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SON AND THE CHAIN GANG.

EMMA V. BROWNLEY, IN N. Y. OUTLOOK.

Son was seven years old when his mother died. She was buried with much ceremony, by the society which she had joined five years before, and to which she had contributed ten cents each month. If ever the paying grew irksome, she would close her eyes and picture the funeral at the end—the hearse and plumes, the black horses, the solemn procession of purple-clad sisters and white-gloved brethren—and then she would pay, pay with joy.

And so it was when she was buried; and Son, who had seen it all and was proud, ceased to be Son in particular and became Son in general; that is, to any of the neighbors in the negro settlement who would give him a rag to wear, a piece of bread when he was hungry, or a place to sleep with their children.

The negro father seldom counts for anything in the life of his children. Son's father, when consumption took his wife from the white man's kitchen, and the pan she toted began to fall, had very promptly and gayly gone off on an excursion with another black lady who was well and strong. They never came back, and no one blamed them at all.

But the negro women were sorry for the child, let him stay when he came around, gave him to eat when there happened to be anything, beat him, and, altogether, treated him like one of their own, until he went visiting to somebody else.

And so five years passed, and Son was twelve. One June morning there didn't happen to be anything to eat, so he strolled off to a street where there was a boarding-house.

The cook had finished the breakfast and had gone to lay the table. The smell of the cooked things went out to the little black boy and talked persuasively to his poor empty stomach and drew him straight to the kitchen. On the table was a platter of fried chicken—for Son lived in South Carolina—and on the range were pans of biscuit.

The remnant of a breakfast and a black boy going out of the yard with his head bent over his hands were what the cook saw on her return.

My! but she was mad; her woolly kinks trembled, as she 'phoned to the police station an account of the theft, which gave the impression that the boarding-house larder had been fairly emptied. For this reason, Son, as he walked slowly, leaving behind a trail of chicken-bones, ran into a hurrying policeman on the corner. At the mayor's court that morning the prisoner understood little or nothing of what was said or done. He felt sure he was going to get a beating—the like of which had never been heard of. He was scared, yet now and then he patted his rounded stomach and rolled his eyes in recollection. As he had never had a lesson on doing right, he was not interested in the mayor's talk on the wrongfulness of his deed. The mayor saw the boy was not listening—"O Lord, if we only had a reform school for such as this!" he said and sighed.

But there were no reform schools for such as Son, and he was sentenced to work in the chain-gang for fifteen days.

It was past sunset when the prisoner was left at the convict camp. Work on the country road had ceased for the day. A blue haze lay like a veil over the hills and valleys; the mountains, a few miles to the north, stood out clear and purple. The smoke from the camp-fires curled up lazily as the two cooks prepared supper of hominy, corn bread, and bacon. The tents were pitched midway on a slight hill, at the foot of which were a spring and a tiny stream. Here and there were heaps of shovels, picks, and spades

where the workers had thrown them down on coming into camp.

Striped and shackled men lay resting on the ground singly, or lounged in groups, chatting idly. At the spring several were washing hands and faces. The gang was composed of forty or forty-five negroes and five or six white men. Their crimes were for the most part theft, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct, or fighting. The overseer and his assistant were smoking in front of their tent and watching the prisoners with seemingly careless eyes. A long black gun leaned against the canvas behind them. In side the tent hung a leather whip, which was brought out occasionally when a man became stubborn and sullen.

Son, having escaped a beating, was untroubled, and stared curiously about him. The overseer, after looking the boy over, removed his pipe and gave an order or two. Within half an hour the new convict wore the smallest striped suit from the camp wardrobe. A light chain was fastened securely around the boy's ankles, with length between for a short step; it was then drawn along the right leg to the waist, where it ended in a ring, through which a belt passed around the body. He was then sent to get his supper with the others. Each prisoner secured a tin pan and spoon from a stack and went to the cook to be helped; he then sat down upon the ground to eat; if he wished more, he went with his pan again to the cook.

