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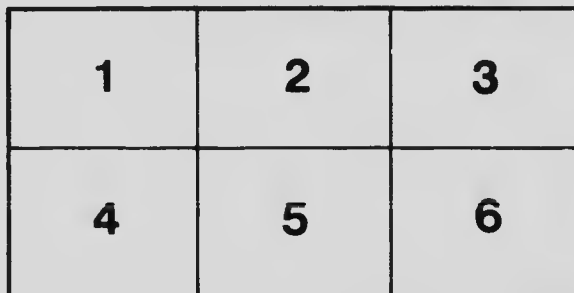
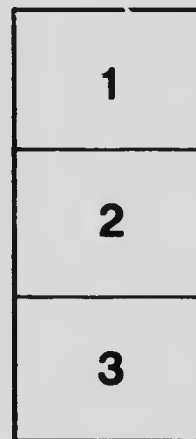
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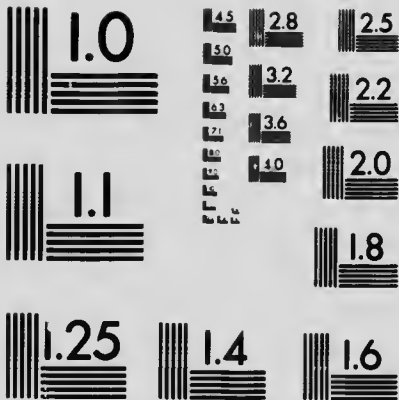
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# REDNEY MCGAW

ARTHUR E. MCFARLANE



REDNEY McGAW



"It was Red alone that finished the job"  
*Frontispiece. See page 120*



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# REDNEY MCGAW

*A Story of the Big Show and  
the Cheerful Spirit*

BY

ARTHUR E. McFARLANE

P. H. Tor

ILLUSTRATED BY

ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1909

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**I**F from this small book there breathes a spirit of optimism, it is for the writer to own at once and honorably that that optimism can hardly be called his own, since it has been lent to him by certain other people. Were a last analysis made even of philosophers, it might be found that their happy or unhappy speaking of mortal things came less from within than from without; that the little, clutching circle of persons and things that made their world was kind or unkind, and they delivered themselves upon all things and all persons accordingly.

At any rate such is the truth in the very unphilosophic present case. And the merit of those whom I may call the "*optimizers*" in the present case should shine the more brightly, inasmuch as they have given increasingly of their help and trust, even as, by reason of intimacy, they must have felt increasingly that the writer was giving them the less cause therefor. Since this is the little, almost trifling book it is, my "*optimizers*" may still live happy and unidentified, save to themselves by their own good consciences. But if I shall ever be empowered to produce a volume in any wise worthy, *then*, — in the menacing phrase of the speaker of the British House of Commons, — I shall not hesitate "to name them."

A. E. McF.

BIRCH CLIFF, CANADA,  
June, 1909.



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# REDNEY MCGAW

## CHAPTER I

### SOME EXPLANATIONS AND A BEGINNING

*Which introduces Mr. McGaw, tells of the doubtful joys of "hoboin' it," treats of a new way to get to Dubuque, and chronicles a stupendous resolution.*

HE stood outside the door of that East Buffalo saloon because Messrs. "Fat" and "Cut Nose" had just gone in. And his name was Robert Emmet Ignatius (otherwise "Redney") McGaw.

By this time his old office-boy uniform, which made him look like an "A. D. T." messenger, was exceedingly disreputable. His hair had lost none of that warmth of coloring which had given him his nickname. But it now dripped down dispiritedly on all sides, like a thatched roof

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on a wet day. A month ago, by reason of an almost unbroken growth of toad freckles, you could never be entirely certain that the said face needed washing. But no such saving doubt could be vouchsafed it now. And while, ordinarily, Mr. "Red" McGaw possessed a smile and an inexhaustible confidence in life, which plainly and palpably ought to be worth from seven to eight million dollars to any man, at this present moment he was not smiling at all. As a true philosopher, he would never have admitted that he was unhappy. But he had at least come as near to being so as ever he had in his life.

Nor was the cause any of the customary ones. If he was without either parents or relatives, he had always congratulated himself on this. For, when you come down to cases, of what value are parents and relatives anyway? If, for three years his only home had been

## SOME EXPLANATIONS

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the "Newsies'" Lodging House, back in New York, he wanted to say that the "Newsies" was all right, all right. Two weeks ago he had lost his job. But could anyone affirm that that was the first time he had lost a job? It was only ten days now since he had taken his high resolve to "hit it fer out West," and join his old office croney, "Spider" Madigan, in the Elysium of that Iowa farm. And already he was well on his way. But — but —

He shifted a little further down the block, got out Spider's frayed-edged letter, and read part of it again.

It began:

"Say, Ime a rube now. Thats right. and everybodys peecky. say, the old lady, thats Mrs Sonnenschein, shes so mity good to me that offen I feel like been good meself. say, they let me go fishin every saturday. thats right. and they say they got room for one or two more like me. so youse want to come out the swiftest you can. say, youd ought to see me runnin the horse rake. it has a mustash like dutch johns . . ."

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Well, he, Red, was getting out there "the swiftest he could." He had now got as far as Buffalo. But — but —

A week ago he had fallen in with that pair of free companions back there in the saloon, Fat and Cut Nose. They were both tramps of old experience, professionals in the thrilling life of the highway. And during the first three days he had told himself unnumbered times that he was "certainly havin' his Irish luck." For they had made him one of themselves almost immediately. They had called him "Bo," which is affectionate for "hobo." They had taught him how to jump freights and dodge train crews, and "bed himself easy" for the night, — just about all there was to know, as you might say.

Yet, for the last few days he had not felt quite so sure about those gentlemen. They were good to him, no doubt, in some ways. But lately they had set him

## SOME EXPLANATIONS

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to "pan-handling" for them. Only the night before they had kept him out in the rain till after two, telling hard-luck stories. . . . And there were other things, as well. . . . "Maybe," he said, with an attempt at ease, "maybe, I'd be a wise guy to do the rest of my travellin' by my lone." But in his heart he was afraid, — afraid of what they might do, of what Cut Nose, anyway, might do, if he tried to leave them now.

As far as to-day was concerned, Fat had told him it would be all O. K. if he showed up again by six. And they had left him a quarter of his takings "to run along on." It was enough to keep him eating for three or four hours. But how was he going to get . . . from them for keeps? How could he go about to get far enough ahead to make sure there wouldn't be any danger of their "catching up on him" again? That was the very uncomfortable question.

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But he had always noticed that questions like that answered themselves a lot easier when he'd just had a meal. And he decided to go over to that "Boston Lunch" place, across the road, for some beans and buckwheat cakes.

And there an answer awaited him to stop his breath!

A few stools down the shiny counter on the other side sat two young men in frogged jackets and bandsmen hats. Red had paid no great attention to them in the beginning. But as they made an end of their eating they began to talk. Their first words identified those bandsmen hats; he thought he'd seen them somewhere before. And now he did pay attention. His ears were as open for everything those young men uttered as his mouth was for those buckwheat cakes. And just as he was mopping his plate with the last syrup-soaked fragment, he heard something which kept



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that last remaining piece of buckwheat from ever getting to his mouth at all.

“Well, accordin’ to what *he* says, once we’ve made the Penn State loop and Chicag’, the old show’s goin’ to head straight on for Dubuque.”

The “old show” was “The Big Show,” — “The World’s Greatest United Circuses and Three-ring Hippodrome,” which, that morning, had made its all-conquering entry into Buffalo. And Dubuque, or at any rate, Dubuque Junction, was the post-office address of “Spider” Madigan! — Red got out his letter and made sure of it again.

“I guess I want to go to Dubuque,” he said. He said it several times. But the real idea that had been awakened in him was too tremendous for any expression whatever. Within five minutes it had swelled and expanded till he could only breathe at the mouth in swallows.

And then, being a man of action, he

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wasted no more precious moments in mere hypnotized bedazzlement. He had nearly half the day yet to work it. He girded himself, — girded himself with the strength of a determination unshakable, — and started for the circus grounds.

## CHAPTER II

### DIPLOMACY

*Great advantages of being an expert on the care of horses, the laundering of circus tents, the watering of elephants, and the adjustment of balky typewriters. Four ways by which you may "get your hooks in" with a circus, — maybe.*

**T**HE question was, what order of tactics would best avail to open the business? — "How to make the start at gettin' his hooks in?"

If you are speaking of *details*, Red did not know. If you are speaking of general principles, he possessed some guiding rules of diplomacy as practised by Cavour himself. When he had all but reached the grounds, instead of keeping straight on to that crowd-thronged, many-pennoned mountain range of canvas, he

## REDNEY MCGAW

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veered off in a flanking movement for those cindery acres of railway sidings, where stood the hundred vermilion-painted coaches of the circus trains.

He followed the long line of horse- and stock-cars. He dodged under the huge elephant "vans" and skirted along the "flats" to the sleepers. But there was nothing there that might offer his "hooks" a grip, — nothing to give him even a finger-hold.

That was only a first try, though. Another minute and he was leaving the sidings for the broad, grassy "billy goat pastures" which flanked them. He took the road that had been cut from cars to "lot" by the circus itself. There was ineffable fascination, too, merely in that road. There were ruts that could have been made only by the wheels of the great forty-horse band-wagon. There were chips of red and gold from some splintered menagerie chariot. And in

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the mushy places there were foot-prints as big as nail kegs! Red's face filled and his eyes glittered. By now that "Big Show" seemed to fill the whole horizon. It seemed to shut out all other things whatsoever.

"But I got to keep cool," he told himself. What he had to do could be done, if it could be done, only by 'keepin' cool and givin' all your intellects to it.'

He got to the circus through its backyard, so to speak. And he found himself first at the horse tent. A groom was plaiting red, white, and blue streamers into the mane of a great gray Percheron. Another circus man, evidently in authority, was looking on.

The flies kept the big horse in one ceaseless twitch of exasperation. Red watched the work, now from one side, now from the other. And then, "Heh! but, anyways," he observed, as casually as if he had known those horsemen for

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at least three days, "youse lads give them some *chance*. Youse don't dock them."

Neither circus man looked round.

"Whenever I see a guy with a docked horse," he continued, now speaking quite chattily, "I always want to see that horse get swagger, too, and start dockin' off that guy's *ears*."

This remark also went unacknowledged. Those two circus men seemed to have been born without the *instinct* for polite conversation.

For an empty minute or two longer he waited. Then he went on to the next tent ahead.

There a section of side wall had come down; a squad of men were busy fixing it. And there, too, overseeing the job, was an individual plainly of foreman rank. Red had heard of such a person as the boss canvas-man.

"Heh," he now began; "looks as if that rain had got things pretty mucked up."

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The boss canvas-man — for he it was — replied no more than had the boss horseman.

“There’s a laundry here in Buf’lo advertises it can wash circus tents. Anyhow, ‘anything from a pocket handkerchief to a circus tent’ is what it says on their signs. You’d ought to get *them* in on the job.”

Still no response. Some of the on-lookers giggled.

“Eeh! Seems like I don’t just remember their address right now. But I could easy get it.”

The boss canvas-man turned slowly, sized the speaker up depressingly, winked at the audience and gave his attention his work again.

“Ah, I guess,” said Mr. McGaw, “I guess youse are some more of what the ice man left at the butcher store.” But he did not say it with any real ill feeling. And then, without letting himself

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become *too* depressed, he took up his march in quest of another opening.

He skirted the endless succession of red-topped stakes and hawser-like guyropes of the main tent,—the big top, as circus people call it,—in which the afternoon performance was now gloriously proceeding. There came out the smell of peanuts and sawdust and fresh-turned earth,—the long swinging rhythm and throb of the band, and with it all the myriad little noises made by fifteen thousand people on the creaking blue-slat seats. From far down at the other end sounded the sharp, whip-cracking voice of the ring-master, and then followed the poundingly regular beat of horses' hoofs upon a hollow platform. It was probably the great, much-pictured "Waltzing Ponies" act that had begun. . . . "Say," Red thought, "think—think of bein' able to walk in free any time youse wanted!"



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He was still standing there, one of a crowd of hankering listeners, when, from the menagerie entrance, two big elephants and a smaller one came swaying suddenly forth. A uniformed keeper followed, and he steered them towards a hydrant, half-surrounded by big blue water tubs.

Red got to those tubs in two jumps. But, alas! they had been filled already.

“Heh,” he said, “heh, . . . but I bet them fellers ’ll want a lot more ’n three.”

“Maybe they ’ll want it,” said the keeper, mopping at his sweltering temples, — he was a brown, sinewy little man, who also had a mustache “like dutch johns”; — “but maybe they wont get it.”

“Ah, youse ’ll want to give them a *little* extry, only to squirt on their backs. An’ I tell youse, now, they need it, in weather like this!”

The keeper had to turn to make the two bigger beasts shove over for the little brother, and he offered no reply.

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“Out at Bronx 'Park,” went on Red, reminiscently, “the elephant I generally always used to water was fierce after ginger ale. And, heh, it seemed like it did him good.”

The animal man looked at him again. He was thoroughly fagged. Throughout the length of the “Unparalleled Exhibition of Performing Pachyderms,” just concluded, he had been tossed back and forth and rolled about in the prickly, sweaty folds of those now eagerly sucking trunks till he had wanted to die. But he had the kind of disposition which it takes much more than work and heat to spoil. “Well,” he said, sighing, “I believe I could drink a few of ginger ale myself, just now.”

“Me, too,” responded Red at once. “And say, I was just thinkin’ of goin’ *after* some. You wait here till I slide out to the stands and I’ll get it now.”

The keeper looked after him, digest-

## DIPLOMACY

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ing his astonishment. But he had his own idea of what that generosity meant. "He'll be wantin' me to see him in," he thought. And he likewise came near to making up his mind that he would.

Red returned with a veritable armful. He had one two-for-five bottle of sarsaparilla, two of ginger ale, and one of cream soda.

"*Well!*" exclaimed the "elephant man." "Who *are* you, anyway, — J. Pierp Morgan, or old John D. himself?"

"Ah, this ain't nothin'." And Red waited till a second bottle had gurglingly followed the first. Then, too, he unlimbered the battery of his smile. "Say, I'm thinkin' of travellin' with youse people."

"*No?* — Are you now? — And when did you join out?"

"Well, I ain't just seen the big boss yet. But *you'd* give me a boost with him, would n't you?"

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“Why, sure! I'd offer you my job.”

With the same admirable loftiness of spirit Red put the offer away from him. “Ah, thanks, but I couldn't think of takin' it. And I don't know as they'd want to *lose* youse.”

The elephant man grinned. “Well, there *is* that side of it. But you don't mean the ‘big boss,’ you mean the ‘G. M.’”

“‘G. M.’ — what's that for?”

“Why, off the lot — (he meant outside the circus grounds) — it stands for General Manager. But with us it stands for Great Man. And he's the man you'll have to talk to. Only I'm afraid he's turned down about seventeen of your size and age to-day already.”

“Has he? Aw, well, maybe then he'll be tired of doin' it by now. Maybe he'll feel like tryin' a change.”

“All right, bub, all right. He's generally in the head office about six, — and

## DIPLOMACY

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I'm sure I give you *my* blessing. And now I've got to run along."

To the left of the main entrance stood two "family-sized" tents. And from his observation of former circuses, Red had a pretty good idea that he would find the manager's office in one or the other of them.

He tried the first.

But the only person at home there was a young man with eye glasses, who was plainly having trouble with his typewriter. He twitched his chin in Red's direction with a jabbing brevity. "Right out now!" he said; "Right out! Back to the asphalt again!"

"Sure!" said Red. "Is there a fellah around here named Daugherty?"

There'll be a fellah around here named Dinnis in about one minute! — Did you hear me say something?"

"Well, I was just goin'." And to prove his good faith he started. Having

## REDNEY MCGAW

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started, he rounded gradually to a halt again. "But, say, — say, I think I could likely *help* youse with that machine."

The young man lifted his thin lips dangerously, and let the carriage go back with a clash.

"Heh, we had one o' them in the last office I was in," continued Red, easily. "And they ain't so bad, o' course, for a *knockabout* typewrite. . . . But, skids, they're sure the limit, ain't they, when they get to balkin'?" . . . He had, by strategic degrees, worked his way back and up to the operator's arm. But, now, the intensifying silence making him nervous again, he retreated once more to the rear of the machine. . . . "Heh, it looks like you'd got your tension too stiff."

"No, I have n't got my tension too stiff, neither! And say —" The operator put out an arm at him.

"Is your rod down all right?"

## DIPLOMACY

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The rod was *not* down. And that was precisely where the trouble was!

"I wouldn't 'a' knowed," confessed Mr. McGaw with modesty, "if I hadn't had so much experience with our own. . . . Maybe I did n't tell you," he added, "that I can typewrite, too. That's right. Only two-finger, though, o' course."

"I guess you're sure a smart lad," said the young man, undisguisedly mollified.

"Oh, I ain't such a much. But I was just thinkin' that when you're busy I'd be able to spell youse, now an' again."

"What? You going to go along with us?"

"Well, I was kind o' thinkin' of it." Again his smile began engagingly to show the place where his tooth was out. "Say, I guess, now, *you'd* be good for your influence with them, wouldn't you?"

"*My* influence!" The young man waved him forty miles away. "With this hay-tedder machine it keeps me sit-

## REDNEY McGAW

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ting up till the milkman comes around to hold my own job!"

And, to the short-sighted, this might appear to promise no more advancement than anything that had preceded it. But, wherever it came from, Red had a feeling, — and a very well justified feeling, — that when you 've managed to do anybody else a service, by just so much, in some mysterious way, have you managed to help yourself. In any case he now unconsciously let it go at that.

Nor, in the hour that followed, did any other openings present themselves. The afternoon show was over. The sun dropped lower. It was going on to six.

