer, the slightest sign of insubordination, the smallest neglect or breach of the innumerable rules and regulations, many of them useless and vexatious, which go to constitute prison discipline. I always thought the warders were harder on a man of education and better class than themselves, but when I learnt to be respectful abjectly so, to render prompt obedience, and generally to "give no trouble," I managed to steer clear of "report." One especial danger torments prisoners who are thought to have good friends "outside." There are black sheep in every flock, and a warder's wages are not always sufficient to keep him honest.

Some are bribed to traffic, that most heinous of prison offences, to act as an intermediary between the prisoner and his friends, to take out "stiffs," or clandestine letters, and bring in (at exorbitant prices) tobacco and extra food. "Mr. Wright," as the dishonest officer is called, will act fairly or unfairly as it suits him, but compact ends badly sometimes, and then goes to the poor prisoner. The warder is implacable, and will "have it in for him" on every possible occasion. He shares the fate then of the restive, discontented, short-tempered prisoner, and has a very bad time of it. A "case" is got up against him on the smallest grounds, and, as the warders hang together, he is certain to be proved guilty, with the usual result of a docking of the already short rations of food.

This food! Only those who are strictly limited to a short allowance can understand how large a part the food plays in the prisoner's life. If my rations seemed at first tasteless and unpalatable, I soon devoured all I got ravenously, and having that best of sauces, hunger, I found

THE FARE EXCELLENT.

But like the British Infantry, there was too little of it; the doctor (he is the real autocrat in a prison) could increase the allowance if he thought it desirable, but he is chary of the favor. The best ration is the soup, which, being made in large quantities and with much care, is always palatable; the bacon and beans are also popular, but a neighbor of mine got into trouble for sending for the Deputy-Governor, and informing him, with much satisfaction, that after a long hunt through the beans he had at last discovered the bacon. Certainly, it is hardly visible to the naked eye, being only three-quarters of an ounce in weight. The Australian meat is well—Australian meat, overcooked and tasteless, there being no mustard provided. The suet pudding, made of the same whole-meal flour as the bread, cannot be eaten except quite hot—it goes hard as a stone directly it is cold. The potatoes—a very large part of the dietary—vary much in quality, and towards the end of the season, before the current year's growth come in, are often watery. Their worst fault is that they are too large; a single potato, even a half, sometimes constitutes the day's allowance. The bread is good, and generally sound; but it is issued two days after baking and gets very hard and dry in the interval. With plenty of fresh butter and some devilled whitebait it would be good eating. Prisoners sometimes complained that it was sour, and then always made them ill, but I never experienced this.

I can speak with some authority as to prison food, for I spent the last six months in the kitchen as one of the cooks. It was a curious situation for me to take, perhaps, but I would have gone anywhere, done anything to "get a job" out of my cell. No one who has not tried it can realize the nearly maddening effects of prolonged "separate confinement" as it is called. It is not quite "solitary," perhaps, but it is

LIFE ALONE AND APART.

For nearly twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four I was shut up in a box, practically, with my work and my sad thoughts, and nothing to relieve them but the "Popular Educator" or a volume of the "Quiver." No one spoke to me, except to give an order. The Governor, the great boss, sailed

past my open cell door once daily with a nod and a brief enquiry if I was "all right;" the chaplain paid me periodical visits, but we were not very good friends, for he took me too seriously to task for my sins, and thought more of my crime than I did—it had been at worst a breach of confidence, to which I had been led by misapprehension. So, when my long and exemplary conduct entitled me to some "privilege," and this, aided a little, I believe, by the medical report that my health was failing and that I should benefit by more freedom, led to my being offered a place in the kitchen, I gladly accepted the boon. I never regretted it, although the work was hard—often repulsive.

