

to dances and other carnal entertainments on the sly, and now the final horror was upon him. Thomas Henry, followed by the rest of his undutiful children, had boldly avowed an unfilial determination to go to the circus, their father's "Sodom and Gomorrah."

The Deacon, like men of his class, had a decided horror of anything he knew nothing about, and therefore denounced it with all his soul. Such was the case with the circus. He regarded it as one of those unholy forbidden things that we are not to touch or even look at, and so he fought with all his power of ignorance and fanatic zeal, but it was a vain struggle. The circus, long the rural theatre, continued to increase in popularity, and recognizing the best mode of making itself known, it had resorted to the latest method of glaring hand-bills and great flaming posters on sides of barns and country hotels, magnifying, in all the colours of the rainbow, the wonders and marvels on exhibition. These were the delight and awe of the average school-boy, or country maiden and youth. Now that progressive person in the carnal knowledges,—the redoubtable Thomas Henry,—had been to market, and had brought home a glowing account of the coming show, how that it had fairly papered the town with lions and tigers and three-headed women, and was said to be by far the most remarkable exhibition that had ever drained that vicinity of its spare cash.

This had occurred the day before, and the family fight had begun.

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The Deacon drove his family (those who cared to drive) in grim silence home from the meeting, and after "supper," the Sunday chores being completed, the attack was renewed.

"They say as the whole town and settlement is goin'," observed Thomas Henry.

"Even the ministers' families," echoed Sophira Ann, the eldest daughter.

But the Deacon only groaned in horror.

"Reach me down that there bible, Saphiry, an' quit yer talk. It aint fit fer the Sabbath let alone any other day."

"But it aint so bad as ye think, dad," broke in Thomas Henry. "It's fine, shore, and all the fellers is goin' ter take their girls. I tell ye the whole country's goin', an' we aint goin' ter stay home an' see nothin' cause you got them ideas."

"Ther's a 'nelephant, an' a cart of monkeys an' an injy-rubber man," put in

William James, the excited youngest, who had pumped the other small boys, who were allowed more liberties and had gazed upon the posters.

"A what?" gasped the horrified Deacon.

"An injy-rubber man," repeated the enthusiastic youngster.

"The Devil's come to this here section, fer shore!" ejaculated the Deacon, taking a couple of strides across the floor. I knowed it. I knowed "it" 'ud be the end of all this dancin' an' cyard playin' an' crokayin' an' carryin' on. The devil's come, fer shore, at last. Ter think as my youngest child should sit afore me and believe in an injy-rubber man."

"Dad," expostulated Thomas Henry, "he's jest called that 'cause he haint got no bones, least none ter speak of. He kin jest roll himself up like a ball an' roll himself along on the floor. He kin make his heels touch the top of his head an' he kin lift his leg like this and put it clean over his head. Bill Tomkins was down to the show at Bidford an' seen him do it, an' he tole me himself."

The Deacon had been listening in astonished silence. Unconsciously his curiosity and wonder were getting the better of his horror of the subject.

"What ye say! Put his leg over his head, did he? Now, that's one of Satan's lies ter begin with, fer no man kin do the like; he aint made that way. It aint anywhere in holy scriptur, which saith: "A man is made with his bones an' his parts!" but it don't say nothin' of boneless men."

"He may not be in the book, dad," insisted the heroic Thomas Henry, "but he's in the circus all the same."

"I tell ye it's a lie, boy," said the Deacon, his wrath rising. "D'ye know when I was your age I was the limberest man in two counties, an' I could do with my bones what no other man could do, though it's vanity ter speak of it now, an' I never could do that. So ye know it's a lie, which is a part of all them sinful circuses. Hand me the bible, Saphiry."

And so the discussion ended, but the Deacon felt that he was defeated, and try as he would he could not keep his mind from reverting to that horrible rubber man, who could do what the "limberest man in two counties" had never done.

"It's all a lie," he muttered to himself, but all the same, before he retired, he asked casually:

"Where's Bill Tompkins stayin'?"

"He's working at Johnson's blacksmith shop."