

GABRIEL and KING COTTON

A SIDE LIGHT ON THE PROBLEM OF HARVESTING A BUMPER CROP

BEHOLD, he comes, the young subject of the white-bearded, old king, King Cotton! Only a slim, good-natured black boy. Lazy? No, just loves to live and enjoy life. Gabri'l realizes he is dependent on his sovereign, but just then the King is very young, and small and puny. His Majesty is so tender that the chill air of spring withers him, and he droops until the sunshines bright and hot. Where is the sin of his young subject taking a day off? There is none.

Gabri'l makes a brave show to his mother, Aunt Rose, as he starts for the cotton field to chop, and chopping means 50 cents a day and rations. But Gabri'l's flesh is weak, and he knows where blackberries abound with their rich, waxy globules, and where they throw their long vines over the hillside. The rains have furrowed footholds in the yielding clay for the long heel of the chopper, and no banks were ever too high to climb or descend when once he had a view of the long, green trailers lying cool and moist with drops of dew.

Gabri'l has an eye, too, for the beauty of the new morning. He often hesitates before planting his celebrated heel down among the growth, and sometimes, but not always, picks aside a morning glory vine covered with delicate blue-cupped flowers, holds it between his thumb and first finger and gazes down in the well and drops it back in the tangled mass.

He looks at the jungle of vines and wonders if there are any snakes, casts his fears to the morning sun, and with a sigh of deep content wades in knee-deep among his new treasures.

He cannot forsake this slanting field of fortune. It is true he left Aunt Rose with the idea in her head that he was preparing to donate 50 cents and "findings" to the family fund. But his departure from duty illustrates how fate woe the thread.

Aunt Rose might cut that thread; Gabri'l never would. How could he help running right into a berry patch? One chopper less will not make much difference, and if it made all in the world it would be the same to Gabri'l. Already his leaky straw hat is half filled with berries and very soon he intends to pull up the red bank and cast himself on the grass under a fine hickory tree he happened to notice on the way to the field.

He enjoys lazily watching a colony of ants among their moundlike homes of brownish sand, and wonders why they are so busy and what they have to say to one another every time they meet and part.

He gazes at them a long time, and then turns over where the sun has a full fling at him. In turning he sees several turkey buzzards soaring high very high, in the blue air, circling round and round. They stay up there so long and look so lazy that he wonders if there is anything dead in the wood; he does not care if there is. "The sun is getting nearer and warmer, and Gabri'l succumbs to his inclination for a nap, which he takes forthwith.

He knows it is 12 o'clock from the long, lusty shout he hears from his friends in the cotton field, and he hears the deep sound of the dinner bell from the farmhouse. He rolls over and wipes his sweaty face on his shirt sleeves and casts his eyes on a large caterpillar that is creeping up and down on a low-hanging bough directly over him. Becoming tired of the caterpillar, he raises on his elbow and lies

down to a couple of jaybirds in a near tree and remembers it is Friday, their day for carrying sand to a warmer place. He has always heard jaybirds were addicted to that habit. There is a convenient rock, and he tries to kill one of the sand carriers, but misses it and the rock lodges in a large, thick grapevine.

"Skinning the Cat."

The grapevine reminds Gabri'l of something, for he slouches over to it and begins to try the strength of the largest vine, and from that solemnly commences to skin the cat, first forward and then backward, all done very leisurely and with no apparent pleasure, for it is too quiet and lonely, and a soul in sight except the noisy, insolent bluejays.

After skinning the cat until his slim arms ache and are almost out of joint, he remembers something else and stands on his woolly head right in the warm sand and then turns somersaults and throws himself around on his hands after the fashion of the man in the circus ring.

He expects a sound thrashing from his mother that night when he goes home and she finds out how he has spent the day. Yes, he knows she will learn all about it—his mother asks him "sich sarchin' questions," he complains.

In the fall Gabri'l has just as much pleasure when he joins the ranks of the cotton pickers.

He leaves home with the crocus sack strung around his neck and dangling from his side like a straw colored, weather beaten pouch.

Usually he goes with bare feet and his splayed toes make distinct marks on the dew wet ground and his bare legs are slashed with the moisture from the dank grasses.

His trousers are pulled up quite near the armpits and are frequently held firmly in place by means of little pegs of wood or thorns that are thrust through the cheap, home-made "gal-luses." The collar of his shirt is rarely ever buttoned and is thrown back to give his throat the full benefit of the winds and the rays of the sun that will soon pour on his head. His hat has reached the stage where it might be said to have gone to seed. Gabri'l was never in a hurry in his happy life. He takes apparent pleasure in stopping some time before he begins his day's work. He needs to do a little tightening on the white homespun suspenders, and to that end leans one side with craned neck looking down at his waistband and working diligently with the little wooden peg.