He went out to the street again, and using his last nickel for it, he fortified his spirit with three doughnuts and a frankfurter. Then at the hydrant where the elephants had been watered, he washed himself. He made a good job of it, too, getting far beyond the regular



## DIPLOMACY

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water-line; and he finished up by wetting and parting his hair with his fingers. Then he filled his chest with the biggest breath he could, and while he had the courage in him, he made for the canvas business office of the G. M.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PERFORMERS' TENT

*In which Red, having joined out as "The Human Egg" and made an undoubted hit,—to the amazement of Splinters, king of clowns, resigns after his second act; and when about to say good-bye to circus life forever, he has a second and an unexpected interview with the G. M.*

**T**HE business office was almost filled with circus people. The boss horseman was there, and the boss canvas-man, and the head of the menagerie, and a dozen more besides. And at a little table sat the G. M. himself. Red knew him at once, not only because he wore no uniform, but because he was quiet of eye, smiled more than he laughed, and listened while the others talked.



“ ‘Mr. McAdam, allow me to present a distinguished citizen of Buffalo.’ ” Page 25



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To Red's surprise, too, he did not have to wait for an introduction. He found himself receiving one immediately.

"Hello," said the boss canvas-man the moment he caught sight of him; "here's the identical gentleman, right now! — Mr. McAdam allow me to present a distinguished citizen of Buffalo, who's the leadin' authority on launderin' circus tents."

Red's face opened up, but not quite happily. "Ah, say," he said, with bashfulness.

"Leadin' authority on launderin' tents?" questioned the boss horseman. "Oh, no. Oh, no. That's only a little side line with him. Horses are his *strong* grip."

"Ah, — say, —"

"Why," said the menagerie boss, "if this is the *same* gentleman, which I reckon it is, all right, — I have it from McNally that it's elephants he specializes

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on. I understand he's a world-beater on handlin' elephants. If you could only get him to join out with us, — and you never can tell, he *might* entertain the idea, — I understand he'd expect to take hold and look after the whole herd."

"Heh," said Mr. McGaw, shifting about as if that tent floor was gradually becoming griddle hot; "I'd like to join out with youse, all right, all right. But it looks like I'm gettin' interduced a little too *much*."

"I'm afraid that's what," said the G. M. "It looks to me as if you'd laid almost too many pipes."

And, just at that moment, having heard Red's voice indistinctly through the two walls of canvas, the stenographer left his tent and put *his* head in. "Say," he said, with entire seriousness, "if that lad in there needs a recommendation, it's up to me to say that he's Johnny-on-the-spot when it comes to mendin' a type-

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writer. He was suggesting that he could help me out now and again if he was with the Show."

And then he wondered why everybody shouted.

"There's nothing else for it," said the menagerie boss. "We'll have to offer him that job of 'Human Egg.'"

"What — what's that?" asked Red. It had come at a moment when he had utterly abandoned hope!

"Why, it's a sort of clowning act," the costume man explained. "It's what we start beginners on. And, then, if they make good at that, we pass them on to something else."

"Well, *say!* — if it's a clownin' act!" — He could hardly speak, — "Will I make good! And you'll never get me changin' off to nothin' else at all!"

"I believe," said the G. M., hesitating, "I believe there's an opening in the cook tent squad, — dishwashing."

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At that Red's face became heavily shadowed again. "Ah, I don't just know as I've had such a lot of experience dish-washin'."

"Very *well!* Very *well!*" — And the manager dropped his hands. "You've worked hard, and I daresay you won't be happy till you get it."

One would have said that without any apparent reason the G. M. had turned completely round. And yet, too, as he gave Red that chance of chances, there was something in the G. M.'s expression that looked extremely like *commiseration!*

But, a little after seven, the costume man took Red into the men performers' dressing-room. There he presented him to a Pierrot and a Pantaloon, and to Splinters, "king of all the clowns on earth!" And when they learned that he was to be the Human Egg, they all rose up and whooped him a welcome together.



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In any other place such a reception would have gone far towards making Red suspicious. As it was, he let himself down on an empty make-up box, and his brain seemed to be going around like a kaleidoscope. Only instead of ever-changing designs in colored glass, all about him there were "artists" getting into their costumes, — costumes of crimson, green, and serpentine, costumes covered with gold and glittering scales and spangles. Opposite him, in silver and robin's-egg blue sat a group of seven whom he knew at once to be the great "Saxon Samsons," though one was a solemn-faced lad not as old as he was, and the two next to him were only a few years older. But the other four were giants, with rolling muscles, and necks like beech-trees where they leave the ground, and thick, yellow beards more crisply wavy than the fetlocks of dray horses. One of them, the mightiest of

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them all, seeing Red looking at him, bared his big, short white teeth and sent a smile over to him that was as sweet and simple as a little girl's.

"Skids!" thought Red, "I'm goin' to get knowin' *him* all right!"

And a few moments later "Splinters" and his lieutenants, having finished dressing themselves, came over to him. "Now, Mr. McGaw," they said, "we're just going to make you the funniest thing that was ever allowed out!"

In a trice they had his boots and outer clothing off. In another trice they had him into something like a shiny white-rubber balloon. And they promptly began to inflate it with a foot-power bicycle pump. The inflating had the effect of tightening the top of the "egg" about his throat till he was all but strangled; and the foot holes drew his ankles together till he could barely keep his balance. "Heh," he told himself after the first

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two minutes, "I don't know as I just like this so much."

In place of shoes they provided him with a huge, flapping pair of yellow duck feet. The costume man came up, covered his face with a tallowy coat of zinc-white make-up paint, and ended by dashing a great splurge of vermilion upon his mouth. — "Gee," choked Red again, "this is gettin' kind o' fierce. But I got to make good!"

And then, as a whistle blew, Pierrot and Pantaloon each took him by an arm, rushed him down a canvas alley-way, through the performers' entrance and thence into the ring. He had just time to feel that about a million people were looking at him, when a trapeze hook was snapped through a ring in the back of his belt. He seemed to lose his hold upon the ground; he found himself kicking powerlessly in the air. And then he received a whack from a slap stick which spun him like a top.

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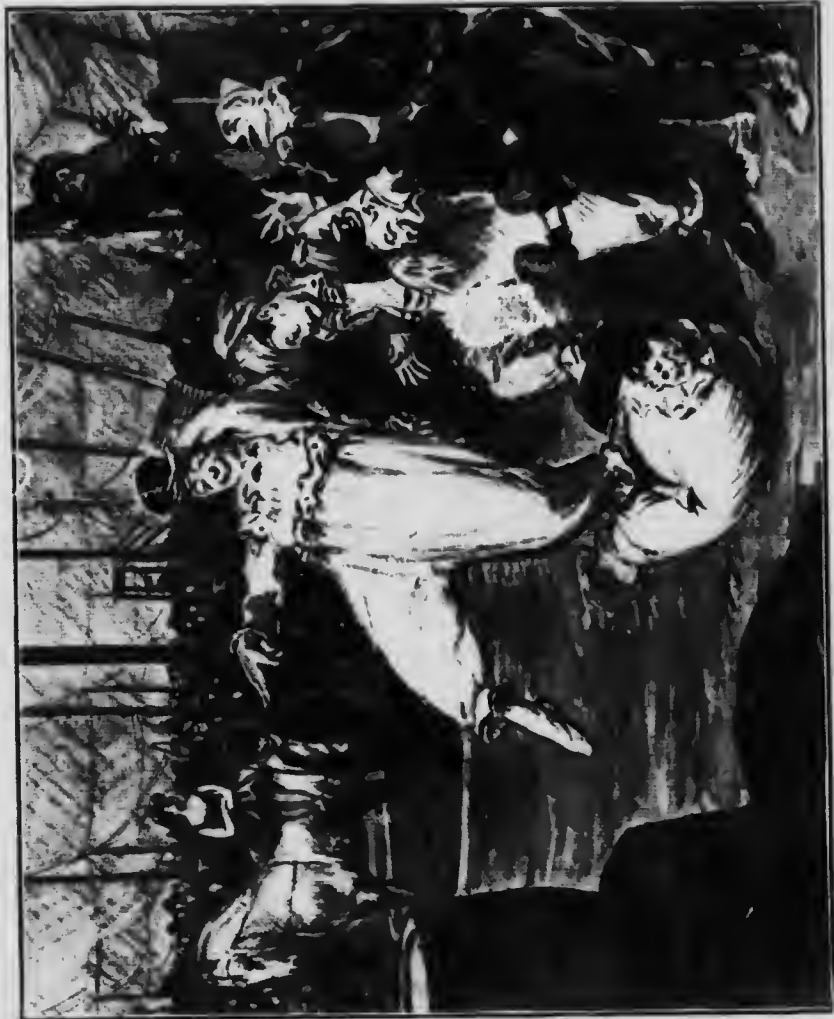
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He came to the ground with a jolting jerk, went rolling down the track as if he were some gigantic, white-kid football; and all the clowns began to "toe him" along. It did n't hurt exactly, but the rolling motion was something awful. And through everything he could hear the roars of the audience: they were *laughing* at it! —

"Say," he panted, "*Say!*"

Now the real inwardness of it all was this: Circuses do not encourage boys of fourteen who want to "join out." And when they are very persistent, they try to give them a first experience calculated to cure them of all desire for the showman profession for the remainder of their natural lives. And with The Big Show this cure took the form of making the new-comer the Human Egg.

In the next act Red was trundled on like a water-melon. And they all took



"This cure took the form of making the new-comer the Human Egg." Page 32



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turns "walking" him, as river-drivers walk rolling logs. Again, if it did not really do him any damage, it scared him to death!

A second time the hook was snapped into his belt, and then, pursued by a grotesque Man Monkey clown, he was run up and up and up, past nets and trapezes and gasoline chandeliers till he was at the very ridge line of the "big top." It was so hot, too, that although only a little of that Man Monkey's face was visible, he seemed, under his brown door-mat costume, to be melting away in perspiration.

Red's own head felt as if it had been thrust into a steam-boiler. It felt —— They had suddenly dropped him to within five feet of the ground again!

He only knew that he had n't struck by opening his eyes to the stinging squirt of half a dozen soda siphons . . . . And once more the audience was shouting and hee-hawing its delight!

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“I guess that’ll be about all for me!” he gasped when he had come to himself at last on that box in the dressing room.

He turned to the English zany beside him. “Say, did somebody, — somebody use to be the Human Egg every night?”

“Sure thing, me boy. H’only just now ’e ’appens to be in the ’orspital. H’always gettin’ hisself into the ’orspital, that lad!”

“Gee, I bet he was! . . . Well, youse are winners all right!” He tried to undo his collar, but his throat had choked up achingly. He had known disappointment before in his life, but never anything like this. — “Heh, *I* could n’t make good at it, I guess, not in a thousand years!”

Splinters came down the line to him and smacked him on the back. “Oceans of fun, ain’t it, old man?”

“I guess it is — when you ’re fergettin’



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about it." Again he made a sick attempt to undo his collar.

"What's that? — We ain't goin' to lose you? — And after only two acts?"

Red nodded.

"Well, well, well, well, well!" And as Splinters began to let the wind out of the Egg for him, all the while he continued to express his worried hope that Red might change his mind. Then he undid the neck and ankle straps. — "But if you really *must* go, you know," he said, "here's what we take the paint off with." He gave him a pot of vaseline. "And you can wash up down there on the other side."

The whole brigade of clowns tumbled and cartwheeled out to the ring again, and left him sitting in his corner alone.

It was at that minute that the G. M. looked quietly in, and then as quietly disappeared again.

The Saxon Samsons returned from their second act. Glittering in his blue

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and silver, the solemn-faced boy he had noticed almost touched him as he passed.

"I guess *he* made good, all right," thought Red; "but, criminy, — I bet there's a terrible lot that don't!" He began to have a feeling for those who don't that he'd never had before.

He had now changed back into his old office-boy uniform. But he continued to stand yearningly beside his box.

"Goin' or stayin'?" the dressing-room watchman called in to him; "nobody allowed in here in street clothes." It was like pushing him out.

"Oh, I'm goin' all right. But say, youse hand it to the new guys pretty fierce and hard, don't youse?" He still smiled, but his smile was now half of it quiver.

The Man Monkey stumbled in again. He worked back his hood. It was dripping. And his eyes were staring with the heat.

Red came to a halt; for he could

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sympathize with that Man Monkey as one who knew. "Heh, talk about it's bein' hot! I guess up there above the lights is where it really hits you. But *youse* have got the stuff in you for it. . . . Well, I need to be moseyin'." He swallowed the lump again, and got himself five steps nearer to the door.

From a group just then entering there came a kind of sipping sound,—that of somebody sucking in his breath with his teeth closed. The "leaper" of the "Flying Florio troupe" had put his thumb out of joint, and his friends were pulling it in for him.

And at that Red stopped once more. "Say, — *youse* 'll think I 'll only be goin' when *youse* throw me out," — he felt it incumbent, now, to apologize to the tent in general, — "but it just happens I 'm car-ryin' the thing the ball-play experts use for sprains." He produced a small and smudgy roll of bicycle tape.

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“Youse need to start it so fashion — turn the end in” — he showed the suffering acrobat; “and, — nah, — that’s all right, you just keep it *all*. . . . You see, — heh, — I won’t be needin’ it now *meself*.”

Then, with a sudden feeling as of salt in his eyes, he made blindly for that tent-flap door.

At the very entrance of the canvas alley-way, he walked into the G. M.’s arms. And the G. M. must have heard almost everything.

“Hello!” he said; “hello! Not leaving us?”

“Yeh,” Red answered thickly. “They gimme my try out, all right; but I did n’t make good.”

“Well,” said that G. M., queerly, “to tell the truth, I never could myself. Kind of a tough world, is n’t it?”

“Ah, I dunno. I guess not, if youse know how.” And he started on again.

The G. M. let him go a dozen or twenty

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feet. Then, "How about having a try at washing dishes?" he asked.

"Wha'?" said Red; "wha'? Is *that* job open yet?"

"That depends. Just come over here into the corner,—so." He put him down on the door-man's stool. "Now—got any people here in Buffalo?"

"I ain't got any anywheres. The only people I know here is two guys I was on the road with and am wantin' to get away from."

The G. M. took hold of his left hand and parted his first and second fingers.

"H'm . . . Smoke cigarettes, I see."

"Not any more," he scarcely breathed, "if youse 'll let me join out yet!"

"Use a good deal of bad language, likely?"

"There ain't any I can't ferget!"

"No crap-shooting any more, either? Because none of those things go in The Big Show."

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“Just you give me the chanst and see!”

“Very well! We’ll see what we can do to-morrow. Only remember, it was n’t laying all those pipes that did it. In the meantime I suppose we’ll have to find a place to put you for to-night. Buffalo’s a two-day stop, you know. H’m . . . h’m — would you be afraid to sleep on the hay in the menagerie tent, — with the animal men?”

Would he be afraid to sleep in the menagerie tent with the animal men! —

And the rest of it happened even more rapidly and amazingly than that. In another five minutes he was under the charge of “Elephants” McNally. And Elephants McNally was that genial keeper for whom he had bought the ginger ale!

What was tramping it, — what was the life of the road, — where were Messrs. Fat and Cut Nose now?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ANIMAL MEN

*A night in a menagerie tent; strange conduct on the part of elephants, lions, giraffes, pythons, and laughing jack-asses: some thrilling adventures which, however, do not appear to have happened.*

**I**T was a first night with a circus that was worth any five years of common, ordinary life!

Perhaps, some time after an evening performance you have tried to go out by the route by which you came in, to see the animals again. And you have found that you could not. This is because animals are sensible beings and hold strong views as to the wisdom of going to bed early. Their acts are considerably put on in the first part of the program; and

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when they have finished they retire in both senses of the word.

When Red followed Elephants McNally into that great, smelly menagerie tent a little after nine, they were already beginning to close it up. The "gasoline men" were making their rounds and putting out all but a single jet in each huge, flaring chandelier. And over on the right, as the darkness thickened, the "big cats" — the lions and tigers, leopards and panthers, — had begun with large, whiny yawns to take to camp.

Down the center of the tent between the poles was a broad, soft bank of hay. The gathering keepers commenced to spread their blankets upon it, and to stuff more hay into bags for pillows.

Elephants got an extra bag and blanket for Red. "But you won't need it much," he said. "When we're sleepin' on the lot like this, we only take off our coats and vests and loosen up a little.



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And, Jemima, it'd be hot enough without anything at all!"

The gasoline men finished their work and departed. "That'll leave it *some* cooler," breathed a keeper by the next pole.

The elephants, in a wide half circle, were stirring about and furling and unfurling their ears uneasily. "It hits them hard here, a night like this," said McNally, "don't it, Coakeney?"

"Coakeney" was East London for "Cockney." And the little East Londoner was bunking just on the other side of Red. "It certainly does, me boy," he said. "They come from parts that's warmer. But in Indiar they can shove beneath the trees. An' often enough they spend the night chin-deep in water."

All the keepers had now "taken to the hay." But it was plain, — and Red realized it with new thrills of rapture, — that, for his delectation, they were not unwill-

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ing to swap experiences for awhile before they went to sleep.

“An’, my word,” said the little Englishman again -- “it’s the Port Elizabeth Ryleway people, — South Africar, you know, — that learned that h’elephants are fond of water. Down there the h’elephants st’y down around the bits of rivers all d’y, and then travel up them after nightfall. Consequence was, at first, that whenever some little brook was let under the ryleway line by a bit of a cuttin’, an’ that cuttin’ was too narrow for the big old bull of the herd to push hisself through, h’up they’d all climb over the embankment, an’ bring down so much gravel and ballastin’ that, my word, that ryleway would n’t be syfe for weeks afterwards! In the end, right through the h’elephant country they had to widen every h’arch along the line!”

“Yes, I’ve heard about that. Commented McNally; “and I can tell you

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too, they 're goin' to have run for their money while they 're finishin' their Cape to Cairo road. When I was last through Buluwayo, I was after them lads yonder," — he crooked his thumb towards the tower-like, open-top cages of the giraffes, — "and I'll just tell you what *they've* learned to do. You know, over there they haven't got any high poles and they've had to content themselves with fifteen-foot steel sticks for their telegraph poles. Well, when a bunch of them necky lads have been bothered by the wires, they simply get together and put their heads through, and rip away a half a mile or so of them at once!"

"*Say!*" said Red, "Gee, I'd like to be workin' out there."

