

# LITTLE FOLKS

## The Ostrich.

(By Captain T. Downing, Hollywood, in 'Daybreak'.)

If any of the young readers of 'Daybreak' happened to swallow a button what a commotion it would cause! Now what boy or girl would imagine that there should be any creature—and above all things a bird—that should look on large, bright, brass buttons as dainty morsels? But out in far-away South

bright buttons on that tunic have been purposely brought from England to furnish him with dessert, and, carefully picking them off, swallows them with evident relish, so that Tommy Atkins has much to contend with in addition to his hardships and dangers of warfare.

During the recent war it has been my lot to witness many strange sights, but an incident or two in connection with the peculiar habits

are of immense strength; and with the aid of a powerful claw enable the bird to defend itself against its enemies, and prove it to be a dangerous foe. The head is small, with large bright eyes—ever keenly watching the movements of those around—always on the alert to take immediate advantage of the opportunity of depriving you of any bright substance, such as buttons, badges, or even watch chain. The neck is long and covered with down, and enables the bird to feed from the ground without discomfort.

The principal use of these birds is to supply a demand created by fashion in civilized countries for feathers to be worn in ladies' hats or made into boas, so that they are kept in large numbers by the farmers who once or twice a year pluck the beautiful feathers which grow under the wing and tail.

Now having some idea of what the bird is like, picture to yourself a camp of soldiers taking a well earned rest. They have had many days' marching, and as soon as they reach camp prepare their meal of fried meat; little do they heed the stately ostrich as he walks up and down past the camp fire and, though on the other side of the wire fence, within reach of the frying pan. For a moment the cook's back is turned. Now is the chance, and with a swift thrust of his neck between the wires, a hasty gulp, and the contents of the pan are gone, whilst the bird continues his stately tread. Look what are those peculiar lumps in his neck which can be seen slowly getting lower and nearer his body—only the last visible signs of poor Tommy's hard earned dinner!

On another occasion I myself, having been permitted by a farmer friend to go in search of a buck for dinner, did not notice that in the same enclosure (or camp as they are called) was a huge ostrich. But he was not so careless, and looking upon me as an intruder, took upon himself the responsibility of my prompt ejection, and, with a back of righteous wrath, came charging towards me. Fortunately I was close to a tree, and with more haste than would appear proper to one of my years, I put as much space be-



THE OSTRICH AS HE IS.

Africa, there stalk through the land, with mighty strides, huge birds looking eagerly for what they can pick up, and woe betide the soldier who may perchance leave his tunic on the bank of a river while he enjoys the luxury of a swim; for if one of those birds (called the ostrich) comes that way he imagines the

of these wonderful birds will be sufficient for the present. To those who have not been to the Zoo I would try and describe this bird. It has much of the appearance of a crane, but is of a very much larger size. Long legged and long necked, the body stands about six feet high, and the legs, though long and thin,