He swings the cotton bag from side to side, and often ends that part of the performance by throwing it over his sugar-loaf hat much as he would a tambourine.

All this is done before he leaves the old horse lot, and then some time is consumed in getting to the white field. There are so many things to delay him. There are the flaming sumac berries—he must taste; he sticks out his tongue and touches them and walks on.

There are poke berries that can be mashed until the bloodlike juice trickles in a gory stream on the ground. He comes across the nest of his mother's old domineer hen. It's the first time he knew where it was. Well, he intends to have eggs to eat that night, he says, "ef de Lawd spare um an' mammy don't keep de eggs fur settin'." Haw bushes have to be sampled and occasionally a long string made of them and wound around his neck, where they can be easily had during the day. Frog stools can be stepped on, picked up and examined. There are sensitive plants with pink hotted flowers that can and must be seen and touched, also why are they sensitive? Their striking ways must be stroked until there are no more to close before he lies on to the scene of labor.

He tests his voice until the welkin rings with the sound from his lusty throat. A frog or two gets in his way, and this affords some amusement.

It is a happy ducky that runs across a vine full of brown shriveled, maypops. He keeps an eye on them! It is too early in the day to eat them, but they will come in for a share of his attention.



TYPE OF OLD "MAMMY" PICKER Stark Photo

INTERIOR OF MODERN COTTON GIN, ONE BALE IS GINNED EVERY FIFTEEN MINUTES Stark Photo

careed hounds. Here and Kingo, to the back of the cart, throw an old checked quilt on top of the trim bale of cotton and on that a few bundles of fodder, and Gabri'l and his tall father, Jack Tomlin, are off for town to sell the cotton and spend the day.

That memorable time is dwelt on by Gabri'l for weeks, and he is the envy of the other boys on the farm who are less fortunate about getting to town. Gabri'l and his old grandfather, Uncle Mose, are pretty good friends, and it is nip and tuck when they get together and begin to tell tales of the present and past in the cotton business. Gabri'l proudly and still unevenly looks around and then leans forward and says:

"Granddaddy, I declar' to gracious de day I went to town wid daddy I seed a buggy gwine long de road jes' lick-otly clip. I jes' hopes I may die if it have a single blessed mule hitched to it. Granddaddy, I tell you, it was plum flyin' an' it didn't make no fuss. It like ter run plum over me an' daddy an' Tebo and de red steer an' Hero an' Kingo. A man wuz thro'n' sum paper at him an' another man jes' sot an' luffed an' rid an' rid, an' I seed you gran'daddy, dey never driv' nothin', but dey jest fair'y fled."

Uncle Mose looked at Gabri'l several seconds and then delivered a warning: "Gabri'l, I'm putty nigh 85 y'ars, but I ain' nuyver seed a nigger ez young ez you wuz ter tell sich sick lies, an' whut's de wuz part, tell dem wen dey ain't no 'casion fur dem. Ev'ry time you go wid your pa ter town I notis you cum back ter de cotton wuz gwine ter be burnt to a plum charcoal. Ef talkin' wuz stop you from dat on-rodly sin de bresh man, an' ef Rose don't larrup you fur whut you hes seed de day to me, I wuz gwine ter tell you. An' I will take de rod an' whate you'r back mosey."

This threat reduced Gabri'l to the verge of a fit, and it was only when he solemnly raised his eyes apparently to heaven and protested that he hoped he might drop dead in his tracks where he stood if he did not see that very buggy with no mule that Uncle Mose pointed to, that he unwillingly admitted that "Gabri'l moutler seed whut he s'posed wuz a buggy wid nothin' to it, but he know'd dat cotton niggers wuz sich fools dat dey eyes got 'clipped sumtimes an' dey really warn't no tellin' whut dey think dey seed."

"I wouldn't tell Rose de time, but de nex' time dere wouldn't be ernut switches on de wile goose plum trees fur ter use, ef I hear any more sech sinful talk."

From the conversation from him, Gabri'l artfully begs Uncle Mose to tell him about the time when he, Uncle Mose, was a boy and how they ginned cotton. Gabri'l declared it had been so long since he had heard Uncle Mose talk he had forgotten all about it.

From the fierce tone Uncle Mose falls into softened mood and a saddened look creeps into his face while he lives over his old days when he belonged to Marse Sid Goodwin. He makes Gabri'l little two-wheeled cart, tie the two long-

One Memorable Event.

