

The "preservation of the peace" in Europe by means of navies and standing armies costs \$950,000,000 a year.

When Spain gets ready to rehabilitate her navy she ought to have ships built in this country. She has had convincing proof that we know how to construct such things over here.

Black powder has seen its last days. The American troops at Santiago, with their black powder, made a target for the enemy, which gave them great advantage in locating our soldiers. With smokeless powder and modern guns of high penetrative power the American regular will be more than a match for any soldier in the world.

As American soldiers go out from Porto Rico American business men are going in, and the islanders are already feeling the good effects of the Yankee methods and Yankee "go-ahead-iveness." The Porto Rican merchant is said not to be wholly lacking in shrewdness, and he may be safely expected to share in the benefits his island is to receive from American rule.

Boarding-house keepers will rejoice to know that the war with Spain will not cut off entirely the supply of their staple table delicacy—prunes. California has come to the rescue with a crop of 84,000 tons this year from orchards which aggregate 55,000 acres. At least 10,000 more acres will be in bearing next year, and a crop of 100,000 tons of green prunes is prophesied for the first year of the next century.

The assumption that a majority of criminals would reform if they could but secure honorable employment forms the basis of a new movement in the interest of ex-convicts, says the Omaha (Neb.) Bee. While there is no doubt that many can be thus reached, it is certain that all of them cannot. It has been ascertained that the average age of 82,359 criminals in American penal institutions was under thirty-one, nearly one-half under thirty, and about a third under twenty-five, and nearly one-eighth under twenty. The average age of American paupers, on the other hand, is about fifty-seven. The fact that professional criminals are as a rule young persons shows that many of them are bred to crime, and since young persons find it easier to secure employment than older ones, it is fair to infer that but few of them are driven to crime by hard times.

The name leather has long since passed from the exclusive vocabulary pertaining to animal skins and hides in their prepared state. Recently, says the Zeugdrucker-Zeitung, a German inventor has brought to public notice an improved kind of asbestos material, and the method of its manufacture. The asbestos is at first divided into very fine fibres of the greatest possible length, then immersed in an india rubber solution, the whole being then thoroughly intermixed until every fibre is coated with the solution; the solvent—for instance, petroleum benzene—is thereupon evaporated. By this treatment the asbestos fibres cohere perfectly, and the mass may then be pressed into any desired form, or may be rolled. The inventor calls the manufactured product asbestos leather, and it is said to resemble leather very closely in its peculiarities and structure and in its industrial adaptation.

The total number of public libraries in Connecticut is 131, of which 77 are absolutely free and 54 subscription libraries, says the Hartford (Conn.) Times. Forty one of these libraries are under the control of the state. Three new libraries were organized during the year, and movements are on foot to institute others. Within a few years there will be a library in every town in Connecticut. The total number of volumes in the 131 libraries of the state is 593,221, and the total circulation during the past year was 1,598,195. The number of new books added for the twelve months closed was 52,365. The total amount paid out in salaries during the year was \$50,197.93, and the amount expended for books was \$23,015.81. All of these figures are largely in excess of those of the previous year and show an increasing interest in libraries everywhere. The annual report of school libraries shows 688 in all. The amount expended on new books was \$24,885.79, and the total number of books is 136,899. During the year several schools were equipped with libraries, and 8339 books were purchased. The New Britain Normal school library is the largest public school library in the country, the total number of volumes being nearly 25,000.

### THE ONE WHO WON'T BE THERE.

I don't think I'll go in to town to see the boys come back; My belt there would do no good in all that jam and pack; There'll be enough to welcome them—to cheer them when they come A-marching bravely to the time that's beat upon the drum; They'll never miss me in the crowd—not one of 'em will care If, when the cheers are ringin' loud, I'm not among them there.

I went to see them march away—I hollered with the rest, And didn't they look fine that day a-marchin' four abreast, With my boy James up near the front, as handsome as could be, And wavin' back a fond farewell to mother and to me! I vow my old knees trembled so when they had all got by, I had to just set down upon the curbstone there and cry.

