MADE in MINNEAPOLIS

BAGS.

Seven floors in a fine big factory furnish seven chapters to the story of making bags. It might be labeled very appropriately, "The Wonders of Bagland," for each floor is a territory in itself, and abounds with things most novel and curious to the priviliged visitor peering into its mysteries and trying to look appreciative. Stories nearly always begin with some sort of an explanation to let the reader know where he starts and where he is going. Bag-making is no exception, even tho it is written in cloth and thread and funny machines. Indeed, this particular story, from the complacent, easy-going elevator rising from the threshold of bagland to the very surprising and attractive tail-piece, would hardly be complete without it.

The Story Begins in India.

Strangely enough the story begins in India. Looking over the room nearest the clouds with its huge, brown bales, square and oblong, each so compact as to be almost "hard as a rock," one might never guess there was an interesting story at all; even then he would have to read between the lines the chapter told by the seventh floor. India, the weird, the jungle home of tigers and the birthplace of famines, is also the only home of the jute plant from which the material for bags is obtained. The plant is stocky, almost a bush four or five feet high. When the fibers have been extracted they are sent to the jute mills and woven into fabric also called jute. The best grades make very pretty cloth. It is a glossy golden-brown, silky even if a trifle harsh to the touch, with black specks clinging to it. These specks are really bits of bark, tho they do not impair the quality of the goods any. Burlap is frequently mistaken for a different kind of goods; it is jute cloth of an inferior grade, being more loosely woven. The jute and burlap are rolled in bolts, packed in bales of from 1,000 to 2,500 pounds, enclosed in a wrapping of burlap, and banded with three thin, narrow iron bands like the heart of the faithful retainer in the old fairy tale. Weaving jute is a growing industry in Calcutta, tho Dundee, Scotland, is as noted for its jute mills as Minneapolis is for flour. Jute is bought by the weight like coffee or sugar, being estimated at so many ounces to the yard; the average weight is from seven to twelve ounces, the heavier being better.

From the Old World to the New.

Then the making of brown jute bags takes a great leap and lands upon the fourth floor called the sewing room. Two great clattering machines to fold the jute, almost half a hundred power sewing machines, over a hundred workers, stacks and stacks of bags in different processes of construction, and fine lint flying around thru the air, combine to make what at first appears to be a startling state of chaos. By and by the mixture resolves into its component parts, and the sewing room then proves to be a center of interest. First a bolt of jute is placed on a roller at one side of the machine. Then the end of the bolt is carried over framework like a tent and fastened at the other side of the machine. Here an ingenious arrangement carries the cloth, all the while unrolling, back and forth; every time a fold is made a row of teeth at each end holds it down fast, and an alternating row bobs up to wait hungrily for the next fold. From 80 to 85 bolts are folded a day. The length of a bolt varies, tho many of them are 150 yards long. About 17,000 yards of jute pass thru the folder per day. When the machine finally stops the ingenious arrangement stops midway between the folds; it resembles a narrow steel bar with a slit down the middle.

The Man With a Knife.

After sharpening a long, rather formidable-looking knife in a truly formidable manner, the man at the folder runs it down thru the slit, cutting the pile of layers into halves. Each half is then a pile of sacks all cut and folded ready to be sewed. Along one side of the room are the power machines which suddenly stop thundering one minute every half hour to be oiled. The folded sacks are distributed to the sewers: the end seam is first sewed, then with a single movement the corner is rounded and the side seam whizzed under the needle. Without stopping to cut the thread, the sewer sends the finished bag flying and places another under the needle. Each machine has before it a yellow-faced dial bearing figures from one to ten. When twenty-five bags h ave been made the hand on the dial is moved over one space, so that by the time it reaches ten again 250 bags have been made. This is done because the girls work by the piece. When the hand has been once around, a little ring is slipped upon a slender steel rod to register that fact. Three thousand bags is the daily average of each girl.

The String Cutters.