There is another day in the life of Gabri'l that is marked with intense pleasure. It is the day that he rises before it is light, helps his father hitch old Tebo and the red steer to the little two-wheeled cart, tie the two long-

the time when the gins were run by fastening four mules to the long beams under the old gin house and how little negro boys mounted the end of the beams and cracked the whip all day, how the mules and the boys got drunk from going round and round so long. And Gabri'l's eyes grow big with astonishment when he listens to the fun Uncle Mose-used to have jumping in the lint rooms and burying himself in the soft, fleecy cotton. Then Uncle Mose enlarges on the old screw for packing cotton, and says that "the press wuz plum full of we boys, and we jest trompled on de cotton tell it wuz packed down, an' den de Beck mule wuz hitched to de beam an' driv' aroun' tell it was packed jam down, an' s'w'd up an' de bale was den ready to be put in de ole cotton house."

Labor Solly Needed.

Much complaint comes from the South as to the inadequacy of the labor supply in harvesting the cotton crop. Bitter criticism is made that the negroes, in many cases, will not do their best work—that they are lazy and not to be depended upon in gathering a great crop satisfactorily. Although this is one of the red-letter years for everything that grows in the ground, and the cotton crop is called extraordinarily large, still it does not quite come up to that of last year.

It is true that more cotton might be gathered if there were an abundance of trustworthy labor hands to work in the fields and gin houses. Still, cotton is king in the South. According to figures given, the total crop of the year ending September is 11,219,800 bales, as against 13,253,841 of last year.

This is certainly an enormous yield of the fiber. The expert figures show 6,716,351 bales. Of this, 114,872 bales were shipped to Canada by rail and 4,852,552 sent to the spinners, leaving the great remainder for the market. According to New Orleans authority there has been a big discrepancy between future prices in New York and New Orleans and spot prices in the Southern spot market. Middling cotton was recently quoted in New Orleans at a price basis of 19 cents a pound, while this is the prevailing price throughout the Southern States. In other words, spot prices are not only above parity with futures in New York, but they are also above the New Orleans contracts themselves. This was the situation in August. Later the cyclones came, with terrific rains and ocean floods, which, together with the wind, greatly damaged the crop along the Gulf coast of New Orleans.

Reports from Texas are very encouraging to the cotton growers of that great State. Shipments begin there very early and large consignments give the prospect there a great increase of ready money.

Blakie resorted to verse. He wrote a song for the street gamins to sing. "If you want to get a roast, Just set up a hitching post, etc. No county official could appear on the street without being met by the anti-hitching-post crowd. The man who in his indignation attempted to spank a little hoodlum who had been particularly exasperating and offensive, was so badly handled by the crowd that gathered, as well as by Blakie's paper, that he would tell Rose de time, but de nex' time dere wouldn't be ernut switches on de wile goose plum trees fur ter use, ef I hear any more sech sinful talk."

When the campaign opened Blakie imported a barrel of hitching-post buttons. He had them fastened all about the city by the words, "Nothing too small to steal." Veters throughout the county fought for the privilege of wearing them. Republicans went through the form of renominating their war horses, who far from seeking nomination almost had to be glued on the ticket to keep them from bolting. The Democrats named anybody they chose. But there was nothing to it; the anybodyes were on the right side of the hitching-post question. The hitching-post crowd was scarcely heard from.

The Republican paper there spent the following ten years telling the people that Blakie's paper was charging \$7200 a year for doing the county printing, although the Republican paper had never had the face to charge more than \$3000. The Republicans also demonstrated that the two quarter sections of desert that Blakie's firm directors had sold the county for \$350 an acre wasn't worth ten. But it did no good. The anti-hitching-post crowd continued in office and so far as I know are in yet. They are, at least, if they have stuck to whistling, grafting and left the retail to amateurs."

A HITCHING POST CAMPAIGN

By Franklin Hichborn.

"CHARGE an office-holder with stealing public funds," said the Practical Politician reflectively, "and nine chances to one the public will re-elect him, but make him ridiculous by connecting him with a petty graft and he couldn't be elected pound-master."

The Reformer for Reform's Sake Only looked his doubts; so the Practical Politician continued convincingly: "Nobody understood this better than poor, dead Charley Blakie. Blakie, as he was called, was one of those old-time newspaper men whose tendency to stir things up kept them constantly on the move. He had been crowded out westward to Phoenix, Arizona, where he made life so interesting that he was pushed over the line into California, thankful that a mere State line and not a rope was involved in his exit. But he failed to profit by his Arizona experience. San Francisco soon became too small to hold him and he was crowded down to a certain interior town stirring things up for the purpose of getting a Republican ring out of the Courthouse.

