

in that rig ter morrer, fer I'm goin' too."

The Deacon further surprised his eldest son by unbending enough to relate some of his former exploits, when he was the "limberest man in two counties."

IV.

Next morning they all made an early start,—the young people greatly delighted with the prospect of the show.

The Deacon tried to put on the air of a sort of paternal sheriff, conducting his children to execution. But through all his veneer of sternness he showed as much eagerness as the youngest of the party, though he was bothered now and again by the remarks and questions of certain of his admirers, whom he now began almost to hate.

"Aint goin' ter the show, air ye, Deacon; of course not; you wouldn't be goin';" or, "Aint this awful, this goin' ter sech things! Goin' in ter town, Deacon?"

And his dignified attempt to say, "I am goin' ter look after the young uns," was truly heroic to behold.

But he was thankful that these encounters were few, for most of the people, like himself, were travelling circus-wards, without any qualms of conscience.

That was a memorable day to the Deacon. Never did he seem to have experienced so much in all his existence, but he felt sadly out of place, and the shocked look of so many of his congregation was a continual mortification to his spirit. He started as if shot when the band played or the animals roared. But the climax of his wonder was reached when the "injury-rubber" man came into the ring and performed on a carpet his astonishing feats.

The Deacon seemed like a boy again. He was entranced. The man did (it was no lie) sit down and deliberately put his leg over his shoulder with his hands. The Deacon trembled for fear the leg would refuse to be returned to its normal position, but no. It was with a sigh of wonder and relief that the Deacon saw the feat successfully performed.

After that all was tame to him. Men might walk on the ceiling with their heads down. Damsels might ride six horses at once and jump through endless vistas of papered hoops. Elephants might roll barrels up planks, stand on them and balance, but he, the once "limberest man in two counties," had seen a man do what he had never done, and it stirred his latent ambition. He felt the accumulated stiff-

ness of years leave his joints at the contemplation.

The others were riotously garrulous on the way home. They discussed the circus and its marvels from all points, but only one observation did they get from the Deacon.

"Wall, it wa'n't no lie, after all. He rally did it, didn't he?"

Late that evening Thomas Henry, on going out to the barn, discovered his dignified parent, the unworldly Deacon of South Concession, by the dim light of a lantern, with his coat off, on a wooden beam, vainly endeavouring to "skin the cat," a popular exercise with small boys.

"Was jes' tryin' if this beam was strong enough. You young uns might break yer necks on it," he explained sheepishly, when he had untangled himself and had come down.

"Damn ef dad want actin' circus all by hisself inter the barn!" Thomas Henry exclaimed to the astonished family five minutes afterwards.

But worse was to come yet before the good deacon was to be exorcised by his demon.

V.

Next day the boys went at the mowing but the Deacon, who had some late turnips to harrow in, went alone to a distant part of the farm to perform this work. He had a double reason for this, for he wished to be alone.

As the morning wore on, and he went back and forth over the black loamy field, his thoughts constantly dwelt on the feats of the rubber man, who had put his leg over his head and had got it back again. He studied and pondered on his former limberness, and wondered if what man has done man cannot do again. His main weakness, his obstinate pride in not being out-done, was touched. Yes, he, Deacon Snider, would try, would accomplish this most difficult of feats, and would use it as an illustration of how little of the marvellous there was in these circuses after all, which, like all earthly vanities, were but cheats to trap the unwary. How nicely it would fit into one of his discourses, and (his vanity whispered) also serve to demonstrate his own power to perform remarkable feats, to prove that he, Deacon Snider, could do even what, in a famous circus man, was considered marvellous.

He looked about for a suitable place in which to try his experiment, and finding a stump in a green plot, left the horses in the furrow, and sitting down with his back