And now they're coming home again! The record that they won Was such as shows we still have men when men's work's to be done! There wasn't one of 'em that flinched—each feller stood the test— Wherever they were sent they sailed right in and done their best! They didn't go away to play; they knowed what was in store; But there's a grave somewhere, today, down on the Cuban shore!

I guess that I'll not go to town to see the boys come in, I don't feel like mixin' up in all that crush and din! There'll be enough to welcome them—to cheer them when they come A-marchin' bravely to the time that's beat upon the drum, And the boys'll never notice—not one of 'em will care, For the soldier that would miss me nint' a-goin' to be there! —Cleveland Leader.

### PRIVATE JIM'S RETURN.

Her hair was drawn back in little waves from her brow. Now and then she would raise her gentle eyes and glance out through the pantry window toward the patch of tall, waving hollyhocks that Jim had planted four summers before. She was kneading dough, and two or three times she stopped to scrape the clinging batter from her fingers with the back of a case-knife.

"Jane!"  
"No reply."  
"Jane!"  
The ungainly figure of a young girl in gingham, her hair escaping in strands the loosely tied knot at the back of her head, appeared in the pantry doorway.

"What d'ye want?"  
"I want ye t' git them biscuit tins out o' th' kitchen cupboard an' bring 'em in here t' me."  
The girl slowly turned and shambled across the kitchen floor, the run-over heels of her old slippers clattering on the white scrubbed boards as she walked.

"I never see such a girl," muttered Mrs. Springer to herself. "Seems like a impossibility t' git any decent help out here in th' kentry. All th' girls that's good fer anything gits up an' gits t' town ez soon ez they're th' right age t' be good fer anything. Only them as is too lazy t' live is left fer us out here."

From the great lump of dough on the board Mrs. Springer pulled little lumps and rolled them into flabby globes, which she placed in regular lines on the bottom of the biscuit tins.

She had patted the last little lump into a ball and wedged it into a corner of one of the pans and stepped back to survey her work when through the open doorway of the kitchen floated to her, on the cool September air, the call, "Missus Springer! Oh, Missus Springer!"

"Now I'd like t' know who that is," she exclaimed as she crossed the floor and pushed open the screen door.

"Fer the lan's sake, Zeke Evans, what be you a-wantin'?"  
She had stepped out on the back porch, all green and blue with clinging vines and open morning glories.

The little man in the light "rig" wiped the perspiration from his brow and clambered out of the vehicle over the wheel.

He advanced toward Mrs. Springer and extended a yellow envelope. "This kum las' night," he said, "jes fore th' ten twenty arrove. Th' operator asked me t' fetch it. At first I thought I'd bring it right over, but I thinkin' but what it might be from Jim. Then I sez t' myself, sez I, 'Missus Springer'll be t' bed an' better wait till mornin', so I fetched it over on my way down.'"

At the name "Jim" Mrs. Springer clutched the bit of yellow paper and, with fingers that wavered a little, tore open the envelope.

Zeke waited.

The envelope dropped to the floor of the porch. Mrs. Springer held the dispatch in her left hand and followed the scrawled writing with the forefinger of her right.

One glance at the words, and she cried out: "It's Jim. He's comin' home. It's from his captin' sayin' he has been sent home sick in th' care o' two other soldiers. He'll th' camp yesterday afternoon a'll be here a'ry tomorrow mornin'."

"Is they anything I kin do fer ye?" asked Zeke, a little tone of anxiety in his voice.

"No, they ain't nawthin'. An' I don't believe I even thanked ye fer bringin' me this telegram, Zeke."

Zeke blushed and stammered that "that was all right" and turned to clamber over the wheel again into his "rig."

curved her trembling lips, and as she climbed the front stairs and went along the hall to the door on the right, at the end, she murmured to herself so softly that the words were lost in the noise of her footsteps: "Jim'll be here tomorrow. Heow I wish Ezry had a-lived till now, to see his boy a-comin' home from th' war t' me like he come t' me more'n thirty year ago."