At intervals before the machines stand girls whose work it is to cut the strings which hold the bags together, arrange them in lots of 25 and pass them to the turning machines. A turning machine is a sort of wooden pedestal with a pair of tall, horn-like posts at each end not unlike the straight feelers of a butterfly. Two girls work at each machine. They seize the bags, and by a clever movement pull them over the horns, turning them wrongside out.

By this time the bags are ready to return to the sixth floor and pick up the broken thread of the story. Here in the baling-room a giant press is "monarch of all it surveys"—notably a great assemblage of bags already packed into bales. From a distance the press looks more like a queer little summer-house than anything else, except that it has no walls of any kind—not even a lattice. There is a great, thick, rectangular block of wood for a floor and another just like it for a ceiling, a stout iron rod at each corner for the ceiling to slide up and down on, and some wheels and things atop by way of fancy decoration. A great truck load of bags criss-crossed in lots of twenty-five is wheeled close to the summer house. Three strands of rope are laid across the floor the short way and a piece of burlap spread over them like a carpet. Then 500 bags are placed on the carpet, alternating the lots to make an even bunudle. Another piece of burlap is spread over them and on that three more strands of rope.

The Ceiling Comes Down.

Finally the ceiling of the summer-house comes down with a mighty pressure of 2,000 pounds and the poor bags are crushed into about a quarter of the space they recently occupied. The wrappings are neatly tucked in, the ropes tied, and as the roof of the summer-house resumes its accustomed position the bale rolls out as neat as ever a bale could be. Finally the bales are marked with the size of the bags, and they are ready to take a jolly slide down a hardwood chute to the shipping-room on the ground floor.

A Break in the Brown Monotony.

Stories would be rather tiresome sometimes without a change of people or scenes. The fifth floor breaks the brown monotony with a refreshing change in "local coloring." This is the cotton room. The bags are cut out of common brown muslin and also bleached muslin which has a smooth finish of white clay and flour. All the bolts in a bale are sewed end to end in a long ribbon. Then the ribbon is sprinkled and ironed, but it is doubtful if housekeepers would recognize the work at first glance. The "sprinkler" is a machine with a pit in it like the hot water tank in a range. At the bottom of the pit a brush, revolving in water, throws up a fine spray and evenly dampens the ribbon traveling across the mouth of the pit. Then it is ironed by the calender, a machine having six large rollers which are easily heated. The cotton cloth passing over and around and between these is ironed out quite smooth and dry. It is next cut and folded by a slightly different method. The machine which does the work has a general outline of a knoll. The ribbon held tightly and smoothly in place travels up one slope and down the other, but on the way down a knife swinging back and forth from a slit in the hill cuts it cleanly across at every swing. Then it seems that elfin hands seize each piece, fold it and drop it, so quickly and neatly is it done by the machine. These also are sent to the sewing-room, but as they are so much smaller than the jute bags nearly twice as many are made by each sewer. They are then packed in bales holding from 1,000 to 2,000, according to the size of the sacks. Some of the bags are destined to carry flour to South Africa—which fact shows how small the world is. These are made double by slipping a burlap bag over the cotton one.

A Compound and Complex Place.

A bag factory is a sort of compound establishment, not to say complex. It has its composing, engraving and press rooms just like a regular printing shop. This is highly important, as the cotton sacks for patrons must bear their own particular trade marks. These sacks are sent to the press room and suitably adorned with various designs and colors before they are sewed.

Interesting as the story of bag-making is, its chief charm after all is the attractive tail-piece. The factory proper is clean and well-ordered to a surprising and satisfactory degree, but the engine rooms are nothing short of immaculate. They are finished in polished hardwood, and where stone walls must intrude they are made and kept snowy white. Rugs here and there—good ones, too—clean little curtains artistically tied back, and a few little articles of furniture give quite a homey look to corners not otherwise occupied. But the engines are the pride and joy of the engineer's heart. Of marvelous workmanship and shining beauty, and almost noiseless in operation as well-behaved machines ought to be, they may well be the factory's crowning glory.

—Mina B. Price.

A Compliment for Mama.