"Well, you wouldn't want to be carryin' telegrams, me boy," said Coakeney. "My word, along the Mombassa ryleway, what with havin' buemen for breakfast, an' then navvies for dinner, the lions

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got so fat that they s'y they actially couldn't waddle off quick enough when the engines 'd find them on the track. My word, it got to be fair shockin'!"

Even as if he had heard and understood, one of the great-maned beasts on the other side of the tent opened his mouth in a long sleepily-hungry stretch. They could hear the jaws come together with a soft clicking. Red's spinal column had delicious shivers!

"Say," he asked "do youse go out capturin' things for the Show?"

"That's what!" said McNally; "and mighty hard they are to capture sometimes. Coakeney, did you ever hear about how I lost that laughin' jackass down in Queensland?"

"Not recently," said Coakeney, "not recently!"

"Why, it was like this: a laughin' jackass, you know, is a sort of a rooster-sized kingfisher, with a head like a blue

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hatchet and a voice to beat a million election rattles. And they're gettin' to be pretty rare. Well, one day I was out in the blue-gum bush, and I caught sight of a big one on the end of a dead branch. Now it's a habit of the laughin' jackass to take a terrible fixed look at you when he thinks you're hostile to him; and once he drills his eye onto you it seems like he ain't got the natural power to take it off again. Well, not thinkin', what did I do but start goin' *around* that tree by way of closin' in on him! Tchek! I'd just made my circle when, *pop*—down that laughin' jackass falls, gives one kick, and is as dead as a knocker. You see, he'd twisted his head around just one point too much and broke' his neck."

"Skids!" said Red, "I bet you lost money on them goods all right!"

"Trust me! I never went after a laughin' jackass *that* way again."

"Frightful unintelligent!" said

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Coakeney, "frightful! And when you 're dealin' with *any* beast you need to have your wits about you. I mind well a ticklish minute or two I had once with a big python in Natal. He'd wrapped hisself 'round me full length, — nothin' but my h'arms free, and knife and gun fifty yards aw'y! What did I do, my boy? I'll tell you what I did, and I want to [s'y, now, I only thort of it in *time*. I took that snyke's tyle, rammed it into his mouth, and *chowked* him to death!"

There was a minute of deep silence. Then there went up a prodigious and manifold snort, as if all those surroundin.g animal men were likewise choking to death.

"Ah-h!" said Red, "you been jollyin' me! — you *both* been!"

"I guess they been doin' a lot more than that," said somebody down the line, with conviction.

## THE ANIMAL MEN

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"And I'll bet you was stringin' me about them giraffes an' lions, too."

"Well, I don't know," said McNally; "you never can tell."

"Say!" came a wearied growl from somewhere out of the dark. "When are you guffers goin' to get to sleep, anyhow?"

"Right away we are. But this new elephant expert here has been tellin' us a line of yarns that would keep any man awake. Hang if we can believe some of them!"

He gave Red's leg an understanding smack, and turned over.

"But, say," said Red, "before youse go, there's just one thing I'm wantin' to ask."

"Ask it now, then."

"About that little geezer with the Saxon Samsons. Why is it he looks so terrible solemn?"

"What, you don't know about our

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Hans Sohmer yet? Why, 'Midget Hans' is the only support of his great-grandmother in Germany; he's been keepin' her since he was eleven. And if you had a great-grandmother on your hands, you'd look solemn, too."

"That — that ain't just more jollyin'? Ah, go on, now?"

"Never a jolly!"

"Skids! But ain't the others his big brothers?"

"Big brothers nothin'. They're what we call a family in the circus. But that only means they've got together because they look alike and all fit into the same line of turns."

"And the biggest one of all, — what's his name?"

"Oh, that's Big Heinie Müller. Him and Mrs. Müller have got a 'leedle Heinie,' too, back with his aunt Elsa in New York. He's only a year old, but he gives the Show a lot more worry even



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than Hans's great-grandmother. — And I guess that 'll be about all for to-night."

Elephants turned over again, made himself easy, and in another five minutes he was gently snoring.

But Red could not sleep. For one thing the evening performance had not ended yet. From the "big top" the throb of the band came to them wave on wave, the chariots raced, and the applause of the crowd sounded like falling surf.

Once he caught two of the elephants turning over; they rose as heavily as mountains, and as heavily lay down again on the other side. "Say!" he gloated, "I bet *Noah's Ark* was n't no better'n this. Say! Spider wouldn't like to be here, or nothin'. And I guess I ain't hoboin' it no more!"

Once, too, the Numidian lion began to blow in his sawdust, louder and louder, even as if it had been the sand of the

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Sahara; and then he sent forth his voice in a long shuddering roar. The animal men never wakened, though Red's legs grew stiff at it.

But by plugging up his ears and pulling the blanket over his head, he began to make himself feel sleepy at last.

It had been the kind of day which at the end seems like weeks and weeks.

## CHAPTER V

### A FIGHT

*Of an abandoned cellar, and a "fistic combat," — or rather two "fistic combats," in neither of which have the principals any desire to engage; with chance observations upon the duties of great world-powers from Big Heinie of the world-famous Saxon Samsons.*

IT would have been better for Red if he had stayed with McNally and Coakeney and the other animal men in the daylight. But he was to start dish-washing at noon. And he felt that it was only his duty to get to know everything there was to know about The Big Show in the meantime. The result was an hour of painful regrets in the present, and a variety of consequences in the future.

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He had started across the commons in the hope of being able to see the inside of the circus trains, when in a hollow he noticed a crowd of battered looking canvas-men. When he got nearer he saw that they were sitting and standing about on the edge of a half-dug and abandoned cellar.

He worked his way through them; and, in a minute, he was trying to work his way back again. Squatting on the ground throwing dice, and inviting the canvas-men "to get into the game," sat none other than those two former man comrades of his in the tramping business!

Both are described sufficiently well, perhaps, by their appellations. They were tramps; and though without any picturesque tatters, they looked their parts. Cut Nose was lean and blue-jawed; and his scar somehow gave him an expression that was sinister even when

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he laughed. There was nothing sinister about Fat. But if properly worked up to it, he could be quite as dangerous a man as his fellow. For the most part, however, the flesh he carried kept him easy-going and good-natured.

And all he did now was to look at Red with some reproachful indignation. "Hello, old chum, we was pretty near gettin' to think that you'd been givin' us the shake."

Cut Nose had kept his eyes fixed upon Red steadily and evilly for almost a minute. "Oh," he said, at length, and licked his tongue about his lips, "I guess he would n't try doin' *that*."

Red stood where he was, gulping with uncertainty.

"Oh, well, anyways, he's back with us now." Fat evidently wanted to smooth out the situation. "And ain't he just turned up, too, when the Doctor ordered?" He winked at the crowd in

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general. "Wasn't we just lookin' for that Irish-mahogany top of his?—Fer when this Deutscher lad over here goes out of his way to tell us he can lick anything of his weight in America—!"

And then Red saw that looking on at his left was the solemn-faced "Midget Hans," the little Saxon Samson who supported his great-grandmother.

"That's right!" Cut Nose caught up Fat's suggestion in a minute; "that's what he said." He shoved the dice-box back into his pocket, with a new relish in things. "An', friend McGaw, when we told him that you could put him out in about three minutes, he said he'd like fine to give you the chance!"

There was no need for Red to be told that Hans had said nothing of the kind. Indeed, the little German was now trying hard to get back through the circle himself. But Fat reached out and held him. And Red knew very well what

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was coming, too. He had seen enough of that sort of thing in the past. He and Hans were going to be made to fight.

It was not that Fat, at any rate, was essentially cruel. He merely wished to be entertained himself, and to entertain the crowd. As both he and Cut Nose looked at it, too, "it did kids a lot o' good to scrap." And Fat grinned encouragement at Hans. "Say, you can do him, can't you?"

Hans nervously shook his head.

Cut Nose reached out and took hold of Red. "Well, you can bet he thinks he can, anyways. An' say, I would n't let any white-eyed Katzenjammer think that about *me!* An' you a good year older than him, at that!"

"The more reason I would n't want to scrap him," said Red. "And I ain't got nothin' *on* him, neither."

"Sure you have! Ain't he a Deutscher

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and ain't you a Yank? What more do youse want?"

Hans was again struggling to be free. But Fat gripped him anew by his elbows. "Ah, come on now, leery. *We'd* rather fight than eat!" And shoving Hans' fist forward, he managed to strike Red lightly with it.

"Say," said Cut Nose, "I would n't take that from him!"

"Ah, I guess it did n't *come* from him! . . . Aw, youse lads let up, now. 'This ain't our scrappin' day.'"

"Every day's your scrappin' day if you've got the right sort of stuff in you."

The boys were driven at each other from both sides. But they contrived to come together so that it hurt only a little.

"Fling them in again, Fat."

And this time their heads struck so that it hurt more than any blow from a fist could have.

"You see," said Fat, with a kind of



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sympathy, "that's what you get for not bein' sports."

The third time Red flung out an arm to cover his face, and his elbow caught his helpless opponent in the mouth. At that Hans gasped miserably and made a motion to put up his own defence.

"Ah, there you're talkin'," said Cut Nose. "Get into it, now, get into it!"

Again they tried to hold back. They were half crying, and they looked at each other piteously, but the big fingers sunk mercilessly into their arms, and once more they were thrown together. They hit out in desperation, almost without knowing that they did so.

"Now, that's somethin' like! That's the pure McCoy! That's what you come here for!"

And then, very suddenly, a number of other people seemed to arrive. Four huge men dropped down into that grass-grown cellar, shouting things in German. It

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was the elder brothers of the Saxon Samson family!

"Skids!" thought Red, weakly; "now I'll be gettin' it from *them* as well!" And already a hand as big as a leg of mutton had its grip on him.

But already, too, Hans, in a quiver of gesticulation, was explaining what the actual situation was.

Whereat Big Heinie Müller and Ludwig his worthy compeer laid hold upon Fat and Cut Nose. It was also plain that they had had to do with ugly customers before. For with a swift dexterity which no one could have looked for from such sons of Anak, they ran their hands up and down the pair in search of weapons. From Cut Nose they removed a long, ugly-looking knife.

"Circuses iss derrible dangerous blaces," said Big Heinie, who was looking after Fat. And then he appeared to have a happy and original idea. From

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the bushiest depths of his tremendous throat he made a suggestion.

"Ach, so-o-o-o!" agreed Ludwig delightedly, beaming upon Cut Nose like a yellow-whiskered sun.

And before those two fight organizers had any realization of their fate themselves, they were squared up and driven at each other, even as Red and Hans had been!

It was easy to see that at first Fat and Cut Nose regarded it as some kind of leather-headed German joke.

When thrust forward till they all but rubbed jowls, while they resisted as best they could, they met each other's eyes with a sheepish grin.

"Iss it to laugh, yess?" asked Fat, facetiously.

But at that moment their faces came together with a bump!

"Ah, *twenty-three!* — What you lettin' them do?" barked Cut Nose.

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“ Ah, could I help . . . ”

A second time they collided, head on.

And now the effect was immediate. Plunging and pitching, and calling upon the onlookers to help them, they tried furiously to free themselves.

Their exertions taught them just two things—in the hands of that mighty couple from Saxony they were about as powerful as a pair of blind puppies. Secondly, from that canvas-man audience they could expect not even sympathy!

All the while Hans had been imparting to his seniors those manly exhortations to combat, which a few minutes before had been coming so freely from the present captives themselves.

“ Ya, ya! ” repeated Ludwig. “ They had radder fight as eat! ”

“ Jawohl! ” boomed Big Heinie; “ if you are not *Deutsch* and he iss not a Yankee, yoost imagine you are two of der great world powers and *therefore*

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should you fight!" He caught one of Fat's back-flung heels and gave it a velvet twist which almost took it off.

And then the two were sent at each other a third time. Cut Nose's wildly jerking right hand pawed his fellow across the mouth.

"Ach, du lieber," said Ludwig, with feeling — "I voot not take *that* from him."

Saying which he and his fellow Samson seized them by the wrists, and they were made to punch each other with method and deliberation.

"It iss a pleasure, yess?" asked Big Heinie. . . . "Ach, ach, ach!" he reprovèd; "if you swear, so shall you fight yet more."

They yelled and heaved backward. "*Cripes! — Judas priest! — Why don't some of the rest of youse pile on?*"

"Why, ain't we enjoyin' it fine the way it is?" asked a lanky stake-driver with a straw in his mouth.

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Hans still coached his brother from a soul inflamed with vengeance.

“Effery day is your fightin’ day if you are sports!” repeated Ludwig, unctuously, and he shoved his man into the enemy’s batteries again. “That is what you came here for!”

Cut Nose managed to twist about and to fling himself at his captor, open-mouthed.

The latter did not even close his hands to deal with him. He caught his forearm and whirled him entirely off his feet.

Then once more their faces were bumped together. And in a baffled paroxysm they struck out much as cactus-cornered rattle-snakes are said to set their fangs venomously into themselves. As often, too, as they tried to stop, once again they were ruthlessly launched forward.

And, with howls of rage, they had been

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hammering each other for a good five minutes, when from the top of the cellar there was a cry of, "*Jigger!—Jigger!* — The show cops!"

The policemen were still far enough away. But in a minute the crowd had begun to scatter. The Saxon Samsons released their grip upon their victims. They even suffered Cut Nose to pick up his weapon again. And for a moment it seemed to be a toss-up if he would not use it. But he thought better of it in the end.

"Come on, youse," called Fat to Red; "what yuh waitin' for?"

"Ah," said Red, "I guess I'll be stayin' with the Show."

Cut Nose ran back towards him. "Youse come on along!"

"Nah," and Red backed in behind Ludwig and Gustav; "I guess I won't be travellin' with youse lads no more. I don't know as I like tellin' hard-luck stories."

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“All right!” yelled Cut Nose. “All right, young bo! We’ll see how youse feel about that later on.” And catching another glimpse of the approaching uniforms, he rapidly followed Fat in the direction of the railway sidings.

When Big Heinie was asked what the trouble was, he answered, “Ach, noddings, noddings. We yoost been havin’ a leedle fun.”

But Midget Hans rushed back to his trunk in the dressing-room and wrote another letter to his great-grandmother. She had several times spoken of coming to America. And he wanted her to know exactly the sort of place America really was!



## CHAPTER VI

### ON THE JUMP

*Of the dish-wash squads; a Homeric contest with battle lines extending between suds and cook tent; of Togo and Nogo; a loading at night and how it feels to "belong."*

**A**T eleven Red was given notice to report at the "cook tent" — or circus dining hall.

He had already, at the breakfast hour, come to know it in one way. At eight it had hoisted a red flag. And next moment about half the people in the Show had started on the run for it as if it were on fire. He had run, too. He had discovered that the red flag meant that breakfast was ready. And he had had such a breakfast as he had not had in

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years,—the best of everything, everything hot, and all you could possibly eat.

*Now* he was to make the acquaintance of the cook tent as a "dish wash." And after his first golden visions of entering Dubuque as a clown, or an elephant keeper, it must be confessed that to go as a "dish wash" did not seem just all it might have been.

But he was soon to find that there was a lot more to say about that.

Behind the cook tent, and flanked by great piles and pyramids of supplies, stood the "range wagon,"—a mighty cooking-stove on wheels, capable of providing a meat breakfast for eleven hundred people in from seventy to eighty minutes. Beside the range wagon stood something much like the boiler of a steam engine. Only the steam from it, conveyed in an elaborate system of pipes, served to boil the huge cauldrons of soup

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and vegetables, steep the tea, "French" the coffee, and keep the cooked meats hot in the big, savory "steam boxes."

From that boiler, too, another system of piping carried hot water to two waist-high lines of long, sloping zinc pans. In these pans the dishes were washed. There were two squads of washers, one for each side of the tent; they called themselves the "Blues" and the "Reds." As was only proper Mr. McGaw was made a member of the latter brigade. And what he had imagined would be mere, everyday dishwashing, he now found to be a regular, thirty-men-on-a-side match game, to beat anything ever seen on a diamond or a gridiron.

In both cases the captain was "tea-and-coffee-man" at the table nearest his pans. And for the first half hour of the meal most of his men had to act as waiters. All, too, had to take at least fifteen minutes off for their own dinners. But, after

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that, those captains flung their aprons away and sent up a shout for turbine speed.

In an instant, as if from nowhere at all, there sprang up between tables and pans two pairs of fiercely rival lines. As if on an endless "conveying belt" a manifold, tumultuous succession of cups and saucers, plates, bowls, and cutlery, whirled out to the washers, spun through their sudsy hands back to the lightning fingers of the dryers,—a gross of towels were used at every meal,—and thence down the return line to their places on the table again.

"Reds" and "Blues" worked in plain sight of each other. And every smallest tie-up in the enemy's lines was saluted with whoops of joy and spurts of energy more desperate than any before them.

"Come on, now! come on, now! come on!" the captains kept crying. But all such urging was entirely needless. Both those double lines were doing flying team-

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work together like two great sixty-armed, panting monsters. Human pressure could go no further.

Red was a beginner, — but he did not feel like a beginner long. “Say,” he gloated to the young fellow next him, “I kind o’ *like* this all right! I kind o’ think I’ll *stay* with this awhile!”

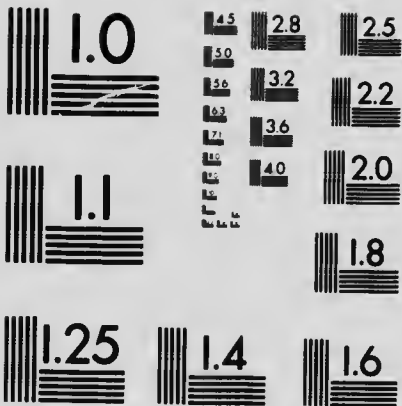
His side was a good forty seconds ahead when a plate slipped from a dryer’s hand, struck an iron cleat and smashed.

“One man off the Reds on penalty!” shouted the cook-tent boss.

With a roar of triumph the “Blues” took hold again. They maintained their burst for a minute, — a minute and a half, — two minutes! Their last cup shot back to the table. They had won out!

