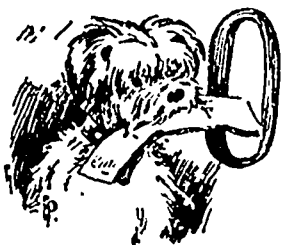


## ❖ A Monkey Theatre ❖

A Day with Professor Wormwood.

BY FAITH FENTON.



NE: two! There was yet an hour by the city clocks before the performance would begin; but a throng of little folk and big were waiting for the Pavilion doors to open; while across the grass, thro' the gateways, and down each street, they were coming.

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling Of merry crowds, at pitching and hustling, Small feet were pattering, little shoes clattering, Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, And like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering, On came the children running.

Certainly had the Pied Piper to compete with the Monkey Theatre his magic flute would have failed. The whisk of a monkey's tail has more fascination for the average child than the music of a score of flutes.

In the meantime, and behind the scenes, the little animals were being made ready for the performance. Behind the heavy stage curtain an impromptu rehearsal was in progress that would have given the fast assembling audience considerable amusement.

Professor Wormwood's troupe consists of about twenty-four small dogs and monkeys, with the exception of two large dogs—a fine poodle and a young Newfoundland.

The little animals are of necessity kept in box cages at night and when travelling. They are, therefore, glad to be upon the stage, where they have space, much freedom of action, and plenty to see.

As I came upon the stage, behind the dropped curtain, the little creatures had received their final brushing and washing from the attendants, and came running up to Prof. Wormwood in a delighted state of freedom.

It was pretty to see their affection for him. They sprang to his arms, climbed upon his shoulder, searched his pockets, and chattered to him in language as expressive as ours, mayhap, if we but had the clue. One little lady, Boo-boo, gave him the prettiest of greetings; leaping away from the attendant she sprang upon the Professor's lap, put her small black arms around his neck, stroked his face, holding it between her cold little hands, all the time chattering in inflections that intimated a world of confidences. And the Professor answered her smiling:

"Yes, yes, Boo-boo of course. Are you going to be a good girl to day? If you are I shall find a candy for you."

He searched his pocket, and in a moment there was a leap from chairs and perches, and a general descent upon him from Charlie, Pete, Uncle; while the little dog-faced monkey, whose one-time accident left her with a limp, hitched herself across the floor in regular baby fashion. They were all satisfied with a taste of candy, then sent back to their seats.

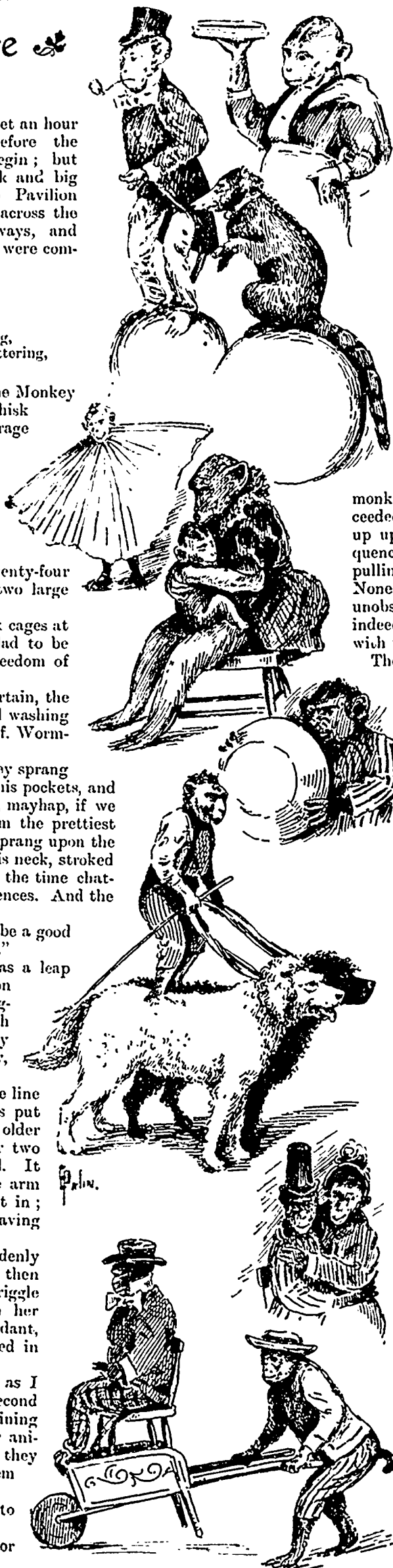
The task of dressing them came next, and from the line of clothes which hung over the wires, the attendants put on the little trousers, shirts, coats and hats. The older monkeys of the troupe submitted quietly; but one or two new ones objected as emphatically as a naughty child. It was amusing to see one wilful little dame shake one arm out of her small sleeve, while the other was being put in; turning her face away, giving angry shrieks, and behaving generally like an wilful two-year-old.