One day a little girl's mother made some cocoa for lunch. The mother asked:

"How did you like this cocoa?"

"I liked it very much,' 'answered the child.

Then the mother said, "I took a good deal of pains to make it nice."

To this the little girl replied, "Mama, every pain shows."—The Little Chronicle.

The Cat Family.

A teacher asked her class to name five different members of the "cat" family. Nobody answered till at last one little girl raised her hand.

"Well?" said the teacher, encouragingly.

"Father cat, mother cat, and three little kittens."—The Little Chronicle.

THE SONG OF THE SOCKS AND SHOES.

The little pink pigs have been rooting around,
Rooting around all night.
Tho I warned them well they must slumber sound
Till the blink of the morning light;
I warned them well, as the owner I gowned
And snuggled them warm and tight.
But tho I told them they musn't peep out,
The little pink pigs have been rooting about;
I warned them one and I warned them ten,
So now they must go in the sock-and-shoe pen,
The pen of the sock and shoe.

First the sock and then the shoe; it's nearly eight o'clock!
Lock the little pigs in the sock,
Shoo the little pigs in the shoe,
Den the little pigs in the pen,
The pen of the shoe and sock.

The little pink pigs, with a wiggle and dive,
All under the gown they run,
While the owner watches me coax and drive,
And giggles a gale at the fun,
And squeals as I swoop on a drove of five
And capture the five in one.
Oh, the little pink pigs have been rooting about,
Tho I warned them well they mustn't peep out,
So I capture five and I capture ten
And drive them into the sock-and-shoe pen,
The pen of the sock and shoe.

First the sock and then the shoe, and then the shoe and sock;
Lock the little pigs in the sock,
Shoo the little pigs in the shoe,
Den the little pigs in the pen,
It's almost eight o'clock!

—Edmund Vance Cooke in Youth's Companion.

THE BITTERN AND THE MUSSEL

A Very Ancient Fable From the Chinese—Fable of the Crow and the Owls.

There is a pleasing humor in most Chinese fables which renders them highly readable, and, in the application, serves as a sugar-coating to the pill. This humor crops out in the very first fable of which the Chinese have any record. It is to be found in the "Histories of the Contending States," where a certain prince used it as an illustration of the need of a wholesome unity among those who, tho entertaining internecine feuds, have cause to combine against a common foe. "A mussel was basking on the bank of a river," so says this fable, "when a big bittern came by. Seeing it move, the fowl put its head on one side and watched it. Then it drew near and pecked at the mussel, but that wily shellfish clapped its jaws together like a trap and held the bird's beak fast. Then said the bittern, 'If you don't open to-day, and if you don't turn me loose to-morrow, some one will find a dead mussel lying about here.' To which the mussel made reply, 'If I don't open to-day, and if I don't release you to-morrow, they will see a dead bittern holding up his toes on the beach.' At this point a fisherman came by and seized the pair of them."

Most Chinese fables point a wholesome moral. Another quaint little story illustrates the similarity of the Chinese mind to that of more enlightened races, for it plays the part of a satire on the habit of borrowing trouble. "A certain rich old man of the Ch'i state gave his annual party to commemorate his birthday, and invited all his sons and grandsons to grace the occasion. In the midst of the jollifications, however, he was observed sitting apart with an expression of woe upon his face. Being asked what was the matter, he replied, 'I was only thinking what trouble I should have in inviting all my guests when my two hundredth birthday came around."