“Ah, *skidoo!*” cried the newest “dish wash” of them all; “and we had a skinch on it! I *told* the chief I did n’t need anything to eat to-day. Except for him makin’ me stop for that, we might of





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won! But wait till we get loose on them at *supper!*”

And for such hours of ecstasy he was to be paid four dollars and a half a week!

“Heh,” he said, “clowns an’ elephant men are maybe all right fer what they got to do. But they ain’t got anything on *this!*”

After that noon wash-up, too, he had a period of freedom. He proceeded to make himself acquainted with the inhabitants of the Side Show. And there he found two more of “the kind o’ people it was worth gettin’ next to.” They were “Togo” and “Nogo,” “The Japanese Twins,” the worthy successors of their never-to-be-forgotten brothers from Siam.

And though from their youth up “Togo” and “Nogo” had been attached to each other by some six inches of their very heart-strings as it were, they proved at once that this in no way prevented them



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from becoming attached to other people. They were undoubtedly two of the most smiling young Japs who ever came to America. And Red's own fine Irish smile might well have made him at one with them immediately.

Further, Togo and Nogo had shown how rapidly you can become naturalized by taking to the English, — or the *American*, — language, and to amateur photography both at the same time!

At first Red watched those four hands move, as if all from the same shoulders, among films and shutters and mounting cards with a creepy fascination. But when he had once commenced to get over that he began to feel that he was exactly the person that those amateur photographers needed to meet. For his last employer had been a camera fiend, — had "developed" in one of his inside offices. And Red was able to tell the Japanese Twins some things about pho-

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tography which they certainly could never have learned from anybody else. For his own part, too, within an hour he had come to the conclusion that as friends Togo and Nogo might be all right; that, in fact they might be just about the swellest ever — “if only youse could tell whether to say *him* or *them*.”

There was another dish-washing match at supper-time. And once more, alas, the hated Blues were victors.

But after that meal there were other things to think about. The dishes did not go back upon the tables. They were packed into big crates. The tables themselves were folded together and the seats taken up.

And almost before the last of them were cleared away, poles and canvas were brought down with a running rush at the hands of Reds and Blues together. For the cook tent and all connected with it had to be put aboard the

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“Flying Squadron,” the first of the four long, resplendent circus trains. And breakfast must be ready on a new lot, at seven next morning, in Cleveland.

As the last of the cook-tent trucks, the ponderous eight-ton range-wagon, trundled across the windy common, Red joined the line that followed it to the sidings. At the forward end of the “Flying Squadron” stood the sleeping car in which he now had his own place and berth number. But dusk had barely fallen and he did not go aboard.

There was too much that was worth seeing outside. The loaders, — “razor backs” in circus language, — were putting the great clanking parade wagons on the flat cars. To the end of the last “flat” they had hooked a species of sheet-iron inclined plane or skidway. Between the cars, from one end of the train to the other, they had laid thin iron bridges. And so, as fast as those tarpaulin covered chariots could be

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hauled up the skidway, a single team of horses, — with a man using the pole of the chariot as a steering tiller, — could run it the full way forward. When the big wagons had been “rolled home,” their wheels were anchored in deeply grooved iron cradles. And they followed each other at the rate of two a minute.

It grew darker, and every few yards along the tracks gasoline flares were lit up. The forty or fifty teams at work weaved in and out among them in a kind of great, deliberate, equine minuet, and now from the emptying menagerie, rattling, banging, and jolting came the cage wagons. As each cage was tilted for the skidway, its inmates in turn sent forth their individual yells of fury. Then came the circus “stock,” — not cows and horses, but zebus and gnus, water buffaloes, guanacos, and emus. And after them again, in mighty procession, — it was like all Stonehenge on the move, —

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down the eerie line of flares marched the elephants!

The scene became one to dream about. And Red did dream about it. At first, when he had learned that they were to leave for Cleveland that night, his knowledge had mainly served to make him a lot more easy in his thoughts about a certain pair of gentlemen whom they would be leaving well behind in Buffalo. But now Fat and Cut Nose filled his thoughts no more.

He was "bedded down" in a berth in one of the sleepers of The Big Show! — That was the thought he felt it was worth millions just to lie there and let soak into him! He "*belonged*"! He had "*joined out*"!

But by degrees dream and reality seemed to get all mixed up and run together. And he slept until, with a long groan of air brakes, his train pulled into Cleveland and took its siding.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POLE WAGON

*The menagerie tent again; first acquaintance with Mrs. Müller, better known as Madam Rosalinda; reappearance of Messrs. Fat and Cut Nose; and how Elephants McNally came pretty near having to do "some fightin'."*

AT that breakfast "dish wash" in Cleveland it was the Reds who won. And this time Mr. McGaw could set forth to view the new lot with a soul chesty with triumph.

He intended to call on Elephants McNally in the menagerie tent. And he almost made the mistake of going to the regular entrance and waiting tamely till the door man had examined his pass!

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But he stopped himself in time. He walked on along the tent, and, lifting a side wall, ducked abstractedly under.

In a moment a watchman was charging down upon him.

Red looked at him in a languid surprise. "Ah, what's the matter with you?" he asked, and held out his pass — "Ain't *this* good?"

It *was* good. And lifting his chest another three inches he continued his way down the sawdust.

According to the custom of The Big Show two local reporters were just about to be permitted to enter the leopards' den, there to be photographed and write up their experiences for the afternoon editions. These particular leopards were rather tamer than Maltese mousers. But, as a "stunt," it flattered the reporters' vanity, and accordingly it was good advertising.

Red had just offered to enter that

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leopards' den himself when he caught sight of Elephants. And then he grew suddenly bashful.

"Hello," cried McNally, cheerfully, "how's the laughin' jackasses?"

Attracted by the echo of something familiar Coakeney also showed up.

"Ho, it's Mr. McGaw, is it? Well, we would n't mind you goin' in with the *leopards* so much. But, my word, I *would* be nervous if I saw you h'enterin' this snyke department. I'd be afryde of you gettin' into a scrim and chowkin the pythons to death!"

"Ah, say," said Red, blushing fiercely, "I don't know as that was so *terrible* funny."

A sharp-eyed little woman in a uniform jacket turned back from the crowd. "Ach, de fakirs!" she muttered with scorn.

"That's what, Mrs. Müller," said McNally.

"Dey would n't want deir photographs





"Say, are you Madam Rosalinda, the lion tamer." Page 81



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took in mit dot feller." She pointed down the row of cages to where a beautiful black panther with a vibrancy as of fire paced up and down his den.

"Huh, you can see he's fierce all right!" said Red. "I bet nobody don't go in with him!"

"Only der keeper und me," answered the little woman, simply.

Mr. McGaw's eyes became as big as five-cent alleys: "Say, are you Madam Rosalinda, the lion tamer?"

"Ya, — lion tamer, — also birdt tamer, also white-mice tamer, also der flying trapeze!" she laughed.

"And she's the only person in the biz!" added McNally. "She could teach the lions high-trapeze work in a day or two!"

"Say!" exclaimed Red; — she had almost more fascination for him than Big Heinie, who, he now remembered, was her husband! — "Say! I wish 't you'd learn *me* how!"

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They all laughed.

“And the little Heinie in New York,” asked Coakeney of Mrs. Müller—“is that there three-sized dad of 'is still troublin' about *'im?*”

“Ach!”—she lifted up her hands quite hopelessly; “only last night alretty deir wass one leedle monkey sick, und der man, he won't his eat supper and keep sayin': ‘Mutter, I'm tinkin' somedings 'll happen mit our leedle feller yet!’”

The two keepers laughed again.

Mrs. Müller turned maternally to Red. “And you, are you mit the Show?”

“Sure, I am!”

“Then I learn you somedings better as peast-tamin'; I tell you how to keep out of danger. Stay ever by your own work. You shall always be safe while you are *workin'.*”

She turned and walked across the tent.

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This was not just what Red had wanted. But he liked Mrs. Müller, and he told himself that he was going to see more of that small lady.

Which, in truth, he was.

On an average between meals the cook-tent squads had about two hours of leisure.

Some of the young fellows, — college students who were taking this means of earning a little money in the summer, — pulled books out of their pockets and sought the shade of the big empty vans. Others went off for a sleep. But Red divided his time between amateur photography with Togo and Nogo, and listening to Elephants and Coakeney talk about wild animals.

McNally for his part seemed to be a kind of general utility man around the Show. He had been in the business so long and possessed such a more than Yankee ingenuity in handling all uncom-

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mon difficulties that he was generally called in when everyone else had failed. It was no time till Red was both marveling at him as a genius and confiding in him as an elder brother.

And in Cleveland he showed himself an elder brother indeed.

About half past five that afternoon Red was standing alone outside the menagerie tent. The G. M. came by and spoke to him as he passed. He did not say much. He merely asked him how he liked his dishwashing work. And when he answered "that he didn't know why they called that dishwashin' job *work* at all," the G. M. gave him back his grin, and said, "Then you'll be a good American yet." And what did he mean by that?

Red was still exercising his brains over it when he turned to go on again, — and then he jumped a yard. As if the Big Show had never left Buffalo, Fat and

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Cut Nose were shuffling rapidly up to him!

"Ah, youse need n't be so shy of us," said Fat, sorely; "We've crossed it off as far as *you're* concerned."

"An', shy or not," said Cut Nose, getting around to the other side of him, "by Gee, he's anyways goin' to tell us where we can get at them *this* and *that* Deutscher pals of his!"

Now, from their viewpoint, Fat and Cut Nose were two individuals who had suffered intolerable wrong. And having by untiring exertions caught up with the show they designed somehow or other to take it out of those Saxon Samsons a hundred times over. In fact, they felt that they were showing magnanimity enough in having given up any intention of taking it out of Red, the deserter. As for Red he could not know all that. He only knew that Fat was grasping at his arm. He pulled back till he was against

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the canvas of the menagerie tent, and "Elephants!" he yelled; "Elephants!"

At that hurry call Elephants was out there in about seven seconds.

"Well, an' what are *youse* lookin' for?" cried Cut Nose.

"Nothin' at all," answered McNally with calmness.

Fat still kept his hold. "All right, then, friend," he said, "you get wise and chase back to where youse belong!"

"I guess," returned Elephants, even more serenely, "that me and Redney here belongs together." Saying which he caught the hand still gripping Red and gave it a swift inward turn that was like jiu-jitsu. Fat let go with a jerk of pain that flamed at once into fury.

A few yards away stood a pole wagon. He ran for the back of it; he pulled out a pipe-wrench as big as a war club, and came back at McNally on the rush.

One might have believed that that was



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precisely what Elephants was looking for.

He dropped to within two feet of the ground. And he had not merely ducked. He shot divingly upon all fours. His fingers closed about Fat's ankles, and with a cry of foundered helplessness that gentleman went on over him and came down head on. The fall left him half stupefied. All the fight was jarred out of him before he had begun.

Nor did McNally stop there. Small as he was he whipped about, leaped upon him like a cat, twisted the pipe-wreath away, and jumped to his feet again.

But he had still to deal with Cut Nose. And the latter's hand had gone behind him. When it came out it was holding his knife, and he sprang at the animal man like a big black eel.

At first Red thought that this time Elephants was running away. But when the little keeper had reached that pole

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wagon he flung the wrench behind him and pulled out something else. It was a circus tent stake, a five-foot length of hickory thicker than a man's arm. It seemed to Red that he might as well have thought of defending himself with a cordwood stick.

"You can't mix it up with *me* and get away with it!" cried Cut Nose. And he flung himself forward.

The next quarter of a minute taught Red some principles of defensive tactics that were entirely new.

Elephants spread his hands some foot and a half apart, so that he could whirl his stake in either direction. The knife clashed slitheringly down one end of it, and the other end swung low and caught the attacker across the knee.

Cut Nose yelped with pain, and then, springing from his left leg, tried to close in a second time.

Two other circus men ran up. But

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McNally declined their help. "It's all right, boys, it's all right! No cause for any excitement whatever!" And he seemed simply to have met Cut Nose's rush by turning part way around. But the heavy stake spun like a drum-major's baton,— and now Cut Nose's left hand went down.

He shook it as if he had hurt his funnybone, and came on again.

This time Elephants stepped suddenly and swiftly backwards. Cut Nose's full weight came upon his injured leg. That threw him to one side and uncovered his guard. The stake swung through a quarter circle, and the man with the knife received it on the back of his thick-set neck. He pitched over on all fours. The knife flew a dozen feet ahead of him.

McNally picked it up and slid it into his boot-leg. "I'm goin' to have a trunkful of these things," he said, "if I keep on. You lads had enough?"

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They had had enough. Cut Nose had already begun limpingly to follow Fat from the "lot." "Youse think," he said, half choked by his rage, "oh, maybe youse think that this is the endin' of this. But it's only just the beginnin'!"

McNally watched them go, beating a tattoo on his cloven chin with his first and second finger. Then he returned that tent-stake to the pole wagon as imperturbably as he had entered into the affair.

Red worked his way close in beside him. "Skids!" he said, "how long did it take you to learn to do *that*?"

"About fifteen years. And you've had a chance just now to see what happens to people who do their fightin' with knives. Yes, and unless you're some yawpin' windy-mouth you don't need to *fight* more'n three or four times in your life at that!"

"But you—you said you had near a trunkful of knives by this time!"

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“ Oh,” returned Elephants, contemptuously, “ of course there’s always some little *trouble* or other keepin’ order on the lot. But it’s a good five years since I’ve done any *fightin’*.”

He began to send his audience “ back to their regiments:” “ Now boys, now boys, you’ve all got your work to do. You’ve had more sensation to-day than is good for your health, — and a mighty sight too much for the good of the Show. We’re not supplyin’ material for any Sunday Supplement. So try to get it right out of your systems again!”

Red watched him with an admiration that could not be voiced by words. Yet against all logic, too, he felt sort of sorry for Fat and Cut Nose. He knew, of course, they would never rest till they’d got even with the Big Show; very likely they’d go after *him* besides. But just the same as the under dogs they had his secret sympathy. And you can take your choice

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as to which feeling did Mr. Red McGaw the greater honor.

That night he spoke to Elephants about it again. "But you never tried to have them pinched or nothin'. O' course I would n't want yuh to."

"Well, in that we go by the G. M. And whatever his reason is, the G. M. ain't got much belief in the good of havin' people pinched. He says it's a whole lot easier to *pinch* them than to *unpinch* them. But about these two good friends of yours, I dunno, — I dunno!"

Red had begun to see some of those adventures with which he had felt the whole life of Big Shows must be filled to intoxication. Yet, in the very last place where we might have looked for it, he had also come face to face with that very sobering question, — the maintenance of the Reign of Law.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BIG TOP

*A further introduction to the reign of order and law; performances between performances; the heavy weight of responsibility upon the shoulders of him who supports a great-grandmother; and some "elephant talk," of which more later on.*

THEY stayed two days longer in Cleveland, during which time they saw no more of Fat and Cut Nose whatever. Then they struck South for a week of one-day stands in the coal and oil towns of Ohio and Western Pennsylvania.

And in that week Red not only awakened completely to the fullness of the Reign of Law on a circus lot, but he also began to have the feeling that he was a part of something a great deal larger than himself. He had experienced

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it to a certain degree when he became a section of the human "conveying belt" which washed the circus dishes. Now he began to realize that that human conveying belt was about the very smallest connecting piece in the machinery of the Big Show.

In actual sight were a score of trades all working together. And there were other battalions of men, far in advance, whom you never saw at all. One squad covered the country driving-sheds and the city bill boards with great posters. A second selected and rented and laid out the successive lots. A third bought the mountains of hay and straw, and the foothills of bags of oats for the horse tent. A fourth provided the tons of ice for the refrigerators, and of coal for the range-wagon. It was the business of still another division to see that those 500-pound cold-storage boxes of fresh meat "came on" all right, with those crates



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of fresh vegetables and tubs of butter and tins of coffee and all the hundred other different kinds of supplies. More than that, everything must be waiting exactly in the right place on the lot long before the vans bearing the cook-tent "rolled" upon it. None of these things happened by chance. And then on the lot itself that huge and complicated mechanism of human hands worked as smoothly and as rapidly and as surely as the great rotary presses that used to whirl out the "extry's" when Red made his beginning as a "Newsy."

And if at first it had been sufficient for him merely to feel himself a part of the conveying belt, now he had grown to feel himself a part of the whole immense machine: "If he wasn't there when called for, like enough there'd be a hitch!"

He had the feeling, too, that at the very center of the driving wheel of the

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engine,—as if he were that tiny, ever-quiet eye of the mechanism,—sat the G. M. But the G. M. was a great deal more than an eye. He was the brain.

When, just before the “night show” on Tuesday, there was a blow-up among the gasoline tanks, on half an hour’s notice the G. M. arranged things so that naphtha could be used instead. On Wednesday the Big Show had to travel over a railroad so small and ancient that the circus trains paralyzed its wheezy old engines completely. And the G. M. spent most of the night getting other engines started on the way from Pittsburg. On Thursday one of those famous “Waltzing Ponies” suddenly fell sick and died. The G. M. began wiring within ten minutes to the only place in America where there was another trick pony that could “pick up its act.”

And whenever the pressure was off he always found time to stop and talk to

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somebody. When he talked to Red he would express his deepest sympathy if the Blues happened to be winning, and ask him if he really wasn't hankering to go back and be The Human Egg again? One day when he had to lecture a stupid keeper his voice seemed to grow even gentler than it ordinarily was. He was certainly the kind of Great Man for Red's money!

When no performance was going on there were several different places on the lot where it was good to be.

The "big top" was one of them. Sometimes Togo and Nogo would come into it and climb up on a trapeze and begin to do stunts. And in that, "they had the Siamese Twins beaten to a froth." Their Japanese manager had once been a professional wrestler; and when, as frequently occurred, the pair tried to take a fall out of him, it was a

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sight worth going a thousand miles to see. Those Twins should rightly have been put upon the bills as The Japanese Octopus!

In the big top, too, you could always be sure of finding one of the troupes of acrobats practising new business. They would set up a *méchanique*, a wide, tall frame of steel tubing, from which hung a pair of leather slings. In those slings, by a sort of life belt, the apprentice acrobat was suspended. He could do the flip-back summersault high in the air, or throw himself backwards from the brawny shoulders of one "ground man" to another, and yet never put himself in danger.

