

take her; says she ain't no bother; says she ain't that sort; says she's a lady. That's what he says! but don't tell me. Drat sich ladies! She's one of that circus lot.

'Oh!' says Jemima Ann, in a tone of suppressed rapture; 'a circus actress! Lor' you don't say so.'

'And she's got a little girl,' goes on Mrs. Hopkins, in an irritated tone, as if that were the last straw, and rubbing her nose in a vexed way; 'she's a Miss Mimi—something, and she's got a little girl! Think o' that. Rogers says it's all right. Rogers says all them sort does that way; marries and raises families, you know, and stays miss right along. This one's a widow, he says. And he wants me to take her in; says he knows I've got a spare room, and would like to oblige a charming young lady and a dear little child—not to speak of an old neighbour like him. Yar! I'll see 'em all furder first—the whole bilin'!

'Oh, Aunt Samanthy, do let her come!' says Jemima Ann. 'I should love a circus lady. Next to a duchess, an actress or a nun is the most romantic people in any story.'

'No, I sha'n't,' Mrs. Hopkins snappishly responds; 'not if I know myself and my own sex when I see 'em. When first I started in the boardin' line I took in females—ladies they called themselves, too, and table boarded 'em—dressmakers, workin' girls, and that—and I know all about it. One woman was more trouble in a day than six foundry hands in a week. Always a hot iron wanted please, an' a little bilin' water to rince out a handkerchief or a pair of stockings in a basin, and cups o' tea promiscuous, and finding fault continual with the strength of the butter and the weakness of the coffee. So I soon sent that lot packing, and made up my mind to sink or swim with the foundry hands. Give a man a latch-key, lots of soap and water, put his boots and hair oil where he can lay his hands on 'em, let him have beefsteak and onions, and plenty of 'em, for his breakfast, and though he may grumble about the victuals, he don't go mussin' with his linen at all sorts of improper hours. I won't have the circus woman, and that's all about it.'

'Did you tell Mr. Rogers so?' asks Jemima Ann, rather disappointed.

'Mr. Rogers is a yidyt; he wouldn't take no for an answer. 'I'll step round this evenin', says the grinning old fool, 'and bring the lady with me, Mrs. Hopkins. You won't be able to say no to her—no one ever is. I know the supper and six and twenty foundry hands is lyin' heavy on your mind at the present moment,' says he, 'and your

nat'el sweetness of disposition,' he says, 'tis a trifle cruddled by 'em. Yes; I never see such an old rattle-tongue. But he'll see! Let him fetch his—— Lord sakes, Jemima Ann! there's them men, and not so much as a drop o' tea put to dror! Run like mad, and light the gas!'

Jemima Ann literally obeys. She flies up stairs like a whirlwind, sets a match to the hall gas, and has it blazing as the front door is flung wide, and the foundry hands, black, hungry, noisy, muddy, troop in, and up stairs, or out back to the general 'wash'us.'

There is no more time for talking, for thinking, hardly for breathing—such a multiplicity of things are to be done, and all, it seems, to be done at once. Hot water, soap, towels—the tocain of war rings loudly up stairs and down and in their various chambers. Gas is lit, the long table set, knives rubbed, bread cut, meat sliced, chairs placed—all is confusion, Babel condensed.

Jemima Ann waits. Coarse jokes rain about her, a dozen voices call on her at once, demanding a dozen different things, and she is—somethinged—at intervals, for lacking as many hands as Briareus. But mostly it all falls harmless and half-unheard. She is regretting vaguely that lost circus lady. Since she may never be a duchess, nor even, in all human probability, a 'my lady,' it strikes Mrs. Hopkins' niece the next best thing would be to turn circus rider, or become a gipsy and tell fortunes. To wear a scarlet cloak, to wander about the 'merry green wood,' to tell fortunes at fairs, to sleep under a cart or a hedge, in the 'hotel of the beautiful stars'—this would be bliss! Not that scarlet is in the least becoming to her, and to sleep under a hedge—say, on a night like this—would not be quite unadulterated bliss—might even be conducive to premature rheumatism. But to go jumping along one's life path through paper hoops, on flying Arab steeds, in gauze and spangles,—oh! that would be a little ahead of perpetual tea-pouring, bread-cutting, bed-making for six-and-twenty loud-voiced, rough-looking foundry men.

She has been to a circus just once, she remembers, and saw some lovely creatures, in very short petticoats, galloping round a sawdust ring in dizzying circles, on the bare backs of five Arab steeds at once, leaping over banners and through fiery hoops, and kissing finger-tips, and throwing radiant smiles to the audience.

Jemima Ann feels she could never reach such a pitch of perfection as that. Her legs (if these members may be thus lightly spoken of) are not of that sylph-like sort a

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