She hesitated an instant before opening that last door, and then, as though it were an effort, she turned the knob and stepped into the room. Everything was just as he had left it. The pin cushion top on the dresser was a little dusty, and there were flecks also on the woodwork of the beds and on the commode top.

His brush and comb lay on the bureau, just where he had left them when he went away with the Thompsonville company. A vest, even, hung over the back of a cane-seated chair, and at the head of the bed on the floor three pairs of shoes and one of rubber boots were ranged in a straight line.

The September sun entering the room through the east window fell upon the face of Mrs. Springer. It was not the old face that had hung over the dough downstairs. It was a younger face now. The eyes were not so tired. Maybe the moisture made them look brighter. And she smiled sweetly through the gathering tears as she looked around that room—Jim's room.

She stood there by the head of the bed for a moment, silent and unmoved; then she laughed aloud and going to the closet door threw it open and peered inside. From the pegs she took down a black cassimere suit, Jim's best suit. "He'll need it now. Tain't nothin' but homesickness, I'll bet, an' he'll be all right in a day or two."

She laid the garments out on the bed and brushed them with the starchy whisk broom that had hung on the wall, over the washstand. It was a labor of love. When dusted, the clothes were folded and laid on the spread at the foot of the bed.

Mrs. Springer covered them with a newspaper and going down stairs for the broom, stopped a minute in the doorway to smooth the "sham" that hung from a frame over one pillow.

Returning, she swept the room thoroughly, then dusted it and opened the window and pulled back the chintz curtains.

Then she went back downstairs. All the rest of that day there was no sharp word spoken to Jane, and as a consequence the girl walked even slower than was her usual custom.

Budd came up from the spring lot before the biscuits were ready to be slipped into the oven, and his mother met him in the kitchen doorway. "Jim's comin'," was all she said.

"Who tol' ye?"  
"Zeke brought a telegram t' me about an hour ago. It said Jim was sick an' two soldiers was comin' with him an' that he'd be here on that six thirty-eight train in th' mornin'."

The younger brother of the soldier thereupon relapsed into a dream of the stories that would be told him ere another week had passed. "Dew ye suppose he'll bring any Spanish bullets?" he asked, finally.

That night when the rest of the family and all the help were asleep Matilda Springer lay in her bed and dreamed awake.

In her mind the years unrolled before her like a panorama. She thought of the day Ezra Springer had asked her to be his wife, of her acceptance. It was under the big shag hickory tree down by the spring lot, and they had gone a-sittin' together. And then the war and his return. And then their marriage and their long, happy life thereafter. And Jim—the boy who twenty-two years ago had come to them.

And then the war—she thought longest of that. Four months before Jim had come to her, inflamed with enthusiasm. All the boys in the Thompsonville company had signified their willingness to go to the front at the call of the president. There were ten vacancies in the company, and could he go? It would be all over in a month, and then he could come back. Yes, he could if his country needed him. She remembered how she went down to Thompsonville one summer morning with Budd to see Jim off to camp with his company. He wrote her the night before the regiment left for Cuba. Letters came to her regularly for a while, and then, of a sudden, they ceased. She thought of those endless days of waiting for just a word from him, her boy, her Jim. And then at last, after centuries it seemed to her, came the letter saying he had been in the hospital with the fever. She remembered how near-

ly crazed she was after she read that letter. Then came others saying he was better, and then day after day without a word, save once, when a short note, scrawled on a bit of wrapping paper, came to her with the news that his regiment was again in the United States and encamped somewhere on the eastern coast. And at last the dispatch of that morning—"Coming home—" and sleep closed her eyes.

At four o'clock Matilda Springer arose. She hurriedly dressed and called Budd. He went out and hitched up the two horses to the old democrat wagon and removed the back seat. He knew he would have to sit on the bottom of the vehicle coming back from the station, for Jim would be on the front seat with his mother, and there would have to be room behind for the baggage. Budd thought of all the implements of war that would be loaded into that wagon and wondered if Jim would give him his gun and canteen.

