

"Guess I'll take the mare in an' hev her shod termorrer mornin' early; git her ready fer me!" he announced after a short interval, "an' you boys kin git ready fer mowin'.

This was a surprise, but no one made any remark.

III.

As the Deacon had truly said, the devil had come "fer shore," but sad to relate the one he had taken possession of was no other than the good deacon himself.

Deacon Snider, like the rest of humanity, was prone to certain weaknesses. Although he would never have guessed it he had two strong besetting sins, which, in the eyes of the religious world of his community, were regarded as his strongest points in religion. One was an insatiable curiosity, and another an almost obstinate determination not to be beaten in anything, which amounted to absolute vanity. In fact these two qualities had made him what he was, and though he fancied he was guided wholly by religious principles, the Deacon, like the rest of us, was largely human after all.

A demoniacal possession now seized him with regard to this strange man who had outdone the "limberest man in two counties."

Next morning he arose bright and early and went to the market town. Before he went he was silent and preoccupied. The one idea still possessed him, and he was carried away by it.

The flaming posters dazzled his consciousness, and it seemed that now, for the first time, they were intelligible to him. The horse-riding and strange animals he cared little for; they had long appealed in vain to his lack of imagination, but he found himself eagerly looking for the cut showing the wonderful feats performed by the India-rubber man.

This was a new feature in the circuses which had come to the vicinity, and when he came to it he stopped his horse and gazed in astonished wonder and incredulity.

"It aint true," he muttered to himself, as he saw the pictures showing the flexible

gentleman tying and untying himself into and out of all sorts of remarkable knots.

He stopped at the blacksmith shop and got the mare shod, and while there evinced a curious interest, as Mr. Bill Tomkins dilated on the wonders, especially the feats, of the India-rubber man.

"You really saw him do it yerself. You actually saw him."

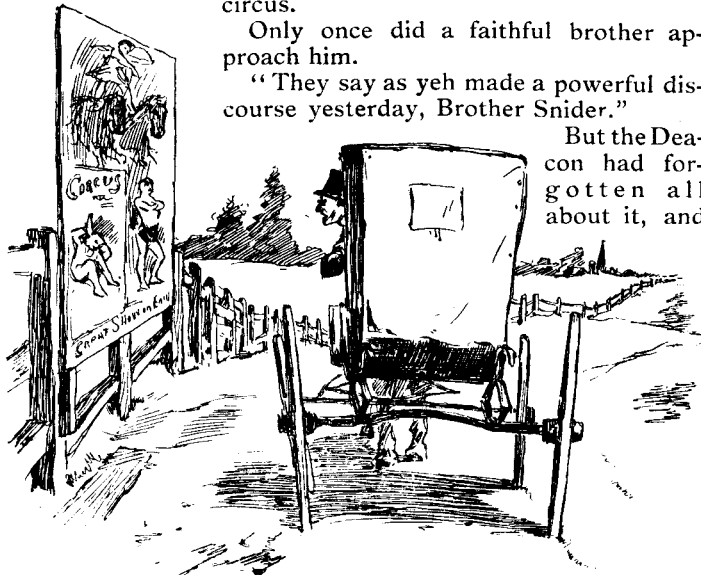
"Well, I'll be damned ef I didn't," asserted Mr. Tomkins profanely, and for once the Deacon forgot to be shocked.

The Deacon remained away all day, and of course was not protected from this strange temptation which had beset him by the general excitement of the town and country, which was on the subject of the circus.

Only once did a faithful brother approach him.

"They say as yeh made a powerful discourse yesterday, Brother Snider."

But the Deacon had forgotten all about it, and



"The flaming posters dazzled his consciousness."

could barely listen in apathy to the well meant compliments of his admirer, as his other ear was drinking in a marvellous relation, for a voice was saying:—

"They say as the injy-rubber man kin tie hisself into all sorts of knots."

The fact is the good deacon's humanity, which had been dammed up so long, was "gone on a bust," as that younger generation, to which Thomas Henry belonged, would have expressed it. He was not the man he had been the day before.

That evening, after supper, he threw another bomb of surprise into the bosom of his family.

"Seein' yer decided ter go ter that air circus, an' seein' as I cyant prevent yer, it's the duty of a parent ter perfect his offspring. Thomas Henry, leave a seat