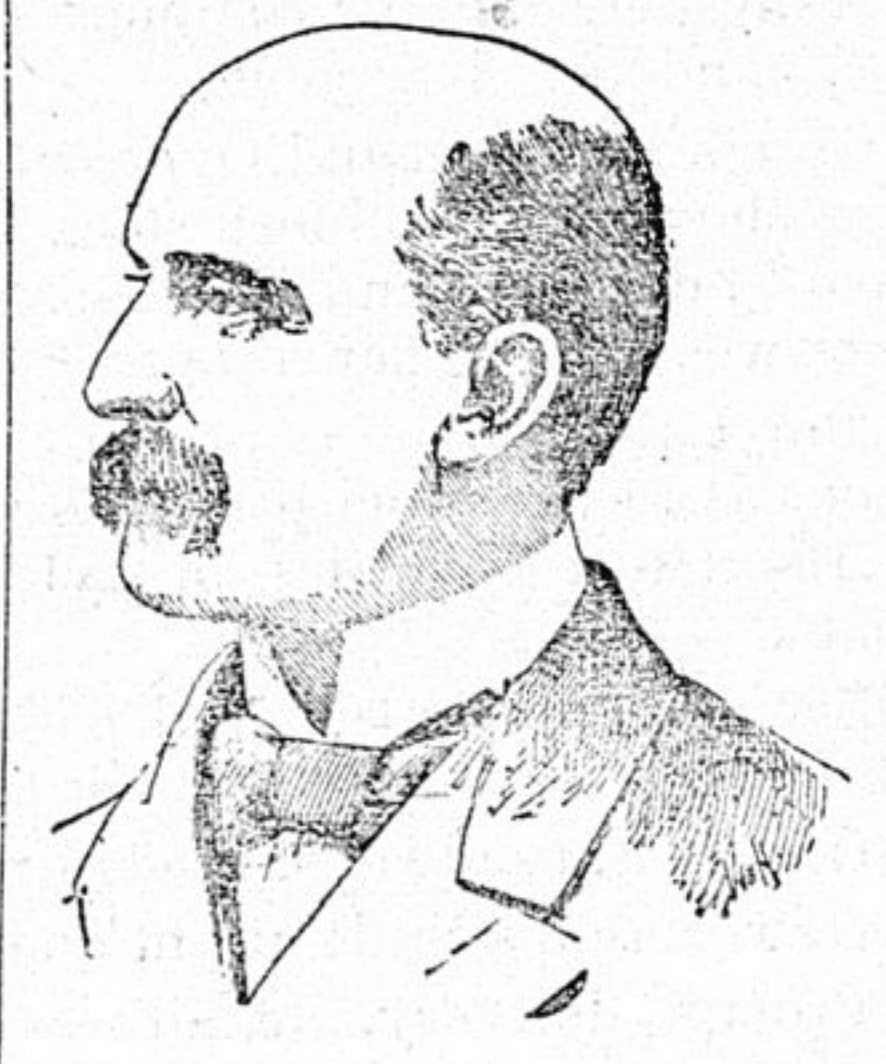
After peeling potatoes, chopping suet and carrots, and mixing dough, I had to take my turn in the scullery and scour the dirty tins, but I got my bellyful of food, for, in spite of the warden's watchful eye, we constantly helped ourselves to dainty morsels, while the mere smell of the food was satisfying, so much so that most of us soon put on the fat, greasy look of the professional cook. I had company, too, such as it was; there were about a dozen men in the kitchen, and although we are not supposed to talk, we did continually, and I made some strange not to say inconvenient acquaintances. This is the one great drawback to "association" in prison. Irksome as is the separate cell, you at least escape the society of your fellow felons, which is apt to be degrading, corrupting and following by unpleasant consequences. The claims on my regard, the appeals to my purse, amounting to positive blackmail, from comrades who hunted me up when we were once more "outside," are not the least objectionable of my reminders that I have done two years' imprisonment.

THE QUEEN'S NEW SECRETARY.

Sir Arthur Bigge Succeeds Sir Henry Ponsonby.

Sir Arthur John Bigge has been appointed by the Queen to be her private secretary, in place of Sir Henry Ponsonby, who has been very ill for some time. Sir Arthur is said to have remarkable courtesy, talent and tact. He was Lieut.-Col. Bigge, of the Royal Artillery, when appointed, but the Queen made him a knight as a further mark of her esteem.