He led the horses up to the back porch and called to his mother. She came out dressed in a brown poplin, and on her wavy gray hair rested her best bonnet, a little affair of jet with violets on one side and strings to tie under the chin. Around her shoulders she had wrapped a shawl.

"I—I—can't hardly wait," she said, half to herself.

Budd helped her into the wagon and climbed in after her. He drove over the dusty country road and across the old wooden bridge with one hand holding the reins, for she clasped the other. She did not speak often during that drive. There are times when the heart is too full to allow of the forming of words. This was one of those times. The mother's heart was filled to overflowing with love for that boy whose face she had not seen for so many, many weary weeks, whose brown eyes had not looked down at her for oh, so long.

The wagon rolled down the last hill in the road and around the curve at the bottom. Budd drew up the horses at the depot platform. "Yew stay here an' hold 'em," said his mother. "I'll go over there an' sit on that truck til' th' train comes."

She got out of the conveyance and walked around the station house to the other side. Unobserved by Budd she wiped her eyes, and then she sat down on the truck.

By and by the young agent came and unlocked the door of the building and went inside. Out upon the cool morning air was wafted the "click, click" of the telegraph instrument.

Mrs. Springer rose from her seat and entering the building walked over to the ticket window.

"Is th' train from th' north on time?" she asked.

"Three minutes late at Silver Lake," was the answer.

"Heow long afore it's due?" There was a little tremor in the voice.

"I'll be here in eighteen minutes," the operator replied.

By and by from away up the track came the rumble of an approaching train. Nearer and nearer, and then around the curve above the station the engine swerved.

The bell clanged, and the train stopped. Mrs. Springer ran back to the passenger coaches. One or two sleepy heads were poked out of the windows, but no one got off. The woman's jaw fell. No, there was no one in the rear cars for Evans Crossing, the brakeman told her.

"Ain't they some soldiers?" she cried, her face all white.

"Oh, soldiers," he said, "they's some up in the baggage car."

The woman turned and ran down the platform. As she reached the forward end of the first passenger coach two soldiers lifted a long pine box from the car ahead and laid it on the platform.

The woman cried out to them. "Where's Jim, my boy Jim? He was comin' on this train! Where is he?"

"Who?" asked one of the men in uniform, quietly.

"My boy, Jim Springer."

The soldier did not answer. He stooped and glanced down at the little white card tacked on the lid of the long pine box.

"I can't tell her, Bill," he whispered to his companion.

### CHILDREN'S COLUMN.

**Sweet Reasoning.**  
On tiptoe, very wide awake,  
Drawn for a moment from her play,  
Watching grandmother frost a cake,  
Wee Mabel stood one day.

A spell of passive silence passed,  
When by a sudden impulse led,  
"My papa says I's drowin' fast,"  
With artless pride she said.

Then pausing as the future glowed,  
With promise in her childish view,  
"An' dwan' ma, when I dit all drowed,  
Den I tan' twost cakes, too."

Grandmother stooped, and with a kiss  
Mabel was folded to a breast  
Whose longings for her future bliss  
Love-moistened eyes expressed.

"Dwan' ma," she murmured, nestling there,  
Her sense of fostering love complete,  
"I dese day's twostin' on 'ou' hair,  
Betwuse 'ou is so sweet."

—Washington Star.

**What "Sing a Song of Sixpence" Means.**  
You all know this rhyme, but have you ever heard what it really means? The four-and-twenty blackbirds represent the twenty-four hours. The bottom of the pie is the world, while the top crust is the sky that over-arches it. The opening of the pie is the day dawn, when the birds begin to sing, and surely such a sight is fit for a king.

The king, who is represented sitting in his parlor counting out his money, is the sun, while the gold pieces that slip through his fingers as he counts them are the golden sunbeams.

