

I was in a pretty fix. My business engagements had been made on the understanding that I would catch this particular train; we had hardly more than enough time to cover the distance; and here was my driver rushing over the fields to a circus like a stage-struck schoolboy, leaving me to fume and swear as I chose!

In a few minutes Elijah was lost in the little crowd of people that stood in front of the stage. I was absolutely helpless. My hand was too sore to allow me to drive at a fast pace. I looked all around for a man to help me, but there was no one to be seen. I shouted at the top of my voice, but the strains of the band, small as it was, prevented the people from hearing me.

Minute after minute went by, and my hope of being able to catch my train faded, flickered, and went out. I allowed the mare to walk on in the direction of the town, looking around every now and then to see whether my hare-brained Jehu was following me.

At length I saw him coming along the road, not running, but walking at a tremendous pace, while his great arms hung loosely by his sides. As soon as he was within earshot my wrath boiled over.

"You infernal scoundrel!" I shouted. "What do you mean by leaving me in the lurch like this? You knew I couldn't drive, and there was neither man nor boy to be seen. I have missed my train and spoiled my day's work through your ridiculous folly. I have a great mind—"

I stopped. The man did not seem to hear me. His eyes had a strange wondering expression, the muscles of his face were drawn, his thoughts were far away, and now and then a muttered word or two escaped his lips. Evidently Elijah was not quite himself. To scold him would have been foolish; in fact, he seemed incapable of attending to what I said.

He mounted to his place without a word of apology or explanation, and drove on faster than before. But although the mare did her best, the task was too much for her. The train glided out of the station as we turned into the station-yard.

As it happened, the adjoining hotel was kept by an old acquaintance of mine, a Mrs. Grainger, and I told Elijah to put up the mare and get her some meal and water, for she was a bit blown. Then I went into the bar parlor to while away the time, for a good hour had to elapse before another train was due. Before long the landlady made her appearance, and I told her of the trick Elijah had played me, adding that I half doubted whether the man was in the possession of his right senses.

"Indeed, sir, it scarcely seems as if he were," said Mrs. Grainger. "Last week he served a gentleman just the same trick, and I'm told that if a circus comes within thirty miles of Heddington, Elijah must visit it, though he should have to walk night and day to do it."

It was evident that the man must have some strong motive for acting in such a way. My curiosity was excited; and as I had nothing to do for an hour or more, I resolved to try whether I could make Elijah tell me his story.

Going into the stable yard, I found my man seated on an upturned pail, his elbows on his knees, and his head between his hands.

"Come into the bar and have a drink after your drive," I said to him.

He looked at me with lack-lustre eyes, as if trying to remember who I was, for several seconds. Then, pulling himself together, he rose, touched his hat, and followed me into the bar-parlor.

"You seemed very much interested in the circus we passed today," I observed, when glasses of brandy and water had been put before us. "Was there anything remarkable about it?"

For fully two minutes he made no reply. Then, without any further questioning from me, he answered, as if I had spoken but the instant before.

"Interestin' it was to me. I once belonged to a circus."

"Indeed? I always fancied you had been a professional athlete at one time. Is it long since you gave up a roving life?"

"I forget; twelve, thirteen—no, fourteen years."

"And why did you leave it?"

He turned and looked at me, and his face was so strange—so full of horror, of grief, mingled, as it seemed to me, with something like ferocity, that I hastened to apologise for my question and beg the man not to answer me. But he paid no attention.

"Why did I leave the circus?" he said to himself, as if debating whether he should answer my question or not. "Why did I leave it? My God! Why didn't I die there and then?"

It was by this time getting dark, and I think the darkness encouraged him to go on. At any rate he soon began to speak in a low hurried tone, as if he were afraid to hear what he had to say. It was evidently a relief to him to pour out his story into a human ear. I give it, as nearly as possible, as he told it to me.

"From my youth up," he said, "I've been what's known in the profession as a strong man. I used to break chains and let men stand on me and jump on me and break iron bolts on anvils placed on my chest. Nothing ever hurt me, and I could do things that would surprise you, sir."

"I was still a young man when I joined the World-famous Cirque and Star Theatre of Varieties. We went about the country, and did fairly well. One of us was a clever conjuror, another did the tumbling business, and so on. There were several lady members of the troupe—one danced, one was a 'medium' and one was an equestrienne. The lady rider's name was Clytie. She was the best and most fearless horsewoman I ever saw. Only a small figure, sir—but there, I can't go on with it."

Elijah suddenly stopped, and seemed disinclined to continue his narrative.

"Never mind her various charms, Elijah," said I. "We will suppose her to have been the most lovely, most captivating creature—"

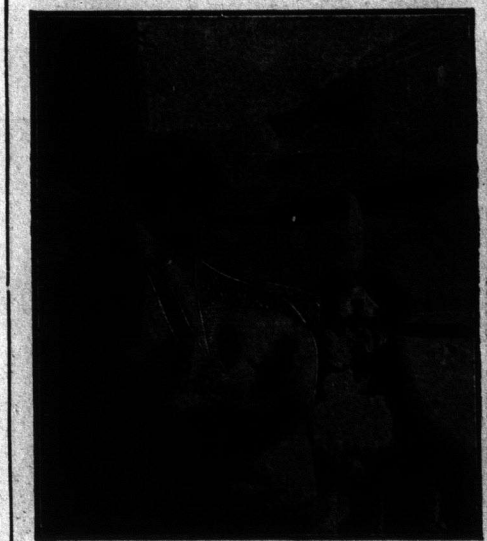
I suddenly stopped, for the man had slowly turned his head, and sat gazing at me with an indescribable look on his face. For the moment I was literally terrified by his expression. The words died away on my lips.

"Believe me, Elijah, I had no intention

of hurting your feelings" I stammered out.

My companion nodded twice or thrice, with a queer solemnity, and turned away his face. Presently I heard the sound of his voice again:

"She was very young, they told me, when she joined the troupe. Her father had been a musician, and they said he had been a gentleman. Anyway, the girl looked as if she had gentle blood in her veins. She was small, as I told you, small and slim, with a tiny face and big wistful eyes. She was like a child, but she was nineteen years old. I loved her



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from the first, but it was a long time before I could make her like me. My feats of strength, that I thought she ought to admire, only frightened her, and I couldn't so much as win a smile from her. I had a rival, I knew very well—no less a man than our manager—Sims was his name. He did his best to keep me and the girl apart, for he loved her himself. He was a big stout man, nearly as big as I am, half German by birth, and by nature a slave-driver. That's what he was—a slave-driver, and we were the slaves, Clytie and me and the rest.

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TIME TABLE			
June 2	REDCLIFFE	June	OLDS
" 3	MEDICINE HAT	" 10	INNISFAIR
" 4	BOW ISLAND	" 11	RED DEER
" 5	TABER	" 12	LACOMBE
" 6	LETHBRIDGE	" 13	POWELL
" 7	STERLING	" 14	WETASKIWIN
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