DREARY PRISON LIFE.

MULTIFARIOUS TRICKS OF THE CONVICTS TO KILL TIME.

Tragedies Behind the Bars—Men Who Periodically Make Themselves in Order to Evade the Regular Routine of Prison Life—How Who Show Sickness.

There are many incidents in the prison life of convicts that are out of the ordinary, and may be said to form part of their pleasures, although some are sated and tragic enough in themselves to be classed as anything but pleasures. I recollect on one occasion that I was appointed a special "trusty" over a tall, lank, dark featured young southerner who, in a moment of hopless desperation, had cut his throat.

Daily, as we will call him, had been a hundredweg lot, and his parents could not control him, and after a youthful vagabondage he had enlisted in the regular army, where he was always in trouble. When under my care in the special hospital ward to which he had been sent he related much of his past life to me, and I learned that he had attempted to take his life when he was a soldier in the same manner as he had done in state prison.

He was not a bad sort of fellow, but being of a sensitive nature, as well as unreasonable, he allowed his gloomy thoughts to master him, and this would result in periods of depression and subsequent desperation, and he cared not what he said or did. In fact, he was in clined to emotional insanity.

One night, when my fellow trusty and I were engaged in conversation, he lay on his cot pondering over his gloomy fate, when something we said aroused him, and he flew into a rage, got up and grappled me in a desperate manner.

I quickly flung him back on his cot and pinioned him, telling my fellow trusty—a mere boy—to ring up the guard.

It was a terrible struggle to keep him in subjection until the guard arrived, for his frenzy gave him almost superhuman strength. He quieted down as soon as the guard arrived and said he was a fool for getting into such a temper, and as he feared the straitjacket he promised to behave himself in the future.

He, however, in another of his frenzied attacks attempted to tear open the wound in his throat, and it was by no means an easy matter to prevent him doing so. Such a reasonable and sympathetic tab generally conquered his excitability. He finally was sent to the insane asylum.

One morning on prayer was being said in the prison chapel one of the convicts set up a howl, and began barking like a dog, after which he clapped his hands—one, two, three; one, two, three—and this caused a general murmur of mixed merriment and expectation.

Two guards immediately passed to the end of the form on which he was sitting and were hurling him out of the chapel when he flew into a rage, struggled with them and hurled horrible curses at them as well as at the officiating chaplain, who was a particularly devotional man to the prisoners. Whether the fellow was insane or not I cannot say. The prison authorities thought he was not, and he was roundly punished for his escapade.

On another occasion as we were marching into the hall for supper one of the convicts gave a howl, threw up his arms and dropped dead on the floor—a fellow convict had stabbed him. There was some enmity between the two, and it resulted in the death of both.

I was hospital trusty, and a long line of prisoners were being attended to by the doctor for real or imaginary ills. One of the prisoners on this particular occasion had nearly served his term of sentence, and he was to have been examined in order that the medical officer would report on his condition.

I was preparing a dose of common stuff for the prisoner standing next but one to him when he fell forward on the floor and blood gushed from his mouth in a stream. He had ruptured a blood vessel, and in spite of the doctor's efforts the poor fellow died.

Malingering is a very general method among prisoners to shirk the monotony or the labor consequent on their imprisonment. Anything that will relieve the tediousness and is at hand is brought into action. One here in the quarry will mash his finger in order that he may be sent to the hospital.

Another there will—quite accidentally of course—fall down the corridor steps and sustain such injuries as to insure a quiet time of convalescence on a hospital diet, and so forth; but the prison doctor is an fait with all classes of malingers, and uses his experience in treating such as cases before him. Consequently the good times often anticipated never materialize.

I know one ignorant, soft headed fellow who became really ill by eating the soap he was allowed with which to perform his daily ablutions. Often bad cases come before me where soap eating had put men into a feeble state of health and left a sickly aspect in their countenances, but this fellow was sick, and no mistake.

After a course of treatment which was in itself as bad as the cause for it he was, however, restored and sent into solitary confinement as a further punishment. He never ate soap again, but, I may remark, he was subsequently poisoned by eating some of the vegetable growths around where he, with his fellows, was sent to labor.

All things considered, the malingerer comes out only second best, but it must be a terrible punishment that causes men to resort to it in order to lighten their burdens.