After supper the negroes drew together and sang—as they alone can sing—old stories, while the whites lay listening with faces toward the stars.

When the overseer called bedtime, the company went silently to the long sleeping tent; each man lay down upon the cot that had been assigned him—the whites at the further end of the tent, then the negroes. The belts were unfastened, the chains drawn out, and the rings at the ends were "threaded" on a chain running the length of the tent. This chain was then locked to stout posts at the ends of the tents. It seemed to Son that every man was instantly asleep. But for a while he could not sleep. The country stillness disturbed him. The rattling of a chain when a sleeper stirred sounded louder than the electric car which ran in town. Presently a whippoorwill set up its cry, and the boy lay listening and wondering what it could be. But after a time he too fell asleep.

At daylight the unlocking of the chain was the signal for the gang to rise; the men shuffled out, fastening the chains to their belts. Son sat upon a log and watched the preparations for breakfast and the drivers feeding and watering the mules.

After breakfast the men shouldered tools and straggled to the road which they were macadamizing. There the sluggish units merged themselves again into the gang—a great, slow machine that crept along with clanking chains through the heat and dust of the roadway, as it ponderously killed time. The unwilling picks and shovels kept time to the slowest of songs—for sing the gang must but never a fast song. And, like a small arm moving out at regular intervals, Son came and went with a bucket of water.

How welcome to each man was the child with the bucket! For does it not take three minutes to drink, and do not the overseer and everybody know that one should rest five minutes after drinking?

At noon there was an hour's halt. Dinner—vegetables boiled with meat, corn bread, and molasses—was soon eaten. Then the men lay down in the shade and dozed until they were called.

Thus the days, pretty much alike, succeeded one another. Sunday was spent in wrestling, playing games, and singing. Occasionally a colored divine of the old-fashioned sort ventured out to preach of the awful consequence of sin. He was listened to with rolling eyes and ashen faces; but on the road the next day, the fiery eloquence but a memory, both he and his sermon, as it was reviewed, received merciless criticism in jokes and shouts of laughter.

One day the mayor in town, grown tired of the increasing number of brawling women brought into police court, and really puzzled to know what to do with them, sent two mulatto women to the camp. Here they created a stir. A tent had to be set apart for their use; striped dresses had to be made, finally the women were installed over the pots and pans, while the men cooks were sent grumbling to the road. The camp wore a subdued air for a few days. But the strangeness of women convicts soon wore off.