It was even more amusing to see her become suddenly submissive, accept the situation, as it were; and then when the attendant left her fully dressed, to slyly wriggle off the little coat, letting it slip by degrees from her shoulders, giving sharp cunning glances at the attendant, and assuming a most innocent pose if his eye strayed in her direction.

"I bought her on Tuesday," said the Professor, as I directed his attention toward her. "This is only the second time she has been on the stage. Our first step in training is to accustom them to their clothes and to the other animals. We let them come at once upon the stage, and they soon grow to feel at home. After that I take them in hand."

He had picked up a small white poodle that crept to his feet, and nursed it as we talked.

"Poor little Pansy," he said, caressing her. "Poor



little blind girl. She is such an intelligent and affectionate little creature," he added. "She used to do lots of good work before she lost her sight. Now we just let her do a little. She waltzes prettily and rides one of the larger dogs."

A mischievous young monkey in striped frock who was playing about the wires, had been watching the Professor and Pansy, with a keen saucy air, now he slipped swiftly down the poles, ran across and gave Pansy's soft white curls a "vicious little pull. Then ran away again.

"Charlie, you villain," cried Professor Wormwood, with a laugh. "He's the scamp of the troupe. Just a baby fellow yet, and as full of mischief as—well as a monkey may be. There's no harm in him though, only fun."

During the performance Charlie and Boo-boo are left free to run about. From my corner behind the scenes I could see Charlie's tricks. He took delight in swinging on the wire, and letting the long cord attached to his collar dangle in the eyes of the dogs sitting on the bench below. He surprised the Newfoundland by leaping suddenly down on his back, giving his ear a tweak and bounding away again.

When an attendant knotted the cord of another monkey or a dog to a chair back, Charlie immediately proceeded to loosen it with his sharp little teeth, then rushed up upon the wires, from which he watched the consequences of his trick. He never lost an opportunity of pulling another monkey's tail, or tipping him off the wire. None of these tricks were on the programme, and were unobservable to the audience. Charlie seemed to be indeed the practical joker of the troupe, yet a favorite with the men.

The auditorium had filled rapidly as we talked, and looking through the curtain we saw a house packed to the topmost gallery.

The Professor put Pansy upon her chair and moved among the animals, patting them, speaking to one and another.

"They know when the curtain is up as well as I do," he said. "Ready, little ones? Over to the table then."

Six of the little animals, monkeys and poodles, ran over to the toy table and took their places. The remainder straightened up, the dogs sat erect, only Charlie hastened to give one more sly tweak of a poodle's tail, before the curtain rose.

They perform their tricks willingly; watching from the wings, they seemed to me eager, rather than otherwise. They like the applause and the movement, and are incited by each other. Again they always look for the Professor's approving pat when they have done well, and sometimes the bit of candy that is always found in his pockets, or in those of the attendants.

The programme went on rapidly, monkeys and poodles finished their tea party. Then they jumped, turned somersaults, swung, walked the tight wire, the little dogs bearing their full share of the entertainment.

After the performance the animals have their supper. Bread and milk at night always, through the day vegetables and fruit in variety. It is interesting to see how well they agree.

We stood among them and watched their relish of the simple food. Monkeys and dogs eating out of the same dishes. The monkeys had the advantage, inasmuch as they first filled their pouches, and afterward swallowed as much as they could. Some beautiful snow white puppies, fairy dogs in size and purity, together with a baby monkey, creep about uncertainly, but with great content, and the larger dogs and monkeys do them no harm.

I have interviewed various trainers of trick animals, but never one who impressed me more favorably than Professor Wormwood. He is a college graduate, a trained elocutionist and a skilful veterinary surgeon, and, best of all, he loves his little creatures.

We had several long talks together, and next month I will give some interesting details of the Professor's own life, and his experiences in training.