The queen, who sits in the dark kitchen, is the moon, and the honey with which she regales herself is the moonlight.

The industrious maid, who is in the garden at work before her king—the sun—has risen, is the day dawn, and the clothes she hangs out are the clouds. The bird who so tragically ends the song by "nipping off her nose" is the sunset. So we have the whole day, if not in a nutshell, in a pie. —New York Tribune.

**The Great Snowy Owl.**  
The winter or late autumn brings, at times, a visitor from the far north, the great snowy owl. I came upon him the other day crouched in the long, dead grass, which whistled in the cold wind, while the snow squalls swept along the far horizon.

He turned his great black eyes on me for a moment and took wing. No bird that I ever saw has such motive power; the first flap of his broad wings sends him far forward or upward. He bounds up and swoops down, turning in any direction with all the ease and lightness of the swallow. A few seconds and his great bulk is a speck at the horizon, a moment more and he has vanished, while you stand gazing in wonder at his grace and speed and power. He certainly has small reason to forego his southern trip; when the arctic winter comes on breaths of latitude can be nothing to him. A few days, or a fortnight at most, will allow him to pass over the stretch that separates his arctic home from us, and still give him time to stop for rest and feeding by the way. His natural vigor and power of wing is so great that the severe cold of the sub-polar regions, and the passage of the great distance that separates it from us, are both sustained with ease, evidently, by this magnificent bird. —From "Winter Birds," in *Vick's Magazine*.

**School-Days in the Old Times.**  
Boys and girls of the present day find the road to learning a much smoother and pleasanter pathway than did their forefathers. A hundred years ago the favorite text in almost every family was, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

A rawhide or bunch of birch hung over the mantel-shelf in many houses, to be used upon the boys of the family, the usual rule being that a whipping at school must be followed by one at home. Those given at school were usually the more severe. In many old schools in England the "birch horse" is preserved as a curiosity: a high, wooden frame shaped like a saddle, on which the delinquent was strapped to receive his lashes.

Watson, in his *Annals of Philadelphia*, tells us that girls as well as boys were whipped in the "academies for the gentry" a hundred years ago.

Other punishments than whipping were common. Talking in school was sometimes punished by fastening a frame over the mouth, from which lolled a huge red flannel tongue. Almost every school had its dunce's cap, and some of them had a "clog," which was a block of wood that was strapped to the leg of a truant and worn outside of school.

Dull scholars were often made to stand open-mouthed under the clock, to be pointed at by their comrades as they marched past. In certain English schools a large wicker cage is preserved in which the delinquent was fastened, the cage being then drawn by a pulley to the ceiling, where it remained until the ill-doer was supposed to be sufficiently punished.

The tardy scholar was sometimes forced to march through the streets preceded by an usher who carried a lighted lantern, to the amusement of the jeering crowd.

These punishments seem barbarous, and were barbarous when applied to most school delinquents, but there are some natures, almost or quite devoid of moral sensibility,—gross mentally and physically,—that can only be made to see their wrong-doing by severe corporal punishment. They are like animals. Their comprehension of guilt is only vitalized and measured by the acuteness of the pain inflicted as a penalty.

**Mildred's Cups of Cold Water.**  
Mildred sat under the shade tree she could find that was near the pump. The shade and the pump were both indispensable, it was such a sizzling hot day. The sun had baked all Mildred's mud-pies "to a turn," and they stood in little, uneven rows, parched and browned and crisp, waiting to be eaten!

"Oh, deary me! how hot it is!" sighed Mildred, trying to cool her warm little face on the soft grass. But even the grass under the shade tree was hot.

"But I'm glad I'm me instead of a horse," mused on the little voice; while Mildred watched a wagon come toiling up the little hill toward her.

"That's Mr. Cooper's horse, an' I guess he's most melted the way he looks. He's all covered over with soapuds. I'm glad he isn't me."

The poor horse toiled on with drooping head and steaming sides. When he got to Mildred's pump, he stopped wistfully; but the trough was empty.