The two most notable cases I have seen and of this kind were where a man boldly put his foot under a falling ton of stone in the quarry, causing it to be terribly crushed and to be eventually amputated, and in the second case, where a man feigned rheumatism and underwent every conceivable torture at the hands of the prison physician, who knew the fellow was shamming.—New York Herald.

The Standard of Pure English.

When the London opposition laughs at the Scottishness of the North Britain, and when the London Athenaeum is pressed by the language of cultured Americans, there is to be discovered behind the laugh and the scoff an assumption that any departure from the usage which obtains in London is most deplorable. The laugh and the scoff are the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace that the Londoner is the sole guardian and trustee of the English language. But this is a belief for which there is no foundation whatever.

The English language is not handed down to us as a sacred trust, to be jealously guarded, and to be so guarded it is quite capable of maintaining its own business without the aid of a committee of Englishmen. If indeed a guardian were necessary, what Englishman would it be who would best preserve our joint English—the shepherd of Dorset or the miner of North Northumberland, the Yorkshire man or the cockney. If it is not the London aspirant who is to set the standard, but the Englishman of breeding, it is hard to discover the ground whereon this Englishman may claim superiority of taste or knowledge over the other educated men to whom English is the mother tongue, whether they were born in Scotland, Ireland or America, in Australia, India or Canada.—Brander Matthews in Harper's.

Books for Boys Who Have Years Ago.

A lesson book for children is attributed to Alcuin, and it contains questions on arithmetic which are said to be found even in some current school books. Here is a specimen of them: "An old man met a child. 'Stand clear, my son,' says he; 'may you live as long as you have lived, and as much good, and thrice as much as all this, and if God give you one year in addition to the others you will be just a century old.' What was the lad's age?" The text book given to his people in English by Alfred the Great, was "Consolation of Philosophy," to which he added "The Universal History of Orosius," a very favorite book in monastery schools.

In the Tenth century Aethis, "the grammarian," wrote a "Cosmography," intended as a reading book to help boys to speak Latin. It consists of conversation about everyday life. In one place a boy is made to say that he is too young to eat meat, but he was not too young to drink beer, so he says that he drinks ale, "if he can get it." In the same century appeared a book on astronomy for children, as well as a map now preserved in the British museum, "less incorrect and having fewer fabulous countries than some older later."—London Saturday Review.

Full Jeweled Watches.

In timekeeping qualities and in finish there is no difference between a seven jeweled watch, a full jeweled watch and an adjusted watch. The adjustment of a full jeweled watch is only to the permit regulator, by which the error can be reduced to a few seconds per month. The patent regulator moves the lever the ten-thousandth part of an inch at a time, while the least movement by the hand of the lever is sixteen times greater. All watches are adjusted to temperature still can lost or slow when subjected to changes. It can only spare time to regulate the watch to the new condition there is little advantage in an adjusted watch. The extra cost over a seven jeweled watch is not in the jewels, which are worth one cent each, nor in any finer work on the movement, but solely in the labor of adjusting the balance so that it will run the same in an oven as in a cake of ice, and in the profits to the factory. This factory profit comes in higher grade movements, the seven jeweled being sold at about cost.—New York Truth.

Britishness and Americanism.

Brander Matthews in Harper's shows that the "well of English undefiled" is no more the exclusive possession of Englishmen than of Americans. He asserts that "of Britishness there are as many and as worthy of admiration and cultivation as were the most of the Americanisms the all enthusiastic Bartlett gathered into his dictionary. Indeed, if a Scot or a Yankee were to prepare a glossary of Britishness on the ample scale adopted by Mr. Bartlett, and with the same generous hospitality, the result would surprise no one more than the Englishman. We should find in its pages many a word and phrase and turn of speech common enough in England and quite foreign to the best usage of those who speak English—Britishness as worthy of repeal as the worst specimen of the mongrel speech adopted by some humorists in America."

Polished Almond.

Politics had been quite warm in one of the rural sections, and there was a little family dispute going on.

"Lucy," said her husband, "I'm sorry you don't like my politics an' things, but I've got my opinions, an' I've got to support 'em."

"Well," she replied, "you've got one an' the children, too, an' yo kin jis make up yo' mind which yo'd rather put down alongside fur yo family or yer opinions."—Washington Post.

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