When, again, some lad was being trained for an act which did not allow of the assistance of the *méchanique*, several of the older gymnasts from the other troupes always gathered in as "safety men." If the apprentice slipped, the



"The older gymnasts always gathered in as 'safety men.'" *Page 98*





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way in which they caught him before he really seemed to have begun to fall amazed Red beyond words.

"If you don't gatch him," said Big Heinie one day when they were teaching Hans, "maybe he break a leg or an arm or a neck or somedings. And, ach du lieber, what shall that great-grandmother do *then?*"

It was evident that the Saxon Samsons considered the support of a great grandmother a matter that might be joked about!

But Hans' own attitude more than counterbalanced that. And as for Red, the thought of Hans' position was enough at times to stop his smile! He had a respect for him which halted only this side of reverence. He had had *his* experience of supporting people in the two or three days when he had had to support Fat and Cut Nose, and he had learned from *that!*

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And in the course of their second afternoon in Cleveland he ventured to speak to Hans about it. "Gee," he said, "if it was me I would n't get no sleep at nights. I once heard of a fellah supportin' his grandmother. But *great-grand-mothers!* — Skids!"

"Many nights I haf not slept," said Hans.

"An' Big Heinie says you been supportin' her ever since you been eleven."

"Ya. But when I wass eleffen only it wass not so *schlecht*, so badt. I wass too young to feel der respon— der responiss— I had not began to think thereon alretty."

"Heh! Then if I was you I would n't do no thinkin' on it *now*."

"*Aber now must* I think of it!" cried Hans, with tragedy; "neffer can I make her take care mit herself! It is *furchtbar*, fierce! The last winter I am home she will not wear her headshawl to hang the clothes herout. And when I buy her



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another yet, she lays it by the chest away for her *jubileejahr*, — till she iss a huntert! When I get her a *paar* American rubbers from New York back she puts them on the parlor for a curiosity! ”

“Skids!” What could anybody do in a case like that?

And from further acquaintance with Hans Red discovered that there was another and a secret matter which afflicted him even more than that uncontrollable great-grandmother. In America he had always traveled with the Müllers. They had become like parents to him; and this season with the Big Show was almost certain to be their last.

Like most people in circus life they had for years been talking of getting out of it and going into something else; to own an American farm was Big Heinie's idea of earthly happiness. Until this year, though, it had been *only* talk. But now there was that “leedle Heinie.” And

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some seven times a day did that mighty father of his observe with a steadily increasing anxiety that "circusses wass derrible dangerous blaces," and that "somedings would happen mit dot leedle feller yet!" The fact that little Heinie was hundreds of miles away with his Aunt Elsa in New York made no difference at all.

And Hans knew, too, that little Mrs. Müller, Spartan and sinewy and matter-of-fact as she might seem to be, also had her hours of emotion when she let herself think of "leedle Heinie." Only it was she who looked after the Müller treasury and she had not been able to persuade herself that they would have enough in the Bank for Savings to buy that farm until the fall. . . . Yet the tug of war between "leedle Heinie" and the Big Show was at times a desperate one. And when "leedle Heinie" did win, if Hans was to continue supporting his great-

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grandmother he would be left altogether alone.

They had stayed three days in Cleveland. Then had come that week of one-day stands in the hills of Ohio and Pennsylvania. And so far they had seen no more of Fat and Cut Nose. The pair had almost left Red's mind when one day they re-entered it with a rush. On Thursday of that week Cut Nose, or someone very like him, was seen near the circus trains. The same afternoon the main gasoline plant was blown up. And it wasn't the kind of explosion that could have taken place by accident.

It filled Red with a vicarious guilt that sent him in a humiliation of apology to the G. M. But the G. M. was already drawing on the resources of the repair car, in which car were to be found the duplicate parts of every kind of big and little machine made use of by the Big Show. It was only a matter of putting

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another gasoline plant together. The G. M. had already got the show housesmiths at work upon it. And, save that he had also been conferring with the circus detectives, he appeared to regard the affair as almost in the natural order of things.

"Why, son," he said, "because we happen to be out an illuminating plant, surely that's no reason why *you* should stop illuminating us with that grin of yours."

And, despite all his proper feelings in the matter, Red began to "illuminate" again.

Then the G. M. further suggested that if they caught Cut Nose they might forgive him and offer him that job of Human Egg! He was entirely the kind of Great Man for Red's money!

But grin once more though he might Cut Nose and Fat were on his conscience smartingly. He had "belonged" nearly two weeks now. He had got to the stage when he never said anything but

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"we" when speaking of the Big Show. And when you do that you belong in very sooth.

He had begun by feeling at home only in the cook-tent. By the end of that second week he was "in friends" with about everybody on the lot. But if you were comparing things it was the menagerie tent and the society of McNally and Coakeney that kept a little the uppermost grip with him. They continued to be jollyers all right, particularly Coakeney. But often, too, perhaps to give their imaginations a much-needed rest, they would confine themselves entirely to the simple facts.

And indeed when they were talking about the elephants, which with Red still held a *supremacy* of fascination, they did not have to use their imaginations at all. Red had noticed in the beginning that the keepers spoke to the great beasts just as if they were human beings. "Pali,"

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McNally would call out, "will you stop mussing yourself up in the dust like that? anybody'd think you were about five years old!" And Pali, far down at the end of that swaying gray half circle, would be justly ashamed, and act as became her years for the next two hours.

As for the little fellows, they were always trying to bunt each other over even when on exhibition,—just as bad boys have been known to brace their feet and shoot each other off a bench in Sunday School. Of course, when Coakeney dropped down on them, in a jiffy they would be as solemn as deacons and look around wonderingly to see who had been making all that row. But a moment later they would be stepping on each other's toes, and giving each other the hunch, and carrying on as bad as ever. Then when their call came to line up for the performing tent they would all rush, pushing and elbowing, to be first. Meal-

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time was another trouble hour. Each of those small-boy elephants made it his business above all other things whatsoever to see that nobody else got his place. And if by chance anybody else *did* get it there would be a frightful riot! To Red it was for all the world like supper-time at the "Newsies' " Lodging House.

Now and again McNally would teach him a word or two of "elephant talk." Thus "*tutt*" is "stop." "*Mail*" is "go quicker." "*Tutt cum min*" is "come this way," or "come back to me," and so on. Neither spelling nor pronunciation may be the best of Cingalese or Hindustani, but they sufficed very well for the purpose. McNally desired in particular to put Red upon proper speaking terms with Deva, the biggest old dame of them all. He used to ask Red how she compared in education with that elephant he used to take care of in Bronx Park. For more reasons than one Red was compelled to

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admit that there could be no comparison whatever between them.

And in truth Deva sometimes did things which she could hardly have been told how to do in English and elephant talk both together. One day of rain when a six-ton pole wagon stuck in a mudhole, she was called upon to get it out again. At first she merely tried the shoving power of those huge, bulbous brows of hers, but that only drove the big van further in. Then she meditated a moment, turned and brought her elephant *brain* to the problem. Curling her trunk around a wheel she both pushed and lifted at the same time. And that pole wagon punted ahead as lightly as a baby carriage!



## CHAPTER IX

### PLUTO

*Mrs. Müller removes a bone and loses her keys ; and, while it may be bad form to twist a lion's tail, it may on the other hand sometimes be the best of wisdom to twist a black panther's.*

IT was Red's familiarity with the menagerie staff which led the cook-tent boss to take him away from his regular job a little after five that Saturday and send him over to the menagerie boss with a note informing him of a shortage in the supply of fresh meat.

Most of the keepers had gone out to supper, for supper is a very early meal when a circus is making one-day stands. But the menagerie chief was sitting in his usual place beside the camels. When he had taken in that message he started for the manager's office.

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Red had crossed the tent again to return to his brothers of the dishwash squad when Mrs. Müller came in. She, too, was on her way to supper. Red slowed up and sent her back an admiring, almost filial grin.

She returned it with maternal interest. But, following her habit, she had an eye on her "peasts" in the big red cages as well.

And she had just passed the cage of Pluto, the black panther, when she stopped, turned, and looked again.

Her face darkened. "Somebody haf left a bone mit him once more, a second time yet this week!"

Red came closer and saw that one of the animal's cheeks was "podded out" as if from an attack of toothache.

"In the Java junkle he know how to get it out alone unhelped," said Mrs. Müller, angrily, "now must *I* do it!"

"Can't I get somebody?" said Red.

A green young elephart man had

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crossed over. But he did not volunteer to help.

Mrs. Müller pulled her key chain from her girdle and pushed under the guard-rope. She mounted the steps at the end of the cage, snapped open the door, and entered. Walking quickly down to the mauling beast she rolled its head under her arm, thrust two fingers in behind the long, spiky canines to keep the jaws open, and with a sudden jerk had that knuckle of beef in the sawdust.

According to the story-books the animal should at once have been filled with gratitude, but he was anything but that. He growled deeply and backed to the other end of his den. He stopped directly in front of the door, in fact, and his bristling lips drew up with a vicious, grating guttural.

Mrs. Müller had gone in angry. And anger continued to be her principal emotion. "I should my whip haf had!" she

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exclaimed. "Raus mit you!" and she started down the cage.

Obviously she expected the animal to change ends with her again. But he did not. Indeed, he only drew in his head, and his ears flattened back so that you could no longer see them.

*"Pluto!"*

*"Ha-r-r-r-h!"*

Red felt a want to cry out. But that might only make the beast worse. He looked nervously at the young elephant man and he saw that he had begun to grow pale, too. "Wait till I go and get the boss," he said, and his voice had a sort of shake in it.

Mrs. Müller had also grown a trifle pale. But there was no shake about her. "Ah-h, I fix him mineself!" she said; "great scoondrel! Raus! Quickly!"

She advanced upon him again. A serpent-like agitation began to run up and down that soft coal-like body. The beast's

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eyes became luminous, emerald flames. Mrs. Müller took another step forward, and his neck fur ruffed up. He hunched back, more and more, lifting both front paws together almost like a boxer.—  
“*Ha-r-r-r-h ! Ha-r-r-r-h !*”

And then suddenly Mrs. Müller drew in on herself. She had seen that which no one outside could see. Next moment the brute had sprung.

He had sprung. But Mrs. Müller met his leap with a lightning-like response of her own. With the quicksilver swiftness of the trained gymnast she ducked almost to the floor, whipped aside, and, like a bird shooting from cover to cover, took the door end of the cage.

Red and the keeper yelled again and again.

But, now that Mrs. Müller was at that cage door, why, with all her sleight-of-hand quickness, why did she not open and let herself backward into safety?

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There was reason enough. "Ach, mine keys, mine keys!" she cried. The bunch lay under the animal's feet. The tight chain must have been snapped by one of those combingly outspread claws. And only then did Mrs. Müller's face really blanch.

At that moment, too, the beast sprang a second time.

A second time the little woman dropped, and flyingly changed ends with him. But a strip had been torn from the shoulder of her braided jacket, and the blood began to trickle — "*Aber, he haf not hurt me,*" she breathed, pantingly.

For an instant her eyes took themselves from the panther's and feverishly swept the floor around her. — "*Ach-ch!*"

They could feel how much of her courage went out of her in that instant. The leap of the brute had carried that bunch of keys half-way down the cage! Even if for a third time she should succeed in

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making that horrible change of ends with him, the door would still be shut to her. "Ach, du lieber Gott!" she choked. And then, lifting up her voice in a cry which seemed as if it must carry over all the twenty acres of that many-tented lot:

"*Heinie! Heinie! Heinie!*" —

There were keepers and circus hands enough rushing up by now, but none of them seemed to be the people needed.

"Where's Conlin? Where's Menzel?" they shouted.

"Our keys don't fit!"

"Get the old man!"

The other animals, with some strange, frightful instinct for what was taking place, began one after the other to give tongue. The two striped hyenas ran to and fro barking horridly, the wolves and leopards took it up, and the jackals howled and yapped.

Somebody pushed through the crowd with a long syringe. "They're just

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bringin' the ammonia, Missis," he panted; "that 'll quiet him!"

In his last spring the great black cat had struck the bars with such momentum that for the moment it had left him stunned. But again he was beginning to recover.

"And der bloot!" cried Mrs. Müller, convulsively, as her eyes caught the red drip about her feet, "he smells der bloot! Dey all smell it! — *Heinie!* — *Heinie!* — *Heinie!*"

Every lion in the big tent was roaring now. Mogul, the royal Bengal tiger, flung himself from end to end of his cage, battering himself into that awful blood madness. The leopards that had once been so tame were tame no longer. The elephants swayed back and forth, waving their trunks with wild blares and trumpeting. As for the black panther himself, once more the green lights were blazing in his eyes like burning alcohol. Once more his whole body was becoming



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one pulsation of fury, — his rage more benumbing, more terrifying than it had been before!

“The ammonia! — Bring the ammonia!” yelled the man with the syringe again.

And a dry-mouthed answer came, —  
“The bottle’s empty!”

Red ran about in a frenzy. “Well, — why — why can’t youse do somethin’ *else* then? Ain’t — ain’t nobody got a *gun?*”

“The boss has — but where’s he got to?”

“I seen him over near the cook-tent!”

At that moment, plunging through the heave of the crowd, Big Heinie arrived. And the huge man was not stolid nor tranquil now. His wide blue eyes protruded staringly, and he caught at those cage bars as if he were another man of Gaza in the temple of the Philistines.

“Ach, it iss you,” cried Mrs. Müller;

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“Ach, wass will you und leedle Heinie do mitout me?”

It took a dozen keepers to get him back again. — “You can’t do nothin’ *that* way! — Here’s a pole! — We can poke the keys down to her.”

They did so, and the little woman gathered herself together and caught them up. But barely had she recovered her balance when a third time the foam-slavered monster launched himself.

And a third time, by desperate swiftness, she avoided him.

Had that cage afforded him space enough to leap as he would have leaped in the glooms of the tropic forest, Mrs. Müller would never have escaped his first oncoming. Now, almost as certainly, she would never escape another.

As if to double the odds against her, too, the sight of her man, instead of bringing back her nerve, seemed to have lost it for her altogether. She had her keys but

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she did not appear to be able to use them! As if she could not distinguish one from another, she was thrusting them against the lock behind her in a sickness of haste that cruelly defeated itself. Second after second went by. The beast was to be given time to spring again. And when he *did*--!

Then the crowd became conscious of a diversion from the flank. Mr. Redney McGaw, probably having very little idea of what he was doing or why he did it, had rolled under the rope and thrown himself at the further corner of the cage, where for a moment that writhing black tail had thrust itself through the bars.— And he was now giving it good cause to writhe. Using both hands he began to buckle and bend it together.

At first, in his fury of excitement, the great cat did not seem to know what was hurting him. Screaming out, he stiffened like a mass of steel springs for

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another leap. But by that time Red had got his foot braced against the axle and could give all his strength to it. Half a dozen others had rushed to help him, too. Yet it was Red alone that finished the job, even as he had begun it. The beast humped up snarling and clawing, ripping slivers from the bottom of his cage in his efforts to turn around; he might have been a common house cat with his tail caught in a door. And almost throwing Red under the wagon he jerked free at last.

But, one instant before, Mrs. Müller's fingers had found the key they sought. And as the gate clashed into place behind her, she dropped into her big man's shaking arms.

## CHAPTER X

### THE HERO

*How it feels to be a hero; lack of true appreciation on the part of Mrs. Müller; Amzi Jimsor and two reserved seats; peculiar effect of heroism upon the imagination.*

**D**URING the next two hours Red experienced all the intoxication of being a hero. The G. M. did not say much. But he squeezed Red's shoulder, and told him he guessed the Show would have to stand him a uniform, — something that would go on the band-wagon, — for that day's work!

McNally and Coakeney sent out for ginger ale, just as Red himself had done that first afternoon in Buffalo. And they insisted that Deva and the four trick elephants should drink his health as well.

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By this time Big Heinie was back again. And he would have been back long before but for the best of reasons. He wanted money, barrels of money, whole pay-wagons full of it! And, unfortunately for him, it was Mrs. Müller's custom to take their combined salaries and bank them through the show treasurer again, on the day when they were drawn. But circus people are the most prodigally generous on earth. Big Heinie could borrow. And he had the money *now!*

At least he felt he had enough to start with. He plowed an enraptured way through to Red. He whispered to him with a basso profundo mysteriousness that was audible for twenty feet around. And then, every other minute giving him a slap meant to be a love tap but which almost took Red off his feet, he drew him into cover behind the hippopotamus cage, and began to bestow wealth upon him by the double handful!

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Impossible for Red to accept it, — to dream of accepting it! He had been called a hero. He had for some time *felt* like a king or an emperor. And to have compounded in base silver and bills would have been to descend from that starry high estate. He kept telling Big Heinie “just not to mention it,” and, “heh, it was n’t nothin’ at all.” And as soon as he could free himself, he confided both pocketfuls to Elephants to return for him “after a while,” — “or maybe, now, it would be better to get the G. M. to do it.”

But Big Heinie, beaming and clucking and slapping mightily out at everyone he knew, had only gone hasting forth to borrow and return with more.

And he was repeating that lavish performance yet a third time when *Mrs. Müller* made her appearance.

*Mrs. Müller*, for her part, was rapidly becoming her Spartan self again. She

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had been excused from "work" for the remainder of the day. But if need had been she could probably have gone through with it. She did shed some very motherly tears when she spoke to Red of what he had done for "leedle Heinie." But after that she pulled herself together and became entirely direct and businesslike. When McNally asked her, "What about that ton or so of coin he'd been loaded up with?" she gave Red a ten-dollar gold piece from it, and answered Elephants that he might give the rest of it back to her: for one thing, she was going to use part of it that afternoon.

And then, as if in explanation of that, she got Red a half holiday and carried him off downtown with her.

She informed him briefly that there were many things that would be of much more use to him than money.



