

The line of dingy-coated men stretched along the broad granite walk and like a great gray serpent wound in and out among the wagon-shops and planing-mills that filled the prison yard.

Down beyond the foundry the beginning of the line, the head of the serpent, was lost at the stairway leading to the second floor of a long, narrow building in which whisk-brooms were manufactured.

An hour before, on the sounding of a brass gong at the front, that same line had wound round the same corners into the building whence now it crawled. There, the men had seated themselves on four-legged stools before benches that stretched across the room in rows. Before each man was set a tin plate of boiled meat, a heavy cup of black coffee, a knife, a fork, and a thick bowl of steaming, odorous soup.

During the meal other men, dressed like the hundreds who were sitting, in suits of dull gray, with little round-crowned, peaked-visor caps to match, moved in and out between the rows, distributing chunks of fresh white bread from heavy baskets. Now and then one of the men would shake his head and the waiter would pass by but usually a dozen hands were thrust into a basket at once to clutch the regulation "bit" of half a pound. The men ate ravenously, as if famished.

And now, their dinner over, they were marching back to the shops and mills of the prison, where days and weeks were spent at labor. Those employed in the wagon-works dropped out of the line when they came opposite the entrance to their building. Those behind pushed forward as their prison mates disappeared, and never for more than ten seconds was there a gap in the long, gray line.

A dozen men in blue uniforms marched beside the line on its way from the mess-hall, six on each side, at two yards' distance. Their caps bore "Guard" in gold letters, and each carried a short, heavy, crooked cane of polished white hickory.

On entering the workroom of the second floor, the men assembled before a railed platform, upon which a red-faced, content man stood behind a desk. In cold, metallic tones he called the numbers of the convicts employed "on the whisk-broom contract" and the latter, each in turn, replied "Here!" when their numbers were spoken.

"Twenty-three-four!" called the red-faced man.

There was no response. "Twenty-three-four!" The red-faced man leaned over the desk and glared down. Then a voice from somewhere on the left answered, "Here!"

"What was the matter with you the first time?" snapped the foreman.

The man thus questioned removed his cap and took three steps toward the platform. In feature the word "hard" would describe him. His head was long, wide at the forehead, and yet narrow between the temples. His eyes were small and close together. His nose was flat, and his mouth hardly more than a straight cut in the lower part of his face. The lower jaw was square and heavy, and the ears protruded abnormally. A trifle above medium height, with a pair of drooping, twitching shoulders, the man looked criminal.

To the question he replied doggedly, "I answered the first time, sir, but I guess you didn't hear me."

The foreman gazed steadily at the man. Their eyes met. The foreman's did not waver, but "2034" lowered his, and fumbled nervously at his cap.

"All right," said the foreman, quietly, "but I guess you'd better report to the warden as soon as you get through in here. Don't wait for any piece-work. Go to him as soon as you have finished your task. I'll tell him you're coming. He'll be waiting for you in the front office."

"Yes, sir." The convict did not raise his eyes. He stepped back into line. Then, at a clap of the foreman's hands, the men broke ranks, and each walked away to his own bench or machine. Five minutes later, the swish of the corn-wisps as they were separated and tied into rough brooms, and the occasional tap of a hammer, were the only sounds in that long room where 65 men toiled.

Now and then one of the men would go to the platform where the foreman sat bent over half a dozen little books, in which it was his duty to record the number of "tasks" completed by each of the workmen "on his contract"—a "task," in the prison vernacular, being the amount of work each man is compelled to accomplish within a given space of time. On the approach of a workman, the foreman would look up, and a few whispered words would pass between the two. Then the broom-maker would dart into the stock-room, adjoining the factory, where, upon receiving a written requisition from the shop foreman, the official in charge would give him the material which he needed in his work—a ball of twine, or a strip of plush with which the handles of the brooms were decorated.

As ten minutes past three o'clock, 2034 crossed to the platform.

"What do you want?" asked the foreman, as he eyed keenly the man in the dull-gray suit.

"A paper of small tacks," was the reply, quietly spoken. The order was written, and as 2034 moved away to-

ward the door leading to the stock-room, the man on the platform watched him closely from between half-closed lids.

A guard who had come round from behind the broom-bins noticed the way in which the foreman followed every movement of the convict, and stepping over to the platform asked, in an undertone, "Anything wrong, Bill?"