The fable which is least likely to rust for want of handling in China is one which clearly gives the advice: Never put faith in a deserter. "The crows and the owls, having their respective colonies adjoining, were so near and dear to each other that there was no love lost on the boundary line. They hated each other with a hate passing that of neighbors. By day, when the owls slept, the crowds tormented them, and by night, when the crows slept, the owls were not found irresponsive in this neighborly solicitude. The slaughter among the crows was great, and one morning, after counting the slain, a many-wintered crow shook his head and said that the only way to preserve their peace was to exterminate the owls. He then directed his friends to peck him and pull most of his feathers out. They did so, and it was a most badly handled looking crow that put his head on one side and winked his eye and strutted off to play his game upon the owls. Arrived at their dwelling, he asked them to take pity on him, as he was in a sorry plight, and the Vermillion Bird forgave him for ever having set up as a crow—a degraded creature that attacks one of his own kind, pecks it almost to death, and then turns it out. They heard his tale and pitied him. Very soon he was comfortably lodged in the owls' domicile, where he lay low till his feathers were grown again. Then one morning as the winter was coming on he set to work and piled great heaps of brushwood before the mouth of the owls' dwelling, saying that he foresaw a heavy snowstorm and wished to protect them. When everything was complete, the wily crow, watching his opportunity when the owls were within, snatched a burning brand from a peasant's fire and set the funeral pyre in a blaze. Then, as they flew out and were scorched, he stood with his legs apart holding his sides with laughter at their dying struggles. This fable, however, altho very much used by the Chinese, was probably derived from an Indian source.

Another, which is purely Chinese, is remarkable for its subtlety. A tiger was making preparations to devour a fox, when the sly one claimed some consideration from the fact that he was superior to all other animals of the forest. "And if you want proof of the fact," he continued, "come with me and I will show you." They then walked together thru the forest, and all the other animals fled before them. The tiger, seeing this, glanced at his companion, and was struck with the lofty manner in which he waved the other animals off. "Verily," he said, "this is the king of beaosts"; and, being too stupid to see that he himself was the object of terror and respect, he decided not to attack the fox.

To show how difficult it is to alter bad habits when once contracted the Chinese have a much-used fable. An emperor who was penny-wise and pound-foolish ordered that in time of peace all war chargers should be employed in the mills. While peace lasted all was well; the horses went their ceaseless round, and flour was cheap; but when war broke out and the horses were ridden into the fight they began to describe circles, as if they were grinding corn. The result was that they were useless, and their riders were slain.

There is no perfect collection of Chinese fables. They must be sought and may be found anywhere in the voluminous literature of Cathay. The writings of Chuang Tse, for instance, fairly bristle with fables of a quaint order. Here is one which illustrates the evils of being called to rule. Chuang Tse was fishing in the sea when the Prince of Chiu sent two high officials to ask him to take charge of the administration of the state. Chuang Tse went on fishing, and, without turning his head, said: "I have heard that in Chiu there is a sacred tortoise which has been dead now some 3,000 years, and that the prince keeps this tortoise carefully enclosed in a chest on the altar of his ancestral temple. Now, would this tortoise rather be dead and have his remains venerated, or be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?" "It would rather be alive," replied the two officials, "and wagging its tail in the mud." "Begone," said Chuang Tse. "I, too, will wag my tail in the mud." Many a point did Chuang Tse score by an apt use of fable, either invented on the spur of the moment or drawn from ancient literature. It is said that on one occasion some one went to Hiu Tse, the prime minister of the Liang state, and said: "Chuang Tse has come. He wants to be minister in your place." At this Hiu Tse took fright and scoured the country for days and nights with search warrants to find him. Chuang Tse, hearing of this, strolled into Hiu Tse's presence and remarked: "In the south there was a bird—a phoenix; do you know it? It started from the South sea to fly to the North sea. Except on the wu-t'ung tree it would not alight. It would eat nothing but the fruit of the bamboo, nor drink anything but the purest spring water. An owl which had secured the carcass of a rat looked up as the phoenix flew by, and screeched him off. Are you not screeching at me over your kingdom of Liang?" Chuang Tse certainly scored that time.—New York Post.

A Puzzle to Solve.

"Atlas," read the teacher, "was the Titan who upheld the world on his shoulders." Whereupon little Walter unexpectedly made this inquiry:

"What did Atlas stand on?"—The Little Chronicle.

When the Rain Pops.

One day my 2-year-old sister was standing at the door while it was raining. Soon it began to hail, and she called to mama:

"Oh, mama, the rain is popping little ices!"—The Little Chronicle.