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She proceeded to illustrate that, first by buying him a good, strong, man-sized suit-case, — and then socks, underwear, handkerchiefs, and linen enough to fill it to bulging. And finally she gave him peremptory orders that, for the remainder of the season, he was every week to bring her all his mending and laundry.

“For dot suit-case iss for glean dings only,” she admonished; “if once you put back into it dings dot are dorn or dirty, you will haf some actions mit me alretty!”

Coming from a lady whose life he had just saved, it was not precisely the sort of language that Red had expected to hear.

But if ever you have been a hero yourself you will know that it takes a great deal more than *that* to quench you.

Besides, there were enough other people who *had* the appreciative attitude. And

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they were only waiting for Red to get back to the lot to show it. He received the hoo-roo'ing congratulations of all the Reds and Blues together! The cook-tent chief, and the horse-tent boss, and the boss canvas-man, and the loading boss, and the costume man, — all in turn said *their* beatifying words to him.

Small Hans, still tremulous, came up and wished him to know that he would have joined in and helped him with that panther's tail, — “only there wass reasons why he must effer and always alive remain!”

But, by now, wherever it came from, Red could not but have certain doubts about other people's bravery, — about Hans', for example, — that is, at least, as compared with his own. In fact, he questioned if there was really anyone else in the Show who had just the exact kind of nerve for black panthers. He was no longer even able to bestow so much ad-

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miration upon Elephants' prowess with a tent stake. Very likely he 'd have done the trick just as well himself.

And to exalt him altogether into the clouds, Togo and Nogo were looking for him to take his honorable picture. They desired moreover to take his honorable picture in the front of that honorable black panther's cage. For, with their national fervor for all deeds of derring-do, they insisted upon believing that the rescue had not taken place from outside the cage, but that Red had bearded the foaming Pluto in his very den!

And, however astonishing it may appear, by this time Red had gone a long way towards taking that view of it himself!

He soon discovered that his left hand was slightly sprained, and he borrowed a handkerchief from McNally with which to bind it up. He expressed the very thoughtful hope, too, that he had n't hurt

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Pluto much. And then he went to the head office and requested the loan of a little paper "to do some correspondin'."

It was to Spider Madigan that he wrote. And even now he did not tell him that he was "with the Show." That was a staggerer he was going to keep till the very day they entered Dubuque. But he did ask Spider "if he'd had any trouble with mountain lions out West. He'd had a good deal just lately with a black panther himself,—that's what had made him think of it."

After which another idea struck him, and he sought the circus postman;—"It was likely a lot of the newspapers would be comin' after him," he explained; "and he thought it'd be just as well to give him notice ahead." And when the crowd's had begun to arrive for the evening performance he went and stood near the main entrance. It had occurred to him that the show bosses would be

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wanting to point him out to people. And it would be handier for them if he could be somewhere near.

But the show bosses had now become 'co busy again to point out anybody. Nor did any reporters come after him at all,—that town being plainly one of “yaps” and “dead ones.”

He was compelled, accordingly, to expand in another direction.

Standing longingly near the ticket-wagon was a thin, big-headed little boy wearing what must have been the raggedest clothes in Pennsylvania. And as to the meaning of his expression there could be no possible doubt whatever.

Red walked over to him. “Heh, ain't you got the price?”

“Got the price! — I ain't got *nawthin'*!”

“Heh, that's too bad. But I c'n remember now when I used to be like that myself. Say, guess you're wantin' to go in pretty fierce, ain't you?”

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“Am I wantin’ to go in! —But whose a-goin’ to take me?”

“Ah, I dunno. What’s the matter with *me*? I don’t guess they’ll be needin’ me *right away*.”

The little boy with the big head gaped. “Say, d’ yuh — d’ yuh mean that you *belong* to the circus?”

“Do I belong! Do I belong! Well, I guess you’d find out if you was to ask anybody! But you just folly along with me.”

He began to lead the way down the long line of guy-ropes to the performers’ entrance. “No use our gettin’ mixed up with the *crowd*,” he said.

The gateman knew him and waved them in with a friendly wink. Red went on past the band, ignored the cheap, blue-slat seats, nodded casually to the ring attendants, and showed his guest into the front row of the “reserveds.” The ushers looked at him a little wonderingly. But

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he "belonged" — there was no disputing that — and they said nothing.

"*Gee whillikins!*" murmured the little boy; "well, I guess you 're on the inside fer fair!"

"Oh, I guess I 'm solid enough. Maybe you better tell me your name. I might have to be interducin' youse."

"Swazey — Amzi Jimson Swazey. — Say, *I* wouldn't like to be youse or anything!"

"Ah, I dunno. Lots o' things looks swell from the outside. But when you're *in* it, maybe they ain't as dead easy."

The performance was commencing with the "Grand Pageant and Progress of All Nations." But Amzi Jimson found it difficult to keep his attention upon it. There are things even more fascinating than the Queen of Sheba on a Royal Two-humped Bactrian, and Solomon riding beside her in all his glory. —

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"What — what is it you do?" asked Amzi Jimson with a kind of awe.

"Heh! Ask me what I *don't* do! I got so many stunts to keep a-goin just now, seems like I never c'n keep track of them!"

The seven Saxon Samsons came leaping and vaulting into the nearest ring and prepared to form themselves into "The Christmas Tree." Ludwig and Gustav and Franz, all in those glittering tights of spangled silver and robin's-egg blue, vaulted to the spreading shoulders of Big Heinie. Upon *their* shoulders again there swung themselves the two younger "brothers." Then Midget Hans was twitched up and up and up to the Tree's very pinnacle. And when as its trunk Big Heinie turned himself mightily and began his rolling "march around," the whole deified seven caught sight of Red and smiled at him together.

Amzi Jimson nearly fainted.



## THE HERO

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"I used to see quite consider'ble of them lads while I was doin' clownin' work," imparted Red, "but I don't get time for that any more."

The four trick elephants came in for their act with McNally walking beside them in the gorgeous uniform of an Imperial Indian Jemadar. In his turn his glance fell upon Mr. McGaw, and he screwed him an eye of brotherly recognition as he passed.

"Heh, maybe you noticed *that* lad?" asked Red.

Amzi Jimson *had* noticed him.

"Well, him and me works together quite a lot. O' course them *little* elephants out there ain't so hard to handle, once you get the classy *how* of it. But, heh, we got six or seven big wild ones back there in the menagerie that gives us a run for it now an' again!"

"Yuh mean you — you — help — *tame* them?"

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" Help tame them! — If it was only tamin' them! — But when youse got to keep learnin' them stunts as well —! Maybe you did n't hear about one of us back in Cleveland gettin' pitched clear through the tent? — Heh, it kept them just all their time sewin' the canvas up again so as to be ready for the next performance! "

" *M-m!* — *M-m!* "

The whole three rings might now be running at once. The air might be as dartingly full of high-trapeze artists as an aviary is full of birds. But Amzi Jimson had no thoughts to waste on them at all.

" Still, elephants ain't so bad, now," continued the hero after a little thought " I've always sort of liked tamin' *them*. It's what us chaps call the big *ones* — the lions an' tigers an' leopard *ones* — that kind o' thing, — that bothers us *most*. Heh, — I guess youse can tell that by the smell of my *hands* "

## THE HERO

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He put one of them up in front of Amzi Jimson's nose. And the latter *did* smell something!

"Well, that's the smell the black panther has. It's sort of an oil seunder their skins. One of them got gain' worse 'n usyal to-day an' had to hold him while our chief lady tamer,—Madam Rosalinda, y' know,—was makin' her speak for it."

This was almost enough for Amzi J.

And Mr. McGaw marked that doubt upon his countenance. As it chanced, the nearest usher had until lately been one of his fellows of the "dish-wash squad." Red beckoned him over. "Say," he said, easily, "this young guy thinks I'm stringin' you out about that black panther."

"Well, he need n't now, old boy. For that was where you got in some of the strongest work ever done in the Show!" (A moment later, had Mr. McGaw not

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been drinking final satisfaction from Amzi J.'s expression then, he might have noticed that that usher was touching his hat to someone sitting just behind them.)

As it was, "Lessee," he said and puzzled up his brows anew, — "It must of been this mornin' that that black panther business happened. Or, no, now, it was this afternoon. Heh, pretty hard to remember *everything*."

If it was no longer possible for Amzi Jimson to doubt, of marvels he felt he could positively contain no more.

But, "What — what else is it yuh do?" he asked despite himself.

"Ah, not so much. On'y a little detectif work once in a while. See that bandage on my wrist? Well, heh, I bet I'll remember *that* for quite some time! We had a couple of toughs try to do up the Show with guns an' knives in Buff'lo, an' I just happened to be comin' along.

## THE HERO

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I was off on relief just then. But I could see that if I didn't get into it, somebody was goin' to be laid out cold. There was a tent-stake wagon near, an' while it was takin' a chance, o' course -- "

Another usher had come down the track. And he, too, saluted the person sitting just behind Red and Amzi Jimson.

With a feeling of sudden, vague portent Red decided to turn around and see who it was.

It was the G. M.!

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRESTLE

*When is a hero not a hero? A profound but uncalled-for observation from "Irish" Gannon of the guanacos; after resolving to ride to the next lot in the forty-horse band wagon, Red stops by the way to pick some raspberries.*

THE G. M. did not say anything. He continued to look quietly out over the arena, even as if he wanted Red to think he had not heard. And a few minutes after he rose and walked down to the ring-master's box.

But in those moments Red became conscious of emotions he had never known before. Shame entered into his world, and abasement, and a depth of self-contempt not to be expressed by speech!

## THE TRESTLE

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"Gee," he said in his heart, "I ain't a cheap bluff or anything!"

And then, not to be explained, and still less to be resisted, came the need, the compulsion of doing penance.

"Heh," he again attempted to argue it, "I guess what I said didn't *hurt* nobody!" (And a great deal might be said in support of that, too. Only that was not the point.)

"An', skids, some people are so dead easy that you can't *help* stringin' them!" (Another great truth. But unhappily another likewise that seemed after all, to help him little.)

It was no use dodging. He could see himself he would have to come to it. He sat swallowing a green bitterness through the "Aerial Ladder" act. And then he got it out at last, — "Heh, — say, — say, cully, o' course you know I was only kiddin' you about that detectif biz!"

Amzi Jimson turned that big head

REDNEY MCGAW

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of his around and stared, — “*Kiddin’* me?”

“Why, sure!”

“*Kiddin’?*”

“That’s what I said.”

“And was that kiddin’, too, about your tamin’ the wild elephants?”

“That’s what!” It was a dose that was worse than castor-oil and quinine mixed up together. Yet at the same time he seemed to get a kind of pleasure from it. “I bet this’ll learn me, all right!” he told himself.

“*Kiddin’! kiddin’!*” For a while Amzi was bereft of language. He was so gagged by disenchantment that he wanted to throw a brick or something.

“And about that keeper gettin’ pitched through the tent? Was you fakin’ me there, too?”

“That’s what!”

“Well, but what — what did yuh want to go *tellin’* it all for?”



## THE TRESTLE

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“ Heh, I dunno. I guess because that’s the kind of fellah I am. Onst I get a goin’, — *tckck!* ”

“ And all that about youse savin’ the lady tamer from the black panther, that was only kiddin’, too? ”

“ No, on the dead, *that* was n’t. Only o’ course I did n’t save her such a *whole lot.* ”

“ Ah, I believe yuh! ”

And, for his part, by now Red did not care whether he had saved her at all or not. There was no pleasure in it for *him* any more. He got to his feet: “ Well, I guess I’ll have to be leavin’ you. It’s time I was makin’ for the cars. Youse can see the rest of it alone. ”

The menagerie tent was already down. When a night move is to be made it does n’t wait till the performance in the big top is over. And the animal cages were now on their way to the trains. Red followed them, taking the dark side of the road.

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But, in spite of this precaution, he stumbled in with old "Irish" Gannon and his guanacos. And something had happened in Irish's demesne that had left him talking to himself with sheer delight. A dirty loafer had spat tobacco juice upon his favorite animal, and it had promptly returned the favor in kind. Indeed, spitting is one of the guanaco's peculiar means of defense. And it spits a sort of inorganic blue vitriol which keeps its sting for days. Irish felt that all was right in *his* universe!

"I tell yez, now, Smiler," he cackled; "take it short an' take it long, in the ind people git what's comin' to thim!"

Red felt that he had cause enough to know it.

At the trains, in the center of a cluster of eddyng gasoline flares, stood a group of excited loaders and bosses. It will be remembered how extensive a rôle in

## THE TRESTLE

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The Big Show's kitchen is played by the steam-boiler. Well, that steam-boiler, while standing waiting its turn for the cars, had had a "blow out." There was every evidence that some explosive had been used, and a very general belief as to who had used it. It seemed entirely probable that Fat and Cut Nose were still following up the Show, and getting even, step by step, as they had said they would!

"I should 'a' sent them to the G. M., anyway," Red heard McNally saying regretfully ; "for if it *was* them, it looks as if they'd set out to sting an' keep on stingin' till they get stung themselves. That kind never knows when they've got enough."

"Yes," said the menagerie boss, "and, what with excursions and specials and every burg overflowed with strangers, we kick up such a side-wash that half a hundred yeggs could trail with us, an' run just about no risks at it."

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It was a matter upon which, two hours ago, Red would have felt the necessity of assuming a general advisership at once. But *now* —

Now he stayed in outer darkness lest McNally and the rest of them should catch sight of him. "And, *say*," he thought, "say, next time I feel like tellin' any one a lot o' rag like that —!"

He slipped away to the jeering solitude of his berth in the sleeper. "Heh! — Heh! I guess *I'm* a hero all right fer fair!"

One might almost affirm, by the time, that the education of Mr. Robert Emmet Ignatius, otherwise Redney McGaw could not have advanced more rapidly in the best equipped of summer colleges!

To their next camping-ground it was what showmen call "a long jump." And at sunrise they were still several hours from their destination.

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The cock-tent hands began to get up and make for the washrooms. In a little while many of them would drift out to the breezy platforms between cars to trade stories with the animal men from the car ahead.

Now those early morning hours had always been particularly delectable ones to Red. They had been for several days in the Western Appalachians, as, indeed, they were still. And it had been his wont to sit swinging his legs from the step below McNally's, watching the sun suck up the mist as the fresh woods and rivers unrolled themselves beneath him, and listen to yarn after yarn with a spirit which could ask no more of joy.

But now he waited till every one else in the sleeper had risen and washed. And even then it was only Coakeney's ensnaring accents coming in through the open door that finally drew him forth.

"Why, hello there, friend McGaw,"

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cried McNally, "and how 's panther tamin' this morning?"

"I 'ear," Coakeney took it up,—"I 'ear that there 's an elephant gone musth (mad) over in the Sellspaugh Show, an' they 've been wirin' to see if they could n't get you to take an hour off an' go after 'im."

That there was nothing but chance in the character of those remarks,—that, in fact, they were meant rather in the way of compliment, did not occur to Red for one reflecting moment. So they had heard about that Amzi Jimson business already,—that was what they meant to him. "Ah, youse are throwin' it onto me early!" he said: "but I guess it was comin' to me, all right!" And with a face of flame he made for the other end of the car.

The porter had left the door open. From the platform of the sleeper a long succession of "flats" laden with the menagerie and the parade chariots

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stretched on and on to the end of the train.

The sheet-iron bridges were still in place between cars. Red crossed the first of them. The speed and the number of the curves made the feat a decidedly dangerous one. And it was that very element of danger in it that filled him with a sudden crazy impulse. "Heh, if I was to come ridin' into town in the forty-horse band wagon," he said to himself; "maybe *that*'d show them! Maybe they'd see it ain't all talkin' with me after all!"

He began to work his way back past van after van.

He had to grip the spokes to get around the biggest of them. And he did n't dare look out. But he kept steadily on. The train was going slower now, but only because they were passing from ridge to ridge by a sort of loop-the-loop movement. And Red had just caught sight of the

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huge "forty-horse," towering in its hoods of tarpaulin, when suddenly the car he was on seemed to swing itself in the wrong direction. He went off sideways falling on his shoulder. He pitched into a stretch of muddy clay which softened the fall. But even so he jolted himself badly enough to lie there half stunned, blinking, and seeing imaginary circles of blue light go up from nowhere, till the last car had cracked the whip around the curve which had thrown him.

"Gee!" he murmured painfully, as he got to his feet, "Gee! And I guess it'll be the next train fer mine, if I ketch any at all."

Another minute of aching self-examination. And then: "It'd ought to be along, too, in an hour or so. I want to be gettin' ahead to some place I can flag it from."

Feeling of his shoulder once more, he limbered up and started.



## THE TRESTLE

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He had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when the curve came unexpectedly out upon a valley. The track was carried across a wide rocky ravine by a hundred yards of spindling trestle-work.

"Skids!" he said, "I guess I was mighty lucky to get my fling as *soon!*"

The situation was certainly rough enough. On the right, leaving scarcely room between the track and rock for a little spring and some raspberry bushes, the mountain side lifted itself straight up for sixty or seventy feet. On the left, with a slope almost as steep, and ragged with tumbled boulders and blastings for as far as Red could see, the bank dropped down to the grass-grown traces of a country road. In the valley he could make out several deserted derricks; and in the blue beyond the woods there was a slender file of smoke-stacks. Through the clear, transparent morning air a distant whistle blew.

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“Heh, I guess that’s the last call to breakfast,” he said. And after getting a drink from the spring he gave his attention to the raspberries.

Once, when he looked up, or rather down, he noticed a man come out upon the road below. But it was too far away to tell if he was a railroadman. And Red went back to his breakfasting.

When, however, he had worked his way around that clump of bushes so that his eyes fell upon the man a second time, it seemed to him that there was something almost familiar in that sliding, shuffling walk.

“Well, I didn’t know as I had any friends just in this l’cality,” he said. And he ate some more raspberries.

But he ate no more after his next look down. The man,—there could be no doubting his eyes now,—the man was Fat!

In a moment Red had pulled his head

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back: "Skids!" he said, "skids! — Then I guess it *was* them, all right!" . . . It was not a thing you could get down in one minute, or in two! . . . "Well, as long as he keeps to the wagon road—!"