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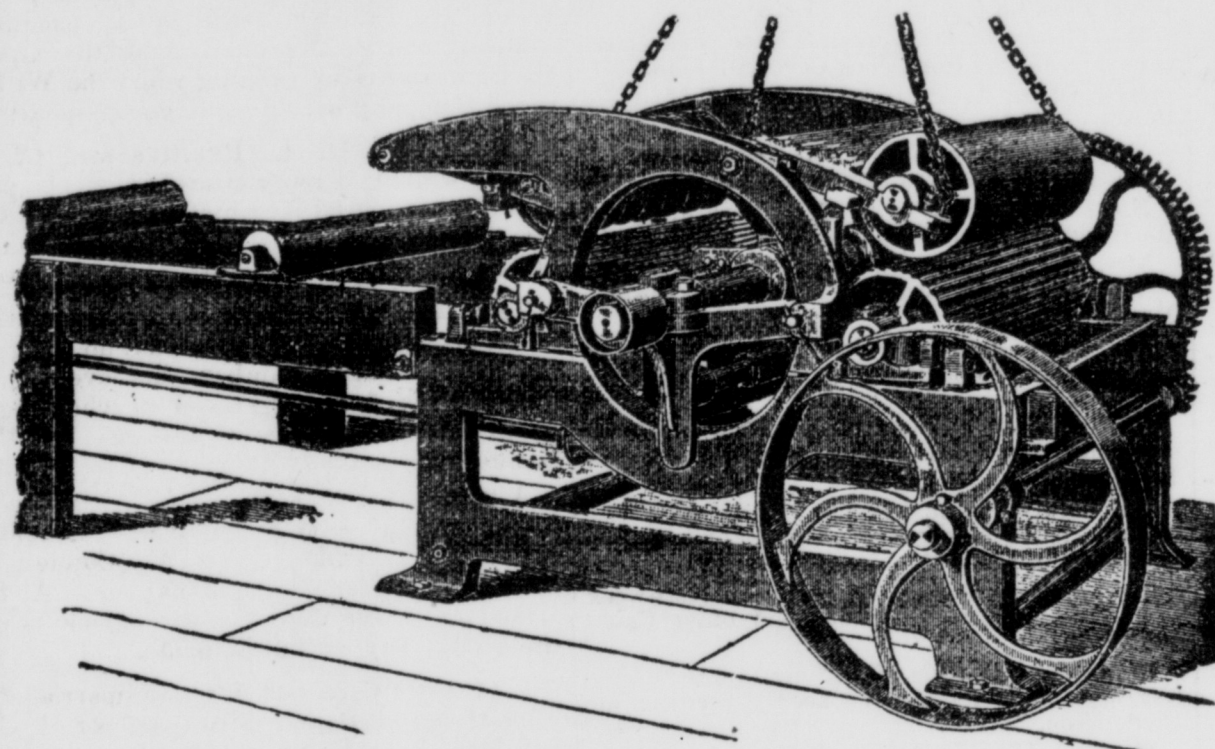
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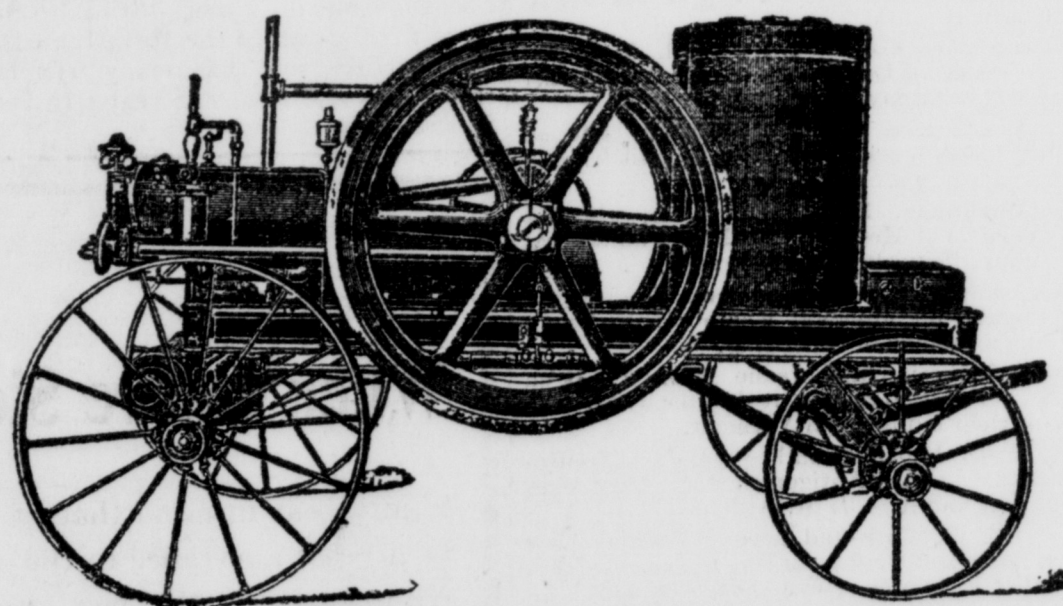
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A Lively Animal.

He was a good-natured German and his face fairly beamed as he walked into a drug-store. The first thing that caught his attention was an electric fan buzzing busily on the soda counter. He looked at it with great interest and then turned to the clerk.

"Py golly!" he said smilingly, "dat's a tamed lify squirrel vot you got in dare, ain't id?"