"That's what I don't know, George," the foreman replied. "That man Riley's been acting queer of late. I've got an idea there's something up his sleeve. There's not a harder nut on the contract than that fellow, and by the way he's been carrying on, sullen like and all that, I'm fearing something's going to happen. You remember him, don't you? What, no? Why, he's that Riley from Acorn. He came in two years ago on a burglary job in Clive, where he shot a drug clerk that offered objections to his carrying off all there was in the shop. They made it manslaughter, and he's in for 15 years. And I'm told there's another warrant ready for him when he gets out, for a job done four years ago in Kentucky. He's a bad one. A fellow like that is no good round this shop."

The guard smiled cynically at the foreman's suggestion that a convict may be too bad even for prison surroundings.

It was quarter to four by the foreman's watch when the door at the head of the stairway opened and the warden entered, accompanied by two friends whom he was showing through the "plant," as he always persisted in calling the prison. The warden was a stout, jovial man, who looked more like a bishop than a "second father" to 800 criminals. The foreman did not observe his entrance into the room, and only looked up when he heard his voice.

"This is where the whisk-brooms are made," the warden was explaining to his friends. "On the floor below which we just left, you will remember we saw the boys turning out broom-handles. Well here, the brooms are fastened to those little wooden handles. Some of the work, you see, is done by machine. The brooms are tied and sewn, though, by hand, over at those benches. In the room beyond, through that door, we keep the stuff handy that is called for from time to time, and in a farther room is stored the material used in the manufacture of the brooms, the tin tips, the twine, the tacks, and about ten tons of broom-straw."

As the warden ceased speaking, the foreman leaned across the desk and tapped him on the shoulder. "Riley's coming in to see you this afternoon. He's been acting queer—don't answer the call, and the like. I thought maybe you could call him down."

The warden only nodded, and continued his explanations to the visitors of the work done in the shop.

"Now," he said, moving away toward the door leading into the stock-room, "if you will come over here I'll show you our storerooms. You see we have to keep a lot of material on hand. Beyond this second room the stuff is stored up, and is taken into the stock-room as it is wanted. Between the rooms we have arranged these big sliding iron doors that, in case of fire, could be dropped, and thus, for a few minutes at least, cut the flames off from any room but that in which they originated. See?"

He pulled a lever at the side of the door, and a heavy iron sliding sheet dropped slowly and easily to the floor. "You see," he went on, "that completes the wall."

The visitors nodded. "Now come on through here and look at the straw and velvet we have stored away in bales."

The visitors followed the warden through the second room, and into the third. There arranged regularly on the floor, were huge bales of broom-straw, and against the walls of the room, boxes upon boxes of velvets, tacks, ornamental bits of metal, and all the other separate parts of the commercial whisk-broom.

The visitors examined the tacks and the tins and felt the bales of straw.

"Very interesting," observed one of them, as he drew his cigar-case from his pocket, and biting the tip from one of the cigars it contained, struck a little wax match on the sole of his shoe. He held the match in his hand until it had burned down, then threw it on the floor, and followed the warden and the other visitor under the heavy iron screen into the workroom of the factory.

The foreman was busy at his books and did not observe the little party as it passed through the shop on the other side of the broom-bins and out the big door.

Two minutes later, 2034 happened to look out through the window across his bench, and he saw the warden with his friends crossing the prison yard to the foundry. A guard just then sauntered into the room and stopped at the first of the bins. He idly picked up one of the finished brooms and examined it. His attention a moment later was distracted by some one pulling at his coat from behind. He turned.

"Why, Tommy, my boy what is it?"

The two soft brown eyes of a little boy were turned up to him. "I'm looking for papa," replied the little fellow. "The foreman downstairs said he come up here. Uncle George is back in the house, and mamma sent me out to find papa."

The guard patted the little fellow's head. "And we will find him, Tommy," he said. He went over to the foreman's desk. "Bill, did the warden come up here? Tommy is looking for him; his mother sent him out."

The foreman raised his eyes from his books. "Yes," he replied, "he went in there, with a couple of gentlemen."

The guard looked at the little boy. "He's in the stock-room," he said. "You'll find him in there, Tommy."

Then he turned and walked out of the shop. The child ran on into the room beyond. His father was not there. The stock-keeper did not observe the little boy as he tiptoed, in a childish way past the desk. Tommy passed on into the farther room. He knew he would find his father in there, and he would crawl along between the tiers of straw bales and take him by surprise.