And next moment, with a slow, squinting peer to right and left, Fat began to hoist himself heavily up the slope.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE YELLOW CANDLE

*Fat again, and something that may be a great deal more dangerous than a black panther; Red is given a chance to play Horatius at the Bridge.*

RED would have been a great deal more afraid if it had been Cut Nose. And what did make him afraid was n't so much the man himself, or even the memory of that blown-up gasoline tank and steam-boiler, as a lurching irregularity in Fat's movements which said plainly that he had been drinking. For Fat in his right mind Red had always kept a kind of unreasoning regard. But not less clearly had Red learned what Fat could be with drink in him. From being not so much a bad man as an imitator of

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bad men, he turned first into a very silly person, and then into a man with the mood and disposition of a wild beast.

Suddenly he sent a glance upwards. At all times his eyes were as quick as a cat's. And he saw Red and recognized him in the same instant.

His mouth went wide with amazement.

"Well — for — the — ! *Youse!*" he said, "*youse —*"

Red could not get words into his throat to answer anything whatever.

"And what happens to 'a' dumped you *here?*"

"It was the train that dumped me. I fell off. Where — heh — where are *you* goin' to?"

"Where am I goin' to? But first gimme time to make up me mind it's you." He still continued to stare at him half incredulously.

"Where did youse say you was goin' to?"

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“Where am I goin’ to?” — And now that Fat had finally begun to recover from his amazement, he showed an unlooked-for disposition to be friendly: “Why, an’ did n’t we start out for Chicag’ together, Bo? Only youse decided to shake old Cut Nose an’ me for somethin’ better.”

“I thought,” said Red, still very ill at ease, — “I thought I’d be goin’ quicker with the Show.”

“Sure, sure youse will! But how d’ you reckon to ketch up again, *now?* ”

“I was thinkin’ I could maybe flag the second train.”

And as soon as Red had said that, he realized, he knew not how, that he should n’t have.

“Oh, *was* you now?” In a flash Fat’s thick face lit with an indescribable grin of quick, if maudlin, cunning: “Then, maybe, *I* could, too! When I get my second wind I’ll have to climb right up!”

Red drew back, beset by a rush of

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doubts and anxiety. What did *Fat* want to flag that train for? And what did he *mean* by "flagging" it? Red believed — and he was probably right — that *Fat* did not exactly know himself. Once more, he did not act like a bad man, but like a bad boy bent on getting even with some neighbor who has taken the whip to him. But, whatever idea might be hazily filling the turbid mind of *Fat*, Red could not but turn his eyes towards that long spider-work trestle just ahead.

If, he told himself, anything should happen to one of the show trains on a bridge like that! And then he resolved in his heart that *Fat* must not be allowed to do any "flagging" of any sort at all.

But *Fat* had already begun to climb.

"Ah, say," said Red, with a kind of coaxing chumminess, "no need of *your* comin' up. If you got any message for the Show, I can take it for youse."

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"Thanks, but it's a fellah I want to see."

"Well, I can see him for youse."

"Look here," said Fat, coming to a stop, "what's the matter with youse, anyway?"

"There ain't nothin' the matter. But there's some things in the Show been — the gasoline plant an' the steam-boiler they both was put out o' business last week — they got blowed up some way. An' they think — anyways *some* o' the Show people think —"

For a moment Fat gave him the corner of his eye. Then he lifted his hand with the gravity of a legally taken oath. "Bo, looky here, — will youse believe me if I tell youse something?"

"What is it you want to tell me?"

"That if there was any blowin' up done, it was n't me that done it, see? It was n't done by yours truly."

Red did believe him. But a moment



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later he had a second and a sharply modifying thought. "Well, but are youse thinkin' of doin' any?"

And at that Fat's whole manner and expression changed completely. He brought his hand down on his thick knee and sputtered foolishly, "You 're a sharp one, Bo, you 're a sharp one!" Then once more he began to climb.

Something in Fat's very laugh put cold fear into Red. And if he was to do anything, he knew he must do it now. "Aw, come on," he said, "you an' me was always good friends. An' I've told youse if you got any message —"

Fat stopped, and chuckled more hugely than ever. "Oh, I got a message, all right," he said. "But I don't just know as you could deliver it, — not when it happens to be a message like *this*."

The liquor had apparently driven all idea of caution out of him. He pulled from his coat-pocket a stick of something

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which Red had seen by the box-full, when they were doing the blasting for the New York Subway. It looked like a big candle of yellow soap. And there could no longer be any doubt as to what had torn the pipes out of the steam-boiler. Wherever Fat and Cut Nose had obtained it, it was dynamite!

Now practically all Red's reading — other than the baseball score — had been of "Deadwood Dick," who single-handed defied and slew entire gangs of "bad men"; or of "Frank Fearless, the Young Sleuth," who compelled twelve desperate counterfeiterers to tie one another while he stood by and juggled with his revolvers. But Fat was in no way like those "bad men" in the Five Cent Library. He had shown that stick of dynamite much as Red himself might have shown a cannon firecracker that he intended to put under a shoe-shine stand. It was plain enough that he had no real plan, or any real sense

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of what he was doing, and none at all of what he might do by accident. "O' course, Smiles," he chuckled again, "I'm not aimin' to hurt no one *bad!* I would n't want to do that."

Red did not feel like "Frank Fearless" or "Deadwood Dick." He told himself that *somehow* or other he must keep Fat from doing that "flagging." But all his boy's instinctive dread of the grown man, intensified a hundred times by the sight of the dynamite, was upon him. "Aw, come on, now," he said, gulping, "I guess youse would n't do anything o' *that* kind."

"Oh, we got the stuff to collect the damages wit'," said Fat, as if he had not heard him. "Cut Nose has collected a chunk of *his* already. So you see it's up to poor old Fat to begin gettin' his actions now."

Once more he sniggered to himself, then put the dynamite back into his pocket and began to climb.

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"Ah, youse are only jollyin' now," said Red; "youse are only jollyin'." He made a last unhappy attempt to smile.

Fat mounted another ten feet.

And then Red fiercely nerved himself to his resolution. He commenced to pick up loose pieces of ballasting stone, — to gather ammunition. But his fingers wobbled as he did it. And, "Aw, look here," he said. "I'm kind o' takin' care o' things up here. You better just stay down where youse were."

"*Oh-h*, no! — *Oh-h*, no! Can't let old Cut Nose do everything in gettin' our revenges, — would n't be on the level."

"Well, now, Fat, youse ain't *goin'* to come up here!"

"Ain't *goin'* to? — An' what'll youse do to stop me?"

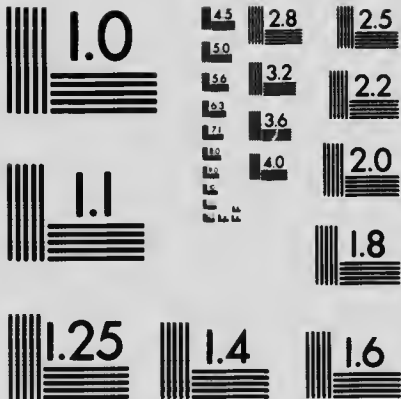
"I'll *rock* youse!" cried Red; "I'll *rock* youse!"

"You'll *what*, Bo?" And he got himself up to the first rough ledge.



"He toppled over backwards." *Page 161*





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## THE YELLOW CANDLE

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Red desperately made himself hard, lifted a stone as big as half a brick, and threw it.

It caught Fat on the chest just as he was getting ready to pull himself around the next big fragment of limestone. He toppled over backwards, his legs tangled up, and he rolled down half a dozen yards.

In his life on the New York streets Red had heard a deal of evil speech, but what he heard during the moments that followed gave him a sort of weakness.

“If he ketches me now,” he thought, — and he could not finish. He had begun, though, and he must go through with it.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A RED-LINED JACKET

*The same continued, and that ever more unpleasantly for both parties concerned; some more or less familiar sounds heard upon a railroad track, and Red finishes with his flag flying.*

THE fall had driven the fog of liquor out of Fat. But a fog of gagging, gnashing fury had taken its place. He drew himself in, covered his face with his arm, and started upward on the rush.

By now Red had had time to line his whole front with broken pieces of stone, and he threw them as fast as he "could put them in."

To use more of his own language, too, most of them "went over the plate." One struck Fat on the shoul-

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der, another on the knee. Another landed between neck and jaw. "And youse know I'm not *wantin'* to do it," Red kept shouting miserably; "nor it ain't really *youse* I'm *reckin'*!"

"You'll know — cripes, you'll know what'll happen to *youse* — when I get to the top!" Yet for the most part Fat was no longer saying anything that you could understand at all.

But he kept on climbing.

Red would have given all he possessed, — he would have left The Big Show itself, to have been anywhere else. Yet, turning back on his feelings again, "Skids," he thought, "maybe, if I did n't want to run so much, it would n't take so much nerve to keep *stayin'* here!"

And this time it was not Red's "rocks" that sent Fat back. He had set his foot on a clump of horsetail that was as smooth and slippery as

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pine-needles. He went down sideways, and again rolled fairly to the bottom.

That second fall turned him almost wholly into the wild beast. He remained a man only in so much as he still had the brain of man to do the thinking for his rage.

"If," yelled Red, "if one o' these hunks hits that dynamite, I bet you'll know it!"

"All *right!* — All *right,* son!" Fat frothed; "then I'll put — put it where it won't be hit!"

He drew out that first cartridge and then a second, thrust one into each "pistol" pocket, and started up again.

Red's coat had come open. The bright Turkey flannel lining of his old office-boy uniform caught his eye, and burned a new thought into his brain. He drove another piece of rock at Fat. Then he jerked his coat off altogether, and flung it, inside out, upon the clump

## A RED-LINED JACKET

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of raspberry bushes. "I guess *that* ought to flag them, anyways," he said, and rushed back to the line of his defenses again.

Once more Fat was half-way up. And now the sounds that came from his throat were like those made by fighting dogs when they are feeling for the death-grip.

Red picked up stone after stone and sent them home. The stress of the excitement was carrying him entirely out of himself. He was crying, although he did not know it. And he was crazily laughing, too. "Here's an old-style in-shoot!" he shouted in his hysteria. "And how did you like that *corkscrew-er?*" "You can take your base on *that* one, all hunky!" "Here's the newest thing in spitballs!" "And I got a lot more comin', too!"

Yet even now he never struck Fat but what he felt sick at himself. For,

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again, it was n't Fat he was fighting with. And, his mood changing, "Aw, why can't youse stop it? Why can't youse stop it?" he begged. But it was like beseeching a man in a delirium.

At times he seemed to feel Fat's hands closing upon him already. "He would n't mind being killed so much," he thought, "if only the G. M. and Elephants and Big Heinie could have been there. The way it was, likely enough *nobody* would ever know about the scrap he 'd put up for them!"

"And he's goin' to get me, too!" he said in the depths of his soul; "he's goin' to, sure!" He remembered the prayers some of the visitors used to try to get them to say at the "Newsies'" Lodging House. "But *this* was no kind of thing to go askin' God to mix Hissself up with." And, "Ah, somebody help me!" was the nearest he got to asking Him.

## A RED-LINED JACKET

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But, while he was saying it, once again Fat had lost his balance and was pitching almost to the bottom of that jagged slope.

"And youse are rollin' on your dynamite, too, youse want to mind!" shrieked Red.

Fat was slowly grinding his teeth. "I jus' . . . been thinkin' o' that," he said raucously; "so I'll — I'll send half of it up to *youse!*"

Screening himself behind an overhanging ledge, he jerked out one of the yellow sticks and a bunch of fuses. There came the scratch and flare of a match.

"Ah, that — that ain't fightin' fair!" Red cried; "that ain't fightin' fair! Ah, Fat, stop it!" For a minute he continued to throw dementedly at nothing at all. Then, when he saw the flung cartridge leave Fat's hand, he dropped flat on his face between the rails.

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The yellow candle hurtled over his head, descended, and — though Red could not know it then — fell into the ooze of the spring.

As he lay there, pressing his unbreathing lips against the oily ballast, it seemed to him that he could have counted a thousand. An “*m-m-m-mmmmmmm*” throbbed and sung in his ears; he did not know whether it came from inside or outside of him. And then followed a thudding, crashing roar. It boomed within Red’s head like shouting in a rain-barrel. Another three or four seconds, and things began to strike him: “Maybe, now, he’d been killed and didn’t know it yet?” — But in reality he had been struck only by bits of mud and gravel, as the geyser thrown up by the explosion came harmlessly to earth again.

And at that moment Red began to comprehend something else. That



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"*m-m-m-mmmmmmm*" was the strange wireless message sent ahead of it along the rails by every approaching train!

He leaped to his feet in a very delirium of triumph. Fat's face was peering, greenish white, around the broken ledge. He was half sobered already. And he felt a relief at seeing Red still there that was almost as great as any Red could feel himself.

But Red was in no state to be aware of that. He picked up another stone and sent it wildly down. "You can't kill *me!*" he yelled. "You can't kill me! I like dynamite! Throw me some more! It's good for me appetite!"

Fat stood a moment longer. He still had his affair to settle with Red, and another to settle with The Big Show. But, as that long red circus train began to work into plain sight, he would willingly have known how to stop it, without having to make any explanations.

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“ Ah, I guess I didn't hurt their blame' old track none,” he shouted up, meaning in reality that he hoped he had n't. And then he saw that Red was going to do the flagging with his flannel-lined jacket. He was already running down the rail edge with it, and picking a place on the slope where he would be in clearer view. — Fat dropped down from boulder to boulder, cursing himself with every wrench, reached the wagon-road again, flung his second cartridge into the ditch, and plunged into the bush.

For a time Red believed that he was doing that flagging in vain. The locomotive drove by him, and the tender, and one, two, three cars! — But he waved on with both hands, yelling till his throat felt as if it were full of files and fish-hooks. And then his ears caught the sudden clashing grind and shriek of the air brake. He saw a head thrust

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itself out amid a cloud of deafening steam about the sliding engine. He started dizzily to run towards it, and found himself falling down. Two minutes later they were lifting him into the brassy reek of a big hot Mogul cab.

And when all four trains had at last made the next lot, and the whole Big Show had heard about it — but why attempt to tell it all! Fill your memory with what happened after that combat with the black panther, and then multiply the intensity of the congratulations he then received by about a thousand. Mrs. Müller was so proud of him that she carried him around to the back of the tent and washed him, face, neck, and arms to the elbows, with her own hands, — before the G. M. should hear about it. Red felt her taking whole patches of skin off in her pride.

A second time Big Heinie's feeling,

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expanded like his chest measurement, though more than ever he was confirmed in his belief that "circusses was derrible dangerous blaces"; and, as usual, the peril he had been in himself convinced him that vastly greater perils were hanging over that "leedle Heinie" back in New York.

Hans Sohmer's gratitude was such as only the gratitude of one who has the responsibility of a great-grandmother on his hands *can* be!

McNally, for his part, manifested his feelings by showing Red how he could get into Deva's very heart's core by gifts of a particular sort of ginger-cake, a secret which he himself had been ten years discovering.

And as for those Japanese Twins, Togo and Nogo —!

But this time being a hero made Red very apprehensive. It was the sort of

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thing that was sure due to "knock" you sooner or later. And he was glad enough when the G. M. ended it by informing him that the Show was not going to say any more at present; but maybe it would be able to do a little real talking when he was leaving them at Dubuque.

"But say," said Red with infinite color, "what about — heh — what about all that rag you heard me gettin' off to Amzi Jimson, the kid I brought in free back there?"

"Oh," said the G. M., "what about that? What about that? Why, I thought that that was a little matter that we were to keep just between ourselves."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WHISTLES BLOW

*A hot day ; some laughter from the hyenas,  
in which they are markedly alone ;  
Red "notices something" ; a life-boat  
drill with sledge-hammers ; first scenes  
in a "blow-down."*

**I**T was as well that The Big Show had not planned to do its "talking" the day it made its third lot in Michigan. For that day — Friday — was one it was long to remember for something else.

The week had been a hot one from the beginning. The Kadick bear had been sitting on his haunches, shaking his head in his misery as if to say: "It's no use. In fact I'd rather die now than have to stand this for another minute!" The "Fighting Kangaroo"

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next door had stretched himself on his back, and crossed his forepaws over his bosom: he had not only prepared himself to die, but to be laid out afterwards. The thermometer had made its mark at 93° on Tuesday, and it had been going up a degree daily ever since. As for Friday, having begun with 90° at ten in the morning, it seemed to have been adding its degree with every stifling hour. . . . "Oh, I s'y, you know," gasped Coakeney, from under a hatful of grass, "I feel as 'ot as the fellah sellin' the palm-leaf fans." But he was about the only one who made a joke of it.

And, indeed, had The Big Show been keeping its perspiring eyes less closely upon that steady rise of the *thermometer*, it would have noticed that the *barometer* was as steadily going down.

But the day's performance had to be given. "If they can stand it to sit in

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their shirt sleeves and look on," McNally put it, "of course they take it for granted we can stand it workin'." He varied his third turn by having Deva walk in beside him fanning him with the Queen of Sheba's sacred, imperial fan from the Grand Pageant. "And it did a lot more than make a hit," he said. "It was the only thing that kept me alive to finish!"

The striped hyenas gave the first real warning. The crowds had just commenced to pass through the menagerie tent for the evening performance, when those *hyenae striatae* began to "laugh."

The menagerie boss stopped, turned, and looked at them with a face grimly significant.

"Oh-o!" whistled Coakeney. "So we're goin' to 'ave a bit of *weather* as well!"

"Red," said Elephants, "you just



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take a squint outside, and see if you can see anything."

Red went outside. The sky had a queer coppery look, but that was not a thing for a city boy to notice. He came back and reported that he could n't see anything at all.

"All right," said McNally. "Maybe if you wait a little while you will." And for the fourth time that day he started his troupe for the arena.

He had not been gone ten minutes when Red *did* begin to notice something. Since the menagerie begins to close up and move for the trains with the commencement of the night show, at eight, in midsummer it has no need of "chardeliers." But it seemed to need them now!

"I s'y," inquired Coakeney, "don't you 'ave any twilight in this quarter of you blocmin' wonderful country?"

"And it's coolin' off again!" said Red.