"G'lang, Dobbin! You can't have any!" Mr. Cooper called crossly. "I'm too worn out to get out o' this wagon again, to say nothin' of pumpin' a mess o' water! You've got to wait! G'lang!"

"Yes, oh, do wait!" cried Mildred, jumping up suddenly. For Dobbin had looked down at her with pleading eyes. And then, s'posin' she'd been Dobbin!

"I can uncheck him. I'll stand up on the edge o' the trough," she said cheerfully. "An' I'll pump. He looks so thirsty!"

Every time the pump-handle went up, Mildred went up, too, and then came down again on the wooden platform with steady little thuds. She could get more water that way.

And so Dobbin had his long, cool drink, and actually went off at a brisk little trot.

After that a good many other panting horses came plodding by, with wistful side-glances toward the pump; and Mildred's clear, pleasant, little voice offered them all drink. People rarely stopped at Mildred's pump. It wasn't a public watering-place, and the trough was small and usually empty; and perhaps people had found out how hard the pump-handle worked up and down.

It was hot, hard work. Mildred's face got very red and wet, and her feet ached with the thuds on the platform; and her arms,—oh, deary me! how they ached with the pump-handle!

Between times she rested under the shady tree, feeling so thankful in her heart that she wasn't a horse!

Aunt Winnie watched her from her invalid chair in the window.

"G'irlie," she said softly, when Mildred went in at supper-time, "do you know what you have been doing?"

"Yes'm: restin'—and pumpin'." Mildred said promptly.

"And givin' a 'cup'—a great many beautiful, kind cups—of 'cold water,' dear!" Aunt Winnie added with a hug.—Annie Hamilton Dounell, in *Zion's Herald*.

**Lord Coleridge's Umbrella Decision.**  
The law as to umbrellas was settled once for all by Lord Coleridge in a leading English case. His lordship held:

"Umbrellas, properly considered, are a part of the atmospheric or meteorological condition, and, as such, there can be no individual property right in them. In *Sampson vs. Thompson* defendant was charged with standing on plaintiff's front steps during a storm and thereby soaking up a large quantity of rain to which plaintiff was entitled. But the court held that the rain was any man's rain, no matter where it fell. It followed, therefore, that the umbrella is any man's umbrella. In all ages rain and umbrellas have gone together, and there is no reason why they should be separated by law. An umbrella may, under certain circumstances—the chief of which is possession—take on the attributes of personal property, just as if a man set a tub and catch a quantity of rain water, that rain water will be considered as his personal belonging while it is in his tub. But if the sun evaporate the water and it is rained down again, or if the tub be upset and the water spilled, the attribute of personal ownership disappears. So, if a man hold his umbrella in his hand it may be considered a personal belonging, but the moment it leaves his hand it returns to the great, general, indivisible, common stock of umbrellas, whether the law will not attempt to pursue it."

So far as we know there has never been a successful appeal from this decision. —Chicago News.

**Electric Torpedo Boats.**  
Among the advantages to be looked for in electric torpedo boats are the lack of flaming funnels and noisy machinery to give notice of approach, freedom of risk from cut steam pipes or wrecked boilers, diminished upper works to serve as a target and ease and rapidity of manipulation by the commander with one hand on the controller. A writer in the *Electrical World* suggests the possibility of primary batteries. For a 140-foot boat, with a displacement of 110 tons, engines of 2000 horse-power are necessary to give a speed of 25 knots, and a weight of 75 tons is all that could be allowed for batteries and motors. Four motors of 500 horse-power each would weigh about 12 tons. This would permit the carrying of 200 cells consisting of 13 zinc plates 18 inches square and 12 plates of like size of copper oxide compressed on copper with an electrolyte solution of strong caustic alkali. Glass jars of 19 inches cube, with water-tight covers, would contain the elements. If such battery would work satisfactorily it should drive the vessel at full speed for one hour, or about 100 miles at 10 knots.