He had hardly passed the door when the stock-keeper, raised his head from the lists of material he was preparing, held his face up and sniffed the air. Quietly he rose from his revolving chair and went to the door of the straw-room. He merely peered inside. Turning suddenly, he pressed upon the lever near the door and the iron screen slid down into place, cutting off the farther room. Then snatching a few books that lay on his desk, he slipped out into the shop, and at that door released the second screen. As it fell in to place with a slight crunching noise, the foreman turned in his chair. The eyes of the two men met. The stock-keeper raised his hand and touched his lips and with the first finger. He crossed rapidly to the desk.

"Get the men out! Get the men out!" he gasped. "The store-room in there is on fire!"

The foreman rapped on the table twice. Every man working in that room turned and faced the desk.

"Work is over for today," said the foreman. His manner was ominously calm, and the men looked at one another wonderingly.

"Fall in!"

At the order, the dingy gray suits formed the same old serpent, and the line moved rapidly through the door at the end of the room and down the outside stairs.

There, in front of the building, they were halted, and a guard was despatched to find the warden. He was discovered in the foundry. "Fire in the broom-shop!" whispered the guard.

The warden's face paled. He dashed through the doorway, and one minute later came round the corner of the building, just in time to see the first signs of flame against the windows of the rear room upstairs.

Within five seconds, a troop of 15 guards had drawn the little hand-engine from its house and hitched the hose to the hydrant nearest the shop. From all the other buildings the men were being marched to their cells.

"These men!" hurriedly whispered the foreman to the warden. "What shall I do with them?"

"Get 'em inside as soon as you can! This won't last long, the front of the building is cut off. It'll all be over in ten minutes."

The foreman gave an order. At that instant a woman came running down the prison yard. Reaching the warden's side, she fell against him heavily.

"Why, Harriet," he exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"Oh," she gasped, "Tommy! Tommy! Where is Tommy?"

A guard at the end of the engine-rail turned ash white. He raised a hand to his head, and with the other grasped the wheel to keep from falling. Then he cried, "Mr. Jeffries, I—I believe Tommy is up there in the stock-room."

"Up there? Up there?" he cried.

The sudden approach of the woman and the words that followed had wrought so much confusion that the men paid no attention to the foreman's command, and he had even failed to observe their lack of attention, in the excitement of that moment.

"Great God!" cried the warden. "What can I do—what can I do? No one can live up there!"

There was a crash. One of the windows fell out. "Get a ladder!" some one cried. A guard ran back toward the prison-house. Then, in the midst of the hubbub, a man in a dingy gray suit stepped out a yard from the line of convicts. His prison number was 2034. He touched his little square cap.

"If you'll give me permission, I think I can get up there," was all he said. "You'll see," exclaimed the warden. "No, no, I will tell no man to do it!"

There was a second crash. Another window had fallen out, and now the tongues of flame were lapping the outer walls above.

The convict made no reply. With a bound he was at the end of the line and dashing up the outer stairway.

The warden's wife was on her knees, clinging to the hand of her husband. In his eyes was a dead, cold look. A few of the men bit their lips, and a faint shadow of a snarl played about the mouths of others. They all waited. A convict had broken a regulation—had run from the line! He would be punished! Even as he had clambered up the stairs a guard had cried, "Shall I shoot?"

The silence was broken by a shriek from the woman kneeling at the warden's feet. "Look!" she cried, and pointed toward the last of the up-stairs windows.

There, surrounded by a halo of smoke, and hemmed in on all sides by flames, stood a man in a dingy gray suit. One sleeve was on fire, but he beat out the flames with his left hand.

Those below heard him cry, "I've got him!" Then the figure disappeared. Instantly it returned, bearing something in its arms. It was the limp form of a child.

All saw the man wrap smoking straw round the little body and tie round that two strands of heavy twine. Then that precious burden was lowered out of the window. The father rushed forward and held up his arms to receive it.

Another foot—he hugged the limp body of his boy to his breast! On the ground a little way back lay a woman, as if dead.

"Here's the ladder!" cried the foreman, and at that moment the eyes that were still turned upon the window, where stood a man in a dingy gray suit, witnessed a spectacle that will reappear before them again and again in visions of the night.

The coat the man wore was ablaze. Flames shot out on either side of him and above him. Just as the ladder was placed against the wall, a crackling was heard—not the crackling of fire. Then, like a thunderbolt, a crash occurred that caused even the men in their cells to start. The roof caved in!

In the prison yard that line of convicts saw 2034 reel and fall backward, and heard as he fell, his last cry, "I'm a-comin', warden!"

