

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1901.

Sent to Prison for Debt.

'Imprisonment for debt' has been abolished in England, but the same thing exists under another name. A debtor is sued in the county court and the judge makes an order that he or she shall pay so much per week or month until the debt is paid off.

'The cells are similar in all respects to those occupied by convicts. The size, the furniture, the utensils are identical. The only literature allowed the debtor, like the criminal, in the early days of his confinement, is the Bible, the prayer and hymn books, and a little volume called 'The Narrow Way.'

'It is merely in regard to bedding that the debtor, within his cell, is better off than the convict. While the latter at the commencement of his incarceration is compelled to rest on bare boards, the former, at all times, is provided with coconut fibre mattress and pillow as well as with two coarse linen sheets, a pillow case and a couple of blankets.

'Before the debtor is finally locked up for the night on the day of his arrival at the prison, he receives a circular yellow cloth badge, bearing the number of his cell inscribed in black on both sides, which makes him look something like a cabman. This badge—the badge of infamy, for it is identically the same in color and all other respects for convict and debtor alike—he is compelled to wear fastened to the left hand side of his coat whenever he leaves his cell.

'The prison bell tolls at 6 a. m., and the day begins. The cell floor must be swept, the white metal utensils cleaned and furnished up, so that you can see your face in them, the plank bedstead set leaning against the wall on end, with mattress dangling over the back, bed clothes made to hang in front, and pillow crowning the whole. Then you wash and finish dressing.

'All at once you hear a clanging of keys. The door flies open. A canvas bag bearing the cell number is flung on the floor, accompanied by an inquiry in an unsympathetic tone, as to whether you are all right, and an order to put out your pots and pans. The bag contains your work—some pieces of canvas, some samples of buttonholes, a stout needle, a skein of white thread, a lump of wax, a knife. You have been deprived of your penknife downstairs, only to be placed in possession of a much more dangerous weapon in your cell.

'At 8 a. m. you get your breakfast—six ounces of whole-meal bread, badly baked and sticky, and one pint of gruel or half-pint of cocoa, in accordance with the choice you have made on your arrival. An hour later your cell door flies open again, and you are conducted to one of the work-rooms. Here a companion in misfortune, who has already mastered the art, shows you how to hem and make buttonholes in canvas bags for the post office. You are at liberty to talk in an orderly manner while plying your needle, and when the governor or his deputy comes around on his daily morning visit you are not required to move.

'At 10 p. m. you leave your work for exercise in a sort of kitchen garden, enclosed by high walls and surrounded by a path, where you may walk in couples. Here new arrivals make their first appearance and relate their stories.

'At 11 a. m. you return to work, and at noon to your cell and dinner, which on Sunday and Wednesday comprises four ounces of whole-meal bread, six ounces of potatoes, six ounces of suet pudding. On Monday and Friday you get six ounces of bread, eight ounces of potatoes, three ounces of cooked beef without bone, which is simply the 'bully' article. On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday the menu consists of six ounces of bread, six ounces of potatoen and three-quarters of a pint of soup. On Monday haricot beans and fat bacon may be substituted for beef, and then the puzzle is to find the bacon concealed under one of the beans. The suet pudding is a

vile, greasy mess and should be discontinued. Frequently some of the potatoes are too bad to be eaten and the debtor is then deprived of his full ration, which is small enough at the best. And he is no longer permitted to board himself. The soup, which is the famous 'skilly,' is decidedly good and might with advantage be introduced into homes where there are children, and economy is a first consideration.

'Dinner over you roll up your sheets and blankets, and place the bundle on end at the top of your corner shelves. You are then at liberty to read Bible, prayer book, hymn book, or 'The Narrow Way,' or to resume hemming and buttonhole making.

'The afternoon is almost a repetition of the morning. At 2 you leave your cell for exercise till 4, and then go to the work-room. An hour later you repair to the cell for 5 o'clock tea, which is precisely the same as breakfast, and you are not let out again before morning. At 8 you hear the Black Marias rumbling into the yard one after another with their loads of evil doers and debtors. At 9 you go to bed, after a jailor has taken your work bag and double-locked you up for the night. And so it goes on from day to day.