Sir Arthur Bigge, K.C.B., C.M.G., comes of an old Northumbrian family, being the son of the late Rev. J. F. Bigge, Vicar of Stamfordham, Northumberland. He is in his forty-sixth year. Entering the Royal Artillery in 1869, he successively became



SIR ARTHUR BIGGE, THE NEW PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE QUEEN.

captain in 1880, major in 1885, and lieutenant-colonel in 1893. He served through the campaign in Zululand 1878-79, and was mentioned in despatches. In the latter year he was appointed aide-de-camp to Sir Evelyn Wood. The French Prince Imperial, when attached to the Royal Artillery, became acquainted with Lieut. Bigge, whose intimate friend he remained until the young Prince's tragic death in South Africa. He became groom-in-waiting, in 1880, and shortly after he was appointed assistant private secretary to the Queen. The ability with which he performed these duties marked him out for further promotion in the Royal household, and this was not long in coming. In 1881 he was made equerry-in-ordinary. In that year Capt. Bigge married Constance, daughter of the late Rev. W. F. Neville.

Career of Duke of Cambridge.

The Duke of Cambridge, whose retirement from the post of Commander-in-Chief has been announced, has had a longer active military career than any other officer now serving. His first connection with the army was as a brevet-colonel in November, 1837, when in his nineteenth year, and his first employment when from about six months at the end of 1838 and beginning of 1839 he was attached to the staff at Gibraltar. In 1842 he became lieutenant-colonel of the 8th Light Dragoons, ten days later became colonel in the Seventeenth Light Dragoons, and for two years, from April, 1843, was a colonel on the staff in the Ionian islands. Promoted to major-general in 1845, he was appointed to the command of the Dublin district in the following year, retaining the post till March, 1852, when he became inspector-general of cavalry at headquarters. In 1854 he went as major-general to the Crimea, where he commanded the First Division at Alma, Balaklava, and Inkerman, his horse being shot at the last-named battle. He was at the siege of Sebastopol, was mentioned in the despatches, and received the thanks of the House of Commons. Advanced to lieutenant-general in 1854, he became general on being appointed to the chief command of the army on July 15, 1856, but did not receive the patent of commander-in-chief till November, 1857, on completing fifty-five years of active service. His Royal Highness has been personal aide-de-camp to the Queen since 1852, and is colonel of the Seventeenth Lancers, Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Grenadier Guards, King's Royal Rifles, Cambridge Militia, and London Rifle Brigade.

ABOUT THE HOUSE.

Care and Wear.

It is not half as hard to care for one's clothes as it is to get them in the first instance. Yet, strangely enough, those who have the fewest garments take the least pains to preserve their freshness. Rich women having French maids have their gowns and bonnets looked after with a jealous skill that women who need such service scarcely dream of.

It is not wear that makes a drabbed mass of your best gown in a couple of months. It is lack of care when it is off your back. If you fold it up or hang it, ten to one you do it badly. Hang all your dress waists and skirts, but suspend them on "coat hangers," not on hooks or nails. The way shopkeepers care for ready-made garments is an excellent object lesson.

A large supply of coat hangers can be bought for a dollar or if you are out of reach of the ready-made articles, manufacture them. Half a barrel hoop, with a loop of string in the middle, makes a satisfactory substitute. Hanging only serves for heavy fabrics, not when they are of thin goods. In that case garments are apt to become stringy. Light materials must be folded, sleeves and bows stuffed out with tissue paper, and all given plenty of room.

Skirt bags are a luxury, even a necessity for handsome garments. They are great square sacks of white cotton, longer than the skirts, and into which the skirt can be slipped without crushing. A sachet suspended in the centre imparts to the skirt a fragrance which makes it as sweet and as fresh as a flower.