He was a convicted criminal, and died in prison-gray. But it would seem not wonderful to the warden if, when that man's soul took flight, the Recording Angel did write his name in the eternal Book of Record, with the strange cabalistic sign, a ring around a cross—that stands for "good behavior."—Youth's Companion.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

In Zante, one of the Ionian islands, there is a petroleum spring which has been known for nearly 3000 years. It is mentioned by Herodotus.

A strange clock was made during the last century for a French nobleman. The dial was horizontal, and the figures, being hollow, were filled with different sweets or spices. Thus, running his finger along the hands, by tasting the owner could tell the hour without a light.

The postmaster at Burlingame received a letter the other day addressed to the man living just across the road from and a few rods north of the schoolhouse about two miles south of Burlingame, Kan. The postmaster promptly delivered the letter to Thomas Mitchell, whose residence answers this description.

Insects may be briefly described as small animals with very large families. They think nothing of having a few hundreds of little ones at a single birth. Many of them are never satisfied with less than eight or 10 thousand, while there are not a few whose offspring resembles the sands of the sea, since they cannot be numbered for multitude.

In several of the Western Kansas towns along the Union Pacific a curious sight is presented to the traveler. The scarcity of cars has caused the wheat elevators to overflow, and some of the buyers have made huge piles of grain on the ground along the railroad tracks. At one place the elevator man has procured a small circus tent. The centre pole is standing erect in the middle of a mountain of wheat, and the canvas is on the ground ready to be hoisted in case of rain.

Several carefully observed cases of falling of hair from emotion have been recorded of late in the Progress Medical, and a still more striking case reported by E. Boissier is 38 years of age, saw his child thrown and trampled by a mule. He supposed it killed, and experienced in his fright and anguish a sensation of chilliness and tension in his face and head. The child escaped with bruises, but the father's hair, beard and eyebrows commenced to drop out next day, and by the end of the week he was entirely bald. A new growth of hair appeared in time, but finer, and exactly the color of the hair of an Albino.

The Monkey and the Parrot.

Here is a Chinese fable with a moral, which might be expressed in English, "Don't monkey with the buzz-saw." But that is getting the cart before the horse. It is about a monkey and a parrot, and is as follows:

A sparrow had its nest half-way up a tree, in the top of which dwelt a monkey. After a heavy rain the sparrow, snug and dry in its warm nest, saw the monkey shaking his dripping body, and could not refrain from addressing him thus: "Comrade, your hands are skillful, your strength great, your intellect clever; why do you live in such a miserable state? Why not build a snug nest like mine?"

The monkey, angered at the complacency of the sparrow, replied: "Am I to be mocked by an evil creature like you? Your nest is snug, is it? and so saying he threw the nest to the ground. Moral: Don't talk with a passionate man.

Sustaining Power of Bananas.

One of the most courageous marches ever taken was that of Colonel Willcocks to Kumasi. We hear that during the march from Kumasi the whole party lived on bananas. On one occasion they had waded shoulder high through a river for two hours. Does anyone want a higher test of endurance on a vegetable diet than this?—The Vegetarian.

SHEETS OF BREAD.

Indian Women Bake Them in the American Desert.

If you wish to dine off a sheet of bread, you must go to the great American desert and ask the women of the Moki Indians to bake it for you. But if you are wise, you will not inquire too closely into the details of the process. The preparation of the bread, in sheets hardly thicker than a sheet of paper, is a real art among the Moki women. A corner in the principal room is set aside for the accommodation of a shallow trough, walled in with slabs of stone set on end. The trough is divided into three compartments, and in these the first process of bread-making takes place. When bread is to be made, a girl kneels behind each compartment. Shelled corn is then put on the flat stone in the first compartment, and with a coarse oblong stone the first girl proceeds to rub it. The coarse meal thus prepared is passed on to the next compartment. Here it is again rubbed with a stone less coarse, and passed on to the third stage. The result is a decidedly flabby meal. With a brush which is made of dried grass bound together with a string of calico, and with which the floor is swept between times, the meal is then gathered up and mixed with water to a thick batter. Then comes in the art of the baker. She takes a single handful of the batter and spreads it over a long, flat stone, under which a fire has been for some time burning. The batter is made to cover thinly the entire surface. When one side is baked she takes the bread by a corner and pulls it off dexterously, turning it the other side up. When it is done, a long, flat basket receives it, and the baker turns the edges all around, so that the air can get at it. Sheet after sheet is baked until the basket is piled high with the blue bread, or "piki," which the baker pronounces "peka."