'On Friday morning, and morning and afternoon on Sunday, you go to chapel, which helps to kill time, walking in single file under charge of a warder. On the way a good view is obtained of the house where the gallows stands, of the brick bat where the condemned pass the last night, and of the place where they lie buried at the base of a high wall—gruesome landmarks which seem to excite lively interest.

'At chapel the debtors sit in three or four rows on one side of the chancel. On the left rises a section of an amphitheatre in four divisions, swarming with a thousand convicted criminals in jail garb of the color of khaki, stamped with broad arrows.

'From the moment the debtor comes into prison he is given every opportunity to find money to satisfy his creditors should he be so disposed. He may telegraph, he may write and receive as many letters as he pleases in that bona fide sense. But if he makes no effort to discharge his debt, he may only write and receive one letter, and have one visit a week.

'Twice in the course of each seven days, and on the morning of departure, the cell must be scrubbed out. You are brought a great bucket of water, a circular scrubbing brush, a couple of remnants of old boots, which you fasten to your knees, and then set to work. It will surprise a good many people to learn that the majority of debtors at Wandsworth are sent there by their wives for failing to satisfy maintenance orders. Another numerous category comprises the alleged fathers of children born out of wedlock. Then come the fathers of boys sent to truant schools, who have been ordered to contribute a couple of shillings a week toward their support. A fourth category is made up of persons in arrear with rates and taxes. Debtors of the miscellaneous class are few. Most of my companions during the fortnight I passed at Wandsworth bore up against their misfortune with a good heart. One or two gave way. One man took the matter so keenly to mind, that he displayed signs of insanity, and was removed to the hospital.'

A Remarkable Play.

During the Lower Lakes golf tournament at Gresspoints, Michigan, says Collier's Weekly, Lieut. George N. Hayward, United States Navy, made one of the most remarkable plays known to the game of golf.

On driving from the first tee he sent the ball over the bunker, fully one hundred and seventy-five yards. It struck a screen on the second-floor window of a vacant parsonage, and went clear through the screen and window.

The lieutenant had a problem to face. He was followed to the house by a large number of interested spectators. Forcing open a window, he climbed into the parsonage.

He found the ball in a back room upstairs, and with a mighty stroke tried to send it into a front room. It struck above the door and clattered about the room for a while. Another stroke was more accu-

ate, and the ball went into the front room. A third put it through a window. The window had been raised to allow the ball free egress, but the stroke sent it rather high, and the ball crashed through two thickness of glass and out on the green.

WAYS OF HUNTING SPIDERS.

Some Stalk Their Prey and Others Build Rafts to Seek it on the Water.

The wolf spider spins no web, but stalks its prey—hence its name. It takes the precaution to spin a thread before leaping after anything, so that in event of falling short, it will have a way of retreat. It is about the fiercest of the spiders, though far from the biggest or most venomous and in captivity will stalk its own image when crawling over a mirror, and fall into a fury at finding itself balked.

The trapdoor spider builds its nest in the ground, a tunnel about three inches deep, with a branch sloping upward and closed by an inner door opening downward. The outer door, which opens upward, is of the thickest, finest silk, with an outer coat of earth and small pebbles to make it indistinguishable from the surrounding surface.

Water spiders lash together with their best silk rafts of dead leaves, upon which they float in pursuit of water insects. But the rafts do not compare with their nests, which are egg-shaped, lined with the finest waterproof web, and buoyed with clusters of tiny air bubbles, which the mother spider takes down by diving upon her back with the bubble entangled in her legs.

All spiders begin nest building very young. At seven weeks old trap-door spiders make little nests the size of a cent, and, of course, something haphazard and awry. No young spider, in fact, builds a workman-like nest, although the creatures have from two to eight eyes each. The youngsters appear to use their spinnerets in play, much as children build doll houses.

Spiderwebs once had a great vogue as medicine. They were held specific for consumption, and certain fevers, as well as the best of stytics. They have still that last use. Even spurting arterial blood may be checked, if not wholly staunches, by a generous handful of cobwebs held held against the wound.