Skirts should not only be brushed when taken off, but the lining ought to be well wiped with a dry cloth. This should be done at once, and the skirts then put away properly. It is tumbling about on chairs, waiting to be disposed of, that ruins quantities of clothes.

A few pair of boot trees are invaluable. The cost of them is more than compensated for in actual saving of money. They not only preserve the shape, but they crack and break far less. It is a measure of economy to keep several pairs of shoes in use. When worn steadily they do not have time to dry out thoroughly while off the feet, and the constant dampness rots them. Water should never be put on shoes, and any soil should be removed with oil. Slippers can be kept stuffed with paper.

Gloves must be pulled in shape as soon as they are taken off, and not put away till they are dried. They should always be removed from the hand by turning them wrong side out from the wrist up, not by tugging at the fingers. In the shops they always turn them, as the other method ruins the shape, and is likely to tear the kid.

The best way to preserve the crispness of veils is by rolling them up in long, narrow sachets made for the purpose; the tulle is straightened out, folded, laid on the sachet and rolled up with it, and the whole tied with a ribbon fastened to the outside of the veil case.

All closets and clothes presses need frequent sunnings and airings. Clothing, too, should be exposed now and again, just as you sun your bedding. That is one of the most sweetening measures in the world. Dress waist linings can be kept wonderfully nice if in addition you occasionally wipe them off with a cloth dampened with very weak ammonia water. Of course, the shields should be frequently changed.

Care of Floors.

With regard to washing floors, the worst thing for them is too much water. Whether the boards be bare or you have a linoleum or oil cloth, at the best some of the water must find its way underneath, where, having no air to dry, it gradually but inevitably damages boards, coverings and health. This fact is coming to be recognized, and a drier made of cleaning is being adopted.

This is a good way: Rub the linoleum, or whatever the covering is, with a cloth wrung out of warm water, and, when dry, polish it with thin beeswax and turpentine, as they do stained floors. The effect is most satisfactory, to say nothing of the fact that the length of the wear is almost doubled.

Another good mixture is one made of equal parts of linseed oil and methylated spirits. Sour milk used sparingly cleans linoleum admirably.

Matting should never be soaped. Take it up, brush and dust it well on both sides, then wipe it with a clean cloth wrung out in fairly strong salt and water. Be careful to wipe it dry as you proceed, that no moisture be retained.

Some Hints.

A tablespoonful of kerosene added to the starch when boiling prevents it from sticking to the iron and leaves no odor.

Silken fabrics should never be folded in white paper. The chloride of lime which is used to bleach the paper causes a chemical change in the silk, and injures the color.

Do not attempt to extinguish the flames of blazing oil with water; it will only make them worse. Pour corn meal or flour quickly over them, or throw over a rug or anything handy that will exclude the air.

A simple way to remove grease spots from wall paper, caused by the head resting against the wall is to hold a piece of clean blotting paper over the spot and press a moderately warm flat iron over it. Repeat the operation until all the grease is out.

In washing embroideries done with crewels on a foundation of linn or crash, the first time bran water should always be used to set the colors. To prepare the water pour a gallon of boiling hot over a pound of bran. Let the bran cook in the water a day, stirring it occasionally; then strain it well. Put the article to be washed in the water when it is lukewarm,

pressing and squeezing it through the water until clean. Do not think of wringing dry, but press out all the moisture possible and dry in a warm place without exposure to sunlight. When it is still damp, lay the right side on a flannel and press on the wrong side. Use only the best crewels if you expect them to wash well.

SUMMER SMILES.

He—"I've a good mind to kiss you." She—"You'd better mind what you're about."

Wymble—"What is the coming woman coming to?" Slyer—"Anything in the shape of a man."

He—"You say they were both wealthy, and married quietly?" She—"Yes, you see it was simply a love affair."

"I conclude that's a fly," says a young trout. "You are right, my dear," said its mother, "but never jump at conclusions."

Mrs. Hushmore—"You'll have to settle up or leave." Summer Boarder—"Thanks, awfully. The last place I was at they made me do both."