No salt is used in the batter, and the piki has a sweetish taste. It is usually blue, partaking of the color of the corn from which it is made. It is eaten dry or in a sort of soup. When the men go on a journey they take piki made into rolls, very much as one would roll up a sheet of wet paper, the bread being of about the same thickness as the paper. The stones upon which the bread is baked are prepared by the old women of the tribe with great secrecy and much ceremony. They are very valuable, and are handed down as heirlooms from mother to daughter. The first stage in the process, so says Popular Science News, is smoothing and filling of the surface of the stone with hot pitch. It is then smoked and rubbed for many days, with an accompaniment of rude chanting. As far as a white man may know the first rubbing is with a smooth stone, the next with pieces of wood, while the finishing work is done with the bare hands. The result is a jet black, smooth surface, to which the piki does not stick in baking.

College Life—Is It Improved.

The era of bathrubs and sanitation and good living has had its effect upon American youth. To-day if young Ben Franklin should come to Philadelphia to try his fortunes, it is quite likely that he would not march up the street munching his cheap loaf, but would be riding comfortably and handsomely in an automobile toward a scholarship, possibly pausing on his way to get a well-balanced luncheon at a fashionable cafe. The whole tone of college life has been wonderfully raised within the past few years, and if one desires to see a set of well-groomed young men he should attend the opening proceedings of a modern college. Their clothes are not only new and well made, but their complexions are clear.—Saturday Evening Post.

The gypsies of Hungary are the finest-looking people in Europe. They are very seldom ill.

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Editor Munsey in his magazine predicts that we shall ride upon a single rail at the rate of 200 miles an hour in the near future, and so safely as to make accident policies not worth while.

The kymograph is a mechanical device for ascertaining a person's moral character and is known only in Chicago, from which city scientific marvels are reported with startling frequency. It will doubtless be ready for use in sufficient time to be utilized on the artificial man who is to be manufactured, also in Chicago.

Siberia has recently furnished a new game-bird for the epicures of Europe. It is called the Siberian partridge, and is found in the mountains south of Omsk, in Southern Siberia, but its original home is said to be Manchuria. Its principal food consists of wild nuts, which give an exquisite flavor to its flesh. These birds, which have begun to appear by thousands in the markets of London, are shot during the winter and forwarded to England by way of the Baltic Sea.

Through the insertion of inductance coils into the electrical circuit, Professor Pupin, of Columbia University, has greatly increased the efficiency of long-distance telephony through cables. The insertion of the coils enables the cable to transmit 6000 times as much current as it is able to transmit without them. With an experimental cable thus provided, it has been found possible to carry on a conversation distinctly at a distance of 250 miles. By applying the principle to oceanic cables, it is believed that telephonic messages might be sent to and from across the Atlantic. It would also greatly increase the rapidity with which ordinary telegraphic signals can be transmitted by cable. The principle is likewise applicable for extending the range of telephonic communications over aerial wires.

Roll a Pumpkin.

The Rev. John Haynes was famous for his pithy sayings. At one time he overheard his daughter and some young friends criticising certain neighbors more severely than was pleasing to him, whereupon he proceeded to read them a lecture on the sinfulness of scandal.

"But, father," remonstrated his daughter, "we must say something."

"If you can do nothing better," retorted Mr. Haynes, dryly, "get a pumpkin and roll it about. That will be at least an innocent diversion."

Not long afterward a conference of ministers met at his house. During the evening an earnest discussion on certain points of doctrine arose, and from the lofty pitch of some of the voices it seemed as if part of the disputants, at least, were in danger of losing their temper.

At that juncture Mr. Haynes's daughter quietly entered the room, bearing a large pumpkin. She put it down in front of her father, and said, "There, father, roll it about; roll it about."

Mr. Haynes was called upon for an explanation, and good humor was restored.

Remains of Tudor Palace in London.

Enfield postoffice, which is shortly to be removed to a new site, at present occupies a building which possesses some remarkable traditions. It was Queen Elizabeth's palace. A portion of the center and south wing of the Tudor structure still remains, and within there are richly ornamented ceilings, oak-paneled walls, and a massive chimney-piece, standing on Ionic and Corinthian columns; and here are seen the letters "E. R.," with the arms of England and France quartered, the rose and portulias, the lion and the griffon and the motto, "Sola salus servare Deo, sunt altera fraudes." At the back of a gigantic cedar, which is regarded as the first of these trees ever grown in England, as unquestionably it is the largest. The story runs it was reared from a seed brought over from Mount Libanus—London Telegraph.

In certain places in New Jersey cells are a drug in the market. At Mullica Hill recently they closed up the water wheel, stopped the running of the dynamo and shut off the electric light.