Spiders are wonderfully weatherwise. They will neither build new nests nor repair breaks in old ones in face of a storm. They have, moreover, a certain precience which foretells weather changes. Wherefore, if you see a half destroyed web, with no spider body making haste to build it over, though the sun may shine and winds cease, be certain stormy weather is not twelve hours away.

Few more wonderful adaptations are seen in the whole round of nature than the webs spiders spin to entrap the wary ant. They are not high-bung, lacy affairs, careering every breeze, but low set silken tubes stretched in the grass, the crevices of rock, or about tree roots. Ants of every size creep heedlessly into them. The spiders eat them with relish, but occasionally a very little spider and a big ant engage in a duel to the death. If the spider can bite the ant can sting—and does it with a right good will. The spider does not try to get rid of such an ant as he does of a wasp or bee too strong to be safely attacked. Such an insect, which threatens destruction to the web-builder. The entangling cables are not loosed but the web rays neatly snipped in two, first those underneath, and at the very last the highest filament. Often the letting go of such a captive means destruction to halt the nest. But some spiders are wiser than some people. They know not merely when they have enough, but when they have too much.

Kites and Telephones in War.

In the Monthly Weather Review for October is given an account of recent experiments at Chicago intended to demonstrate the usefulness of kites in effecting telephonic communication between a besieged town and its friends beyond the enemy's lines. The suggested plan is to send up from the town a very large box kite carrying a telephone fastened at the end of a wire running through a pulley. When the kite has attained the desired position, the besieged are supposed to slacken the wire and drop the telephone to the ground, while the kite remains in the air. There are manifestly many practical details not provided for in the scheme as thus outlined, but it is at least an interesting suggestion.

The French Shore Question.

An editorial in the London Times gives a full review of the French shore question in Newfoundland—a question that has menaced for many years the peaceful relations between England and France.

The treaty of Utrecht in 1713 secured for Great Britain the absolute possession of the island of Newfoundland. This right was confirmed without qualification by the treaties of Paris in 1763 and of Versailles 1783, and it has never been modified or challenged. At the same time the French fishermen on a certain defined portion of Newfoundland coast obtained rights in 1713, re-affirmed in 1783, which place them in a very peculiar position in regard to British territory. Within the limits fixed by treaty they are allowed to catch fish and to dry them on land without being subject to local restrictions. On the other hand, they are precluded from erecting fortifications or indeed any other buildings except wooden stages and burs for drying; they are forbidden to winter in the island, and are enjoined to confine themselves during their stay to the business of fishing and drying fish, or to repairs necessary for their vessels.

The British colonists are placed under an obligation not to molest the French fishermen 'during their fishing,' or to injure their drying stages or scaffolds during their absence. In strictness nothing belongs to France under these treaties except the right to carry on the inshore codfishery within certain narrow limits. In process of time, the value of this right has greatly fallen away. Commercial and social changes have reduced the importance of the inshore Newfoundland fishing to very small dimensions, and the process of shrinkage has been going on steadily ever since the modus vivendi was introduced in 1850. Six or seven years ago the number of Frenchmen employed in all capacities on the 'French shore' was less than 1,200, and it is now only a little over 500. The proceeds of the fishery have never, in recent years exceeded a few thousands of pounds. The main element of profit appears to be the lobster canning industry, which is a parasitic growth on the original conventional rights of France, and which, if we fall back on the strict provisions of the treaties of Utrecht and Versailles.

The power to catch lobsters and to establish factories for 'canning' them on the Newfoundland coast may be conceded as a matter of comity or indulgence, but it can hardly be extracted by any fair process of interpretation from the right to catch and dry codfish, to erect drying stages, and to repair fishing boats. But, if this claim is extravagant, what is to be said of the addition made to it by the French that the British colonists should be forbidden to set up lobster-canning factories of their own on the 'French shore'? Not a word can be found in support of this claim in the stipulations of 1713 and 1783, yet it has been provisionally recognized under the modus vivendi. The colonists of Newfoundland contend that, as the French interest under the treaties is rapidly declining one, it is unnecessary to make any valuable concessions in order to extinguish it.