Friend—"If you can't live happily with your husband, why don't you get a divorce from him?" Unhappy wife—"I am afraid I couldn't get anyone else."

"You will notice that I have you on the string," said the boy to the kite. "Yes," answered the kite. "And that is what makes me soar."

Dear summer maiden, I would say The nicest way to woo This season is to swing all day In a hammock built for two.

Nell—"Why did you marry that dried-up old millionaire? I wouldn't have him with all his money." Belle—"But he said he would die for me."

"Do you consider Lifter strictly honest?" "Honest to a fault. Why, he told me without my asking that he stole that dog he had with him last evening."

How fishers differ as they wait And for a nibble beg; Some use an old tin can for bait And others use a keg.

The husband (seeing his wife off)—"You must promise not to ask for money every time you write." The wife—"But that would necessitate my writing so much oftener."

"I—I suppose," said the fair customer, hesitatingly, you can warrant this hammock? "Yes, ma'am," briskly replied the salesman. "It's built for two."

"What's Jim A-goin' to do when he leaves college?" Well, if he's got eddication enough he'll teach school, but if he hasn't I reckon he'll edit a newspaper."

He—"How do you like Foppington, Miss Barrow?" Miss Barrow—"Not at all. He can't pronounce his r's, and I do detest being called Miss Bow-wow."

Husband—"I'm sorry that burglar got your watch last night, my dear; but there's one thing to be thankful for." Wife—"What's that?" Husband—"He didn't wake up the baby."

Bacon—"Did you see Hooker when he came from fishing?" Egbert—"Yes I was out the float." "Was there any fish lying about him?" "No; he was lying about the fish."

"Two heads are better than one," they say; But it does not always work that way. There's an instance, though, on which there's no quarrel—

Two heads are better than one in a barrel. Clerk—"Yes, sir! That's one of the best clocks we have in the store. It goes eight days without winding." Hayseed—"Is that so? How long do you figure she'll go when you do wind her?"

Mr. Asker—"They tell me that the book-keeper of your firm is behind in his accounts; is that so?" Mr. Tasker—"Far from it; he came out ahead. It's the company that's behind."

Nellie—"Look at those pretty cows, Maudie—"They are not cows, they are calves." Nellie—"But what is the difference?" Maudie—"Why, cows give milk and calves give jolly."

He (meaning to be complimentary)—"How becoming that veil is to you, Miss Fannie. Why don't you wear it oftener?" And now he is trying to tell why she treats him so coldly.

Lady—"It is strange that a strong man like you cannot get work." The Tramp—"Well, you see, mum, people wants reference from me last employer, an' he's been dead twenty years."

Farren—"How much wealth do you think a man ought to accumulate before he can safely ask a girl to marry him?" Kooler (inspecting him)—"It depends on the man. You will probably have to accumulate a million."

Madame—"I have been charmed with your visit, baron. I shall forever lead a good life that I may have the pleasure of meeting you again hereafter." The baron—"My dear madame, do not, I pray you, be too good."

He—"That's just like a woman. She can't view any question impartially. All on one side, just as she is on horseback." She—"Yes, John, and haven't you been on every public question the same way you ride horseback?"

Blobbs—"I hope we have clear weather for our trip." Slobbs—"Oh, we will." Blobbs—"How do you know? Been reading the weather predictions?" Slobbs—"No; but I have just bought a new umbrella and mackintosh."

Theodore—"Tell me, now, what is the meaning of the expression, 'pulling your leg'?" Richard—"I can't tell you in so many words; but I will illustrate. You haven't \$10 about you that you can let me have for a week or two? Thanks."

Music for Marching Men.

A French general has inaugurated a plan which finds much favor in the German army, namely, that of permitting and even encouraging the soldiers to sing when on the march, a privilege which has been strictly denied until recently. It has also been arranged that any soldier who can play on any of the smaller musical instruments shall be provided with such instrument at the expense of the state. It is claimed that this introduction of a musical feature into the army will serve to revive the spirits of the men, and will materially aid in alleviating the hardships of military service.