"Now, that Republican ring had no business to have its leaders with their noses in the political trough, for the town was at that time overwhelmingly Democratic. But a split in the ranks of Democracy let in their opponents, and once in they stuck through four elections. As the fifth election approached the Democrats felt the crying need of stirring things up. Blakie's well-established reputation as a stirrer got him his job. He was imported to stir, and he stirred. But before he got down to business he almost lost his job, because he was looking for something petty to stir, while his employers were looking for big eteals.

The paper was one of those corporation affairs governed by a board of di-

rectors, each cock sure that he was especially cut out by providence for the newspaper business. Blakie had a hard time with the bunch. They brought him some evidence of graft, and many libel suits in the embryo, all of which Blakie succeeded in corraling before hatching. Among the grafts was that of a steal in the sale to the county of granite intended for the construction of the new Courthouse. Said granite had turned out sandstone and pretty bum sandstone at that. But the county had paid for it, although it could be used for nothing, and was finally piled up back of the jail, a monument to methods which should have been enough to turn the rascals out. But although exploited in the Democratic papers through four campaigns the pile had stood there without apparent effect upon the voters, who seemed content to keep the Republican rascals in and the Democratic rascals out."

The Reformer for Reform's Sake Only, thoroughly interested by this time, nodded appreciatively. He had been through many such disappointing campaigns.

"So persistent were the Democratic directors," the politician went on, "that the sandstone for a fifth time be made to furnish Democratic thunder, that Blakie finally went over to the jail to look it up. To his surprise he found two stonecutters who were doing time for some petty offense busily engaged in cutting up the soft stuff into queer-looking objects that resembled hitching posts, but made of the brittle sandstone, such posts were, of course, useless. But on questioning the prisoners Blakie found that the stones were intended for that very purpose; that the Sheriff was having the work done and proposed to present every county official with a fancy carved hitching post.

"Blakie could scarcely conceal his

delight; the long looked for opportunity had come; to use his own expression, he had the Republican ring skinned to a finish; he had caught it at petty stealing.

"However, Blakie had the greatest difficulty in keeping his directors from queering his plans. That sandstone, the directors insisted with tiresome repetition, had cost the county \$5000; it was useless; the steel—already exposed four times without results—should be exposed again. And so on, and so on, and so on. Because he wouldn't stir their way the directors began to doubt Blakie's integrity. About the time they had become convinced that Blakie was standing in with the Courthouse ring the posts had all been finished, delivered and set up. Before the house of the Sheriff stood two, and before the house of the Auditor a like number, and so on down through the list of county officials to the smallest deputy county clerk. Blakie had pictures taken of the various hitching post ornamented houses and then prepared to open up. He had something to open up on.

"But again did he run up against the opposition of his directors. 'Those posts,' they insisted, 'aren't worth six hits a hundred. That isn't the point. The point is that there was a steal of \$5000 in the purchase of that sandstone. Suppose the Sheriff has had two prisoners cut the stuff into hitching posts. What of it? He relieved county property of much cumbersome rubbish. It's the steal that we ought to expose.'

"But," insisted Blakie, 'the point is that they'll steal anything, even to a useless piece of sandstone, and use prisoners fed by the county to do the work for them. I tell you that we can turn 'em out on the hitching post issue. You got me down here to stir things up. Now let me do the stirring.'

"The upshot of it all was that Blakie

had his way, the directors firmly resolved that if nothing came of it to fire him and get a better balanced man.

"But Blakie was sure of his ground. His first hitching post article was the sensation of the day. He said nothing about the \$5000 steal—and hoped most devotedly that it would be forgotten—but he did have estimates from experts of the value of the county's sandstone, who placed it as six-bits a ton. The stones weighed 200 pounds a ton. Ten to the ton, they each represented a steal of material valued at 75 cents. The cost to the county for feeding the prisoners while engaged in the work was 15 cents to each post, so the steal was on a 234-cent basis. This usefulness of the posts for practical purposes was gone into. It was shown that a horse tied to one of them would, by throwing back his head, break the post short off. Two pictures accompanied the article. One of the fine new residence of the Sheriff, a hitching post on either side of the driveway; the other showing the home of the smallest Deputy County Clerk, with a hitching post ornamenting each side of his humble gate. "From the highest to the lowest," read the caption under the two cuts.

"The town read, saw and boiled over. For the first time in their popular career members of the Courthouse ring were that night hooted on the streets. Crowds gathered in front of their residences to see the posts for themselves and pass sarcastic comment; comment that the wives and daughters of the households heard, and then went off into bedrooms and corners in the sitting-rooms to shed tears. Nothing takes the life out of a man like that.