From the imperial point of view, the reason why it is desirable to get rid in an amicable way of the rights of France on the 'French shore' is that the protection of the French fishermen, even though they are only an insignificant and unprosperous handful, is a perpetual source of danger. The claim to interfere with this object might at any moment bring the French Government and the French navy into collision with the British colonists and with the Imperial power. Though the 'French shore' is of little economical importance to France, it is confused in the popular mind with the French interest in the sea fishery on the 'Great Banks,' which is not only a valuable industry, encouraged by a high bounty system, but is regarded, rightly or wrongly, as a nursery for the scamen of the French navy. With the cod fishing on the 'Great Banks' neither the Imperial Government nor the people of Newfoundland have the right, even if they had the desire, to interfere.

But the latter feel very keenly that the bounty system in France subjects them to

unfair competition, which they consider themselves justified in meeting with restrictions on the supply of early bait to the French fishermen. Under the modus vivendi the French sea fisheries obtained advantages in regard to the supply of bait, as well as in regard to the lobster-canning business, which are not likely to be continued if the question of the 'French shores' reverts to the original treaty rights. The real issues are not important enough to justify a quarrel between two great nations. France has practically nothing to gain by insisting on her rights under the Treaty of Utrecht, while the colonists have substantial reason to chafe under the enforcement of those rights. A better opportunity of settling the matter is not likely to occur than while M. Waldeck Rousseau's cabinet continues in office. If there should be a delay of another year, the British government may have to deal with a Minister for Foreign Affairs in France less friendly to this country, less practical than M. Delcasse. Meanwhile we can see no reason why the publication of the report of the Royal Commission, made two years ago, should be any longer postponed.

Swearing Off.

One day the engine of a Western freight train broke down, and the only passenger, a travelling preacher, got out and worked with the train crew, pulling, hauling and heaving as vigorously as the rest. He knew something about the machine, and was, indeed, quite capable of running an engine himself; so he was able to consult with the men, and advise them to some purpose. The work was carried on under a vigorous flow of profanity, which seemed to be quite unconsidered—a mere matter of habit.

Finally, says the Rev. C. T. Brady, who tells the story, I suggested an interruption in the swearing, adding that I was a preacher. The head brakeman dropped his crowbar with a look of abject astonishment. Everybody else let go at the same time, and the engine settled down. The men looked at me with amusing consternation.

'You are a what?' repeated the conductor, with an oath.

'A preacher.'

'Well!' said the official, with a long whistle of astonishment. Then, after regarding me thoughtfully for a moment, he added: 'Well, sir, you work like a man, anyway. Ketch hold again!'

'All right,' said I, 'but no more swearing on this trip.'

'None!' was the laconic reply, and that promise was kept.

When the work was done and all hands stood panting but successful, the engineer remarked:

'Well, this is the first time I ever saw a preacher that knowed a reversing lever from a box car. Come up and ride with me the rest of the way.'

The Mammoth Cave's War Supplies.

It has been averred that but for the saltpeter furnished by the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky and by some smaller limestone caverns, the United States would have been unable successfully to wage the war of 1812. Even during the Civil War these cave supplies of saltpeter were largely utilized for making gunpowder. Recently the question of the origin of cave saltpeter has been discussed anew in the Journal of Geology, and W. H. Heas, dissenting from the view that the saltpeter deposits are due to the formation of guano by bats, holds that they have originated from the evaporation of water which, as it percolated through the roof of the cavern, absorbed nitrates from the soil.

Forest Reserves of Rubber-Trees.

It is reported that the department of agriculture will set aside as forest reserves the island of Romblon, north of Panay, and the island of Pautani in the Jolo group. United States army officers report that these are perhaps the richest islands in the world for rubber trees. In Zanzibar a new kind of gutta-percha is said to have been found. It is produced by a tree bearing a peach-shaped fruit which attains the size of a small melon.