A young woman, who has recently taken charge of a kindergarten, entered a trolley car the other day, and as she took her seat smiled pleasantly at a gentleman sitting opposite. He raised his hat, but it was evident that he did not know her.

Realizing her error, she said, in tones audible throughout the entire car: "O, please excuse me! I mistook you for the father of two of my children!" She left the car at the next corner.—New York Sun.

Afterward their number grew until there was not enough cooking, washing, and sewing for them all to do, and some of them were sent to the quarry to carry out rock to the crusher.

At the spring one morning, as Son sat resting, chin in hand, his eyes wandered to his fettered feet. Something stirred his heart. An ugly, sullen expression swept his face. "Jes' like a dawg," he muttered. Then his eyes slowly raised themselves to the tops of the mountains and rested upon a bit of cloud floating there. Dim images began to flit across his brain—his mother, the times of hunger, nights when he slept upon the naked floor, in contrast the present with the three good meals a day, the cot at night, the rough kindness of the bosses and men, and lastly, when he carried water to the men, the look in their eyes which made him feel that at last he was of some importance. With a gurgling laugh, he rose, picked up his bucket, and, leaning over, filled it; then balancing it on his head, he walked slowly along the path, singing softly the song the men were singing on the road in clear, far-reaching voices:

"O Lord, O my Lord, O my good Lord!
Keep me from sinking down.
I tell you what I mean to do;
Keep me from sinking down!
I mean to go to heaven too;
Keep me from sinking down!"

Son had dignified his labor in the only way that had occurred to him—he passed the water with the identical bearing and expression of solemnity with which the deacons passed the wine in the great negro church in town. That day the ceremony was more impressive than ever before; the men looked at him wonderfully, and one said, "What a matter wid de nigger?"

The overseer called the boy up after dinner and explained to him that his term had expired. Son gazed at the boss with puzzled eyes. He had never thought of being sent away. Where should he go? He did not want to go—not one bit. Wearing his own ragged clothes and freed from the chains, he sat by the roadside that afternoon while the gang worked, and looked scornfully on while a half-grown negro carried the water-bucket. But his small mind was busy with cause and effect and with forming a plan. Late in the afternoon he went to town.

In court, two mornings later, Son received a sentence of thirty days for boldly entering a house and stealing a diamond ring. At sunset of the same day he appeared at the camp trying to look sullen, and making a miserable failure of it.

Circular Veils.

Circular veils are the newest in style, and under all circumstances they are exceedingly graceful. When made up of lace, net or chiffon they are sure to be greatly admired. Very smart are they in white or black sprigged lace by the piece, trimmed on the edges by both an entre-deux and an edging. Colored veils have the same lace finish, the trimming laces in most cases being dyed to match the veil's foundation. To wear them correctly they require four hat-pins. It goes without saying that we shall soon find sets of hatpins four in number, sold in the larger shops. The other day a woman just over was showing her friends at Narragansett the sets of four hatpins she had found in several foreign shops and had selected to be in accord with her different hats. These circular veils dip only an inch or so below the line of the chin and hang evenly all round. They show off the dressing of the hair and do not interfere with the profile or full facial lines, as the closely draped veil does so often. For coolness they are most desirable, as well as for the quickness and ease with which they may be lifted from the brim and thrown back upon the hat.—Vogue.

Do You See the Moral.

In the office of a big department store, where bigwigs and littlewigs must go, there hangs a placard bearing in heavy faced print, so that all may read, the following:

Complaint was recently made to us that one of those employed by us, holding a very responsible position, and whose services to us were beyond question valuable, entertained ideas of his self-importance so as to make himself most disagreeable to the other employees of the firm, remarking to them that he was so indispensable to the house that the firm could not get along without him. We called him in and said to him:

"We have been told that you have said that this house would fail if it were not for you. Now we know that your services are of great value to us, but we would really like to know if we would fail without your services. So we are going to try the experiment, and have decided to suspend your services to us for one year."

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"You said that young man was a promising politician."

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum; "I must say he promises things with all the ease and ability of an old hand."—Washington Star.