"The Recorder, kept awake by his wife weeping, and having a pretty thin skin himself, in the darkness of midnight got up to help Blakie along. Unable to bear the thought of the two posts in front of his house and the scornful members of his neighbors, and besides, being strongly urged by his wife, got out of bed, took down the posts and laid them under a stack of hay. One of Blakie's lynx-eyed reporters saw him do it. Blakie the next day played up this feature of the situation. He had a cartoon of the Recorder laboriously concealing the offending post under a haystack. He

also printed two pictures of the Recorder's house, one showing the stone in place. This he labeled Before Exposure. The other picture showed the house without the posts, and bore the caption, 'After Exposure.' Again the town went delicious with the excitement. Everybody laughed long and hard at the cartoon and the pictures and the semi-humorous way in which the Recorder's midnight work was described—and determined, even as they laughed, that such a pack of rogues should be turned out root and branch, just as soon as the ballot-box could be reached.

"That night the Recorder's house was the center of attraction. There was more nerve-shattering comment outside, and a whole lot more weeping within. The unhappy official found himself losing caste in his own family.

"To keep things going after interest in the Recorder's misdeed died out, Blakie resorted to verse. He wrote a song for the street gamins to sing. 'If you want to get a roast, Just set up a hitching post, etc. No county official could appear on the street without being met by the anti-hitching-post crowd. The man who in his indignation attempted to spank a little hoodlum who had been particularly exasperating and offensive, was so badly handled by the crowd that gathered, as well as by Blakie's paper, that he would tell Rose de time, but de nex' time dere wouldn't be ernut switches on de wile goose plum trees fur ter use, ef I hear any more sech sinful talk.'

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A VERY ANCIENT JEWISH COLONY IN CHINA

FOR more than two thousand years there has been a colony of Jews established at Kailifengtu, China. The exact date of their entrance into the country is not known, but it is supposed from a tablet found in their synagogue at that place that they must have appeared there about 500 B. C., although it may have been as late as 58 A. D. It is not until the third or fourth century that they are mentioned in Chinese annals, when their synagogue is referred to by a Chinese writer as a "heaven spirit monastery." Western Persia is given as their starting point, by which Persia is probably meant, because of the number of Persian words which are used by the Chinese Hebrews.

Mr. Ezra, who is an authority on the subject, thinks that there is no good reason for the theory that the Chinese Hebrews are descended from the ten tribes. There are many references to these Hebrews from the year 578. An Arabian writer mentions them as one of the sects that perished in a general massacre at Khanfu, but in 956 and 988 there are records of the Chinese district officials conferring honors on Hebrews, and in 1163 the erection of a synagogue was begun in Kailifengtu. Hebrews were invited to Kailifengtu to join the imperial army. In the fifteenth century there were many Hebrew communities in China. The best

Showing How Ridiculing Small Things in Politics May Achieve Big Results

information we have about these communities comes through the Jesuits, who entered Peking at the end of the sixteenth century.

The discovery of these Chinese Hebrews was made by Father Ricci, one of the first Jesuits to enter China.

Early in the seventeenth century, one summer's day in Peking, a visitor, prompted by rumors of the arrival of certain foreigners who worshipped a single God, and yet were not Mohammedans, called on Father Ricci. The missionary, noticing the difference of features from the ordinary Chinese, his head bowed, and his hands clasped in his knees before a picture of the Virgin with the Infant Jesus and St. John the Baptist. Near by was another picture representing four of the apostles.

The visitor smiled also, remarking, "We in China do reverence to our ancestors. This is Rebekah with her sons Jacob and Esau, but as to the other picture, why make obeisance to only four sons of Jacob? Were there not twelve?"

Returning to the former apartment, mutual explanations followed and an unforeseen solution ensued. The stranger was a Hebrew, Ngal by name, who had come to Peking from Kailifengtu to procure literary honors. He stated that in his city there were some twelve families of Israelites, with a fair synagogue, in which they preserved a roll of the law more than 400 years old, and

who far from seeking nomination almost had to be glued on the ticket to keep them from bolting. The Democrats named anybody they chose. But there was nothing to it; the anybodyes were on the right side of the hitching-post question. The hitching-post crowd was scarcely heard from.

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The condition of the Chinese Hebrews has been declining very fast since that time. A missionary in 1844 found them in an impoverished condition. They had been obliged to tear down a part of their synagogue to sell it. Finally, some thirty years later, a society for the rescue of these people was established, and in response to an urgent invitation eight Chinese Hebrews left Kailifengtu for Shanghai.

They arrived in that city in March, 1902, where they were cordially received by the Hebrew colony. Quoted as to their observance of the ancient religion, these Hebrews admitted that their faith was rapidly declining.

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