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“Yes,” broke in Elephants, at that moment coming hurriedly back with the little four; “and if you take another look out *now*, you’ll putty near know why.”

*This* time Red and Coakeney went together.

Part of the sky was still copper-hued. But over their heads there was swiftly rising a tremendous blow of tumbling, on-rolling, blue-black cloud. Coakeney whistled, and they ducked back into the fast darkening tent as if to “get from under.”

McNally crooked his thumb towards the “big top.” “And a whole townful of yaps in there that ought to be at home in their cyclone cellars!”

Unquestionably Elephants seemed to be getting nervous.

“Well, we could offer them their money back, couldn’t we?” asked Red.

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Coakeney laughed. "Their money back! My blessed h'eye!"

"And you can bet," explained Elephants, "that the G. M. would pay a few for the *chance!* But you'd find you could n't get one in ten to take it back. They'd want to stay to see Big Heinie win the last chariot race if it was the Judgment Day!"

The keepers commenced to walk slowly up and down in front of the elephants; and they tried to reassure them with little slaps on their trunks. . . . One of the smallest began to whimper, as if he was afraid of the dark.

"Now, you're all right," said McNally; "Daddy'll take care of you. — Red, just put your head outside and see how close she's gettin' now."

Save for a little bronzy rim where the sun had set, the whole sky had become the color of dark gray cotton batting. Frightened people were scattering

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across the vivid commons. Some birds came rapidly over. It would have been hard to say whether they flew or were blown. As yet the black, ever-growing silence overhanging all had been broken by no drop of rain. But, as Red lifted the side wall to return, the first gust of wind to reach the ground whipped the heavy "four-ply" from his hands and filled the tent with a breath as cold and wet as any ever blown from ocean. Little snapping waves ran up and down the canvas, and all the big center masts creaked together. The whole twenty-acre "lot" seemed suddenly to fill with that sound of creaking wood and straining canvas. It was as if some great sailing fleet were about to be overtaken by a hurricane. McNally had no need now to ask "how close she was"!

"But, heh," said Red, attempting to turn his anxiety into nonchalance, "what's the pa'tic'lar *danger*?"

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“Son,” answered McNally, “if you ever see one bad blow-down, you’ll never ask that question again!”

“But the band’s keepin’ on playin’ right ahead.”

“Of course! It’s got to. Once it stopped,—while you could n’t get them out by *reasonin’*—the whole mob in there’d be trampin’ each other next minute in a panic! And yet they’re goin’ to stay in there as *long* as it *is* playin’! Lord, what can a show do anyway?”

“My aun<sup>t</sup>” said another keeper, “are they never goin’ to get the teams around to fetch these cage wagons out!”

Just at that moment, though, there began to make itself heard the quick hollow calling of a boatswain’s whistle.

“Ah, there they come now,” said Elephants.

“An’ jolly well time!” said Coakeney.

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To be inside there made Red feel a lot more creepy than to be out. And again he ducked under the canvas to the chilled half-darkness of the open lot.

Elephants and Coakeney had mistaken that whistle. The teams were not coming yet. It had been an emergency call. And a double squad of canvas-men with sledge-hammers had started on the run from the tool wagons. Now they were taking their places each at a guy-rope stake of the big top. It was like a life-boat drill. . . . And, as long as the stakes can be kept in, even a six-master big top can generally hold its own.

In the lee of the bellying length of the great tent there burned a row of gasoline flares. But whenever a man tried to take one around to the other side, it puffed out in an instant. . . . From every direction those wan, quaver-

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ing whistles were calling now. And suddenly, with one shattering crash of lightning, down came the rain!

Red could hardly get his breath till he was inside and stood streaming by McNally again. The hail-like drops, threshing upon those acres of drum-taut canvas, gave off one universal *rip-p* as of tearing silk.

Coakeney and McNally were still with the elephants, — “holding their hands.”

“There’s a gang watchin’ the big top,” shouted Red; “but there’s nobody watchin’ us.”

“No, nor there won’t be!” McNally shouted back. “The G. M. looks after the yaps, an’ we look after ourselves. And he’s dead right, too!”

“But w’y don’t they get these blessed caiges h’out?” shrilled Coakeney. “If we move these bulls before we know w’ich way the teams are comin’ in, we’ll

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get everythink tangled up so blightin' fierce —”

To the animal men the danger was not so much in the possibility of a “blow-down” as in the steadily increasing chance of a stampede of the elephants.

The huge “bulls,” as Coakeney called them, are not afraid of any storm whatever as long as they can be taken outside into a clear field and allowed to see that it is a storm. When, however, they have to go through it in the tent, worked upon by the foolish frenzies of all the other animals, just how they will act may be a very different matter.

But these particular boatswain's whistles which the menagerie was waiting for made themselves heard at last. They wailed nearer and nearer. And following them came the clash of harness and the wild “*Yip, yip, yip!*” of the teamsters.



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A section of side wall was brought down with a rush. And like the bringing up of battery after battery under an unbroken cannonade, the plunging six-horse teams swept through.

“Stables all down an’ lyin’ every way!” shouted a driver, hoarsely; “that’s what’s been the matter with *us!*”

The menagerie men had begun “hooking up” before the horses had come to a halt.

“You’ll have to double up on the heavy chariots,” cried McNally; “for we can’t help you to-night.” (By *we* he meant the elephants.) “We’ll have to put a whale of a lot of ginger into it if we’re goin’ to get out ourselves!”

After the first flashes of lightning it was so black that he had to feel for Red, and to make Red hear he had to lay his mouth against his ear. “Just take hold of Mother Deva’s fin for a minute,” he said. “The old girl’s as

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good as gold. But the back-flap is slappin' her every time it blows in, and a little *more* of that — ”

He followed Coakeney on the jump for the “jacks,” — the pump-like levers with which the big tent pegs and elephant stakes are pulled.

## CHAPTER XV

### DEVA ON A MARATHON

*Increasing need for ginger cakes; Deva follows the crowd, and takes Red with her; some flash-lights; thoughts upon riding a haircloth sofa at midnight in Michigan bush; and a new method of alighting, — that of climbing a tree.*

RED kept tight hold of that snaky, single-fingered "hand." All the great pachyderm's fear quivered down through it, and his own fear now gave him a sense of fellowship. "Heh!" he kept saying, "I guess what we need to put ginger into us, Mrs. Deva, is some more of them ginger *cakes!*"

Even within the tent the gasoline flares could not now be kept alight. And, in one sense, there was little need

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of them. The lightning had gradually become almost uninterrupted, and it seemed as if the flashes were not outside, but in. It was like the explosion of endless gigantic arc lamps.

The cages had all been closed long since. But that did not keep terror out of them. Every animal in the menagerie was yelping and yarring, shrieking and gibbering and howling, and the big cats could be heard hurling themselves to and fro against the sides of their dens.

Amid the shouting of the teamsters, cage-wagon followed cage-wagon into the storm-swept lot. Inside, the atmosphere was fast becoming one of bedlam. By now, up and down that dolmen-like half-circle of elephants, as if in response to some diabolical "Heave-ho, and all together!" there was running a terrifyingly regular "rock and swing"! And the big tethering had begun to draw

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without any need of help from stake-machines in human hands!

Again and again, as the wind flung that back-flap against the shaking Deva, Red could feel fear go through her.

“Elephants!” he yelled, “Elephants!”

But Elephants, feverishly pumping at his “jack,” could not hear him.

And at that moment a whole section of the tent seemed to go flaccid. It collapsed almost upon Deva’s back.

“*Elephants! Elephants! Coakeney!*”

Another section caved down and fairly knocked him over.

“Stay with her now! Stay with her!” some one cried.

Red thought he was shouting to him.

“All right,” he gasped; “but, skids, burnin’ decks is easy to *this!*”

And then the whole side of the tent seemed to go raking over his head. But that he was standing almost under Deva it would have carried him with it.

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There was a crash of broken cages as the center poles came to the flat. The keepers were inside, the elephants out. The younger beasts in the middle pivoted around, stretched forth their trunks, and blaring their complete demoralization, charged straight ahead of them. What stakes had not been pulled already tossed behind them as they ran.

Deva caught Red and set him between her front legs. But if she stayed she would stay alone. She wavered a moment longer; then, swinging him upon her back, *she* followed the others.

The line she had taken lay within a hundred feet of the "big top." Red saw it go by as a great luminous blur. And high above the storm, high above the yells of that line of protecting canvasmen, he could hear the band still playing! He even noted somehow that they were playing "*Make a Noise like a Hoop and Roll away!*"

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He did n't cry out. He still kept enough of his senses to realize the uselessness of it. As he lurched now to this side, now to that, he merely tried to hold his grip on the back edge of the big rubbery ears, and make his legs straddle the neck, if it could be called a neck! "I guess this is my finish *this* time!" he kept telling himself; "I guess this is my finish for fair!"

But as yet there was no sign whatever of *anything* finishing! Deva's size and speed had gradually given her the lead, and she kept it at a pace to gallop down a horse. When, too, she seemed on the point of going head on against a low, brick freight-shed, she went about, blowing her Gargantuan bugle, and started over the common on the right.

In the next three flashes of lightning, even as if they had been artificial flashlight exposures, Red saw three things

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that he knew he would remember as long as he remembered the stampede itself. The first was the "Fighting Kangaroo," taking such leaps as animals ought to be allowed to take only in dreams. The second was one of the lions, backed up against an overturned chariot and spitting and striking out like a cat.

And the third was Cut Nose!

There was no mistaking him. He was fleeing from the direction of the circus trains. And in the face of Cut Nose there was fear such as neither blow-down nor elephant stampede could add to! . . .

On the edge of the common Deva went through what must have been a board fence as if it had been made of berry-box splits. Red could scarcely feel the jar. Then they came out upon the open road. There were two roads, in fact. Deva, followed by three of



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her frantic retinue, took the first; the remainder of the herd were crowded off into the other.

They were still within the town limits, for at intervals there were houses and electric lights. At a crossing a horse emerged from a side street. Next moment it had backed its pitching rig into the gutter, sat itself down in the shafts, and was beating the air with its forefeet.

Another half-mile and the houses became fewer, while the electric lights ceased altogether. They now began to pass interminable, slanting piles of lumber. There came the sound of a waterfall, and they found themselves crossing a long frame bridge. It gave and wayed beneath them, and Red felt his own middle give with it.

But they passed it safely, and were now out upon the road to the back townships. And if in that more than

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darkness Red could see nothing at all, Deva seemed to be able to see quite well enough. At any rate, she ran in a straight line, kept the middle of the road, and struck nothing but a few low branch ends. Her stride, too, had grown a great deal evenner.

Fifteen minutes more went by. And Red was at least not quite so certain that his "finish" was coming within the next ten seconds. He found himself almost able to calculate what his chances were, and he became a lot more conscious that the bristles on Deva's back were pricking him like an old haircloth sofa.

But when was Deva ever going to stop? It was not a matter of minutes now, but of half an hour, of an hour. They had gone miles and miles. The thunder rumbled far behind. But Deva still held on, as if she had no thought of making halt this side of the Punjab.

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The sky was clearing, and here and there in a slashing, or when the bush was not so thick, they had a glimpse of starlight. In one of those stretches Red craned his neck far enough around to see that the other three elephants were not following directly in their leader's footsteps. They were trailing off a little to one side. "If I could sneak along her back to her tail, I could likely drop off without gettin' hurt *much*," he said.

He could likely have done no such thing; but in any case it was something to think about.

Another half-hour, and they passed a small log shack. There was a light in the window. The elephants all lifted up and trumpeted at it together with the defiance of guilty consciences. But as the door jerked open, the darkness swallowed them again.

The road became softer now, — they

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were entering a swamp. And in the next clear space there was another bridge. *It* would never hold them in the world!

But, by now, Deva and her companions seemed to be regaining a lot of their native wisdom. As they approached that bridge, they slowed up and swerved off the road. Their feet splashed in water. A branch caught Red under the chin. He clutched it, and two huge bulks brushed against his legs as he pulled himself desperately up and out of reach.

His arms were too trembly to hold him long. He worked his way out to the end of the branch, let himself quakingly down, and found that the water came only to his knees. Next moment he was back upon the road. The four elephants were sloshing and crashing their way on. He had escaped!

And *yet*, — now that he was left there



“They heard a story which seemed to them a little the most astounding ever told in Michigan.” *Page 197*





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alone in the bush at night, — fear descended upon him like a flock of bats. He turned, and ran and ran and ran, and stopped only when, breathless and half sick, he had at last reached that log shack that marked the spot where the swamp began. The door was open now. A man and his wife were standing staring from the threshold, talking in halting whispers of they knew not what. And when they had brought Red in, from him they heard a story which seemed to them a little the most astounding ever told in Michigan.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FREAK CAR

*Progress of events on the lot; of Little Micky and Big Heinie; of a circus sleeper which while dark was not empty; Cut Nose visits Togo and Nogo, and though coming unexpectedly is clasped to their bosoms; unaccountable behavior on the part of Cut Nose.*

**I**N the meantime we should show very little feeling if we any longer delayed returning to The Big Show to see how *it* had come through that night's terrific experience.

In one way it had come through very easily. The big top—the focus of show-man anxiety—had, with the aid of its guarding stake-men, held firm to the last. Some side-wall had blown in. Little, muddy torrents had poured under



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the seat-racks wherever they were on low ground. There had inevitably been miniature deluges around the center poles, and down the lines of lacing between the great, mightily-straining widths of canvas. But that was everything. Some ten thousand people went home believing at the end that they had never from first to last been in any real danger at all.

As for the menagerie tent, we have seen already what happened to it. But, as the menagerie boss explained it afterwards, "When an animal tent blows down, things are never anywhere near as bad as they look. Gosh, they *could n't* be. It ain't in nature possible!" In the present case two horses, a cage of wolves, and a young tiger had been killed. The corpse of the latter was presented to the local museum for stuffing, as a slight souven', in the words of the G. M.'s presentation

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remarks, of an evening The Big Show felt it would never forget.

Three lions escaped, which was also something a number of people in that town and its immediate vicinity never forgot. But none of those lions did any actual damage. And when all was said, and their capture had at length been safely effected, they were no doubt almost as glad to get back to their cages as the surrounding districts were to see them go. Speaking broadly, a lion is dangerous only when he is at home. When he is n't, the thing occupying what we may accurately term the lion's share of his attention is to find out how to get there.

In the matter of the elephants that had not gone with Deva, they had encompassed their own capture. As if predestinate, they had run, ears up and trunks out, straight into some old gravel pits. And there an hour later they had

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been rounded up as neatly as if those pits had been a kheddah especially arranged for the grand annual "drive" in Mysore or the Chittagong hills.

Of the show people themselves, it would be safe to say that for Hans Sommer the consciousness of what *might* have happened to him would keep his great-grandmother afflictingly upon his mind for the next month. "Sometimes I think I haf *unrecht*—I am unright—any more to take sotch rissks mit myself," he said.

And that night it was Franz and Ludwig who had to sustain him with the comforts of philosophy. For Big Heinie had a heart affliction of his own. One of those elephants subsequently to be rounded up in the gravel pits was the mother of "Micky," the Show's baby elephant. With an absence of every right maternal instinct which she must have been overwhelmingly ashamed of afterwards, she had

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left him tangled in the tent ropes, and fled for her life with the others. And when Big Heinie came out from their last turn, there he stood, lifting up his voice in a way to silence three orphan asylums. Nothing looked good to Micky any more, upon this earth!

It was Big Heinie's finisher with the circus business. "Ach, du lieber, Minna" he shouted. "Don't I *tell* you once alretty somedings'll happen mit dot leedle feller yet?"

In vain did Mrs. Müller make answer for the hundredth time. That it was the baby elephant who was temporarily an orphan, and not their kiddy, made no difference to Big Heinie whatever. As he saw it, all that was simply an evasion, an attempt to dodge the question. He had heard too many explanations of the sort before. Long after the majority of The Big Show's soaked and bedraggled performers had betaken

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themselves to their haven in the trains, he was still going about the town earth-quaking dairy after dairy in an almost weeping attempt to get Micky a pail of milk. And he informed every keeper, canvas-man, and "razor-back" he met of his irrevocable determination "for-effermore to yomp der yob, and mague a try at der farm life bei Chicago!"

We have said that, as Red made his never-to-be-forgotten departure from the lot on the rolling, heaving back of Deva, one of the three rain-swept pictures brought out by the flash-light of the lightning as he passed had been of Cut Nose. And the longest story here to be told is about him.

For the preceding fortnight, and at the risk of capture daily, he had been traveling almost move and move with the Show. When he fell behind one day, he jumped a freight and caught up the day following. He hardly knew

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himself what he was after: perhaps he sullenly and steadfastly harbored the hope of sooner or later being able to catch one of those Saxon Samsons in some place or manner where no power of biceps could keep him from getting his revenge.

Meanwhile he had been waiting his chance to get into one of the sleepers when they were empty, and, by making a good choice of valises, to pick up something to run along on. And that night the storm seemed to offer him his opportunity. While the evening performance was still going on, all the porters had gathered together in one vestibule down at the end. Cut Nose saw them there, and drew his inference. He tried a car door. It was open. Not even a trainman's lantern had been lit inside. Who, possessing even a much more powerful intellect than gentleman Cut Nose, would not have taken

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it for granted that that car was empty ?

It was not, however, as empty as it looked. And the one modifying detail which Cut Nose could not know was this :

In every circus which carries a side or "freak" show, the "freak" show closes up a few minutes after the main show opens. Its tent is one of the first to come down. And the occupants are free to make their way to their traveling quarters, the "freak car," at their own convenience. Now, the night of the blow-down, most of those unfortunate "freaks" preferred to huddle together and wait for clearer skies in a big hotel driving-shed directly across from the lot. But the manager of Togo and Nogo had, as the physical character of his charges always compelled him to do, already bespoken the town hack for them. With no regard to the weather, too,

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they had wanted to get to their car as soon as they could for another reason, one of their own. They had a whole box of films to develop; and in the conditions of that night they saw a chance to do the said developing uninterruptedly. Their manager had departed with the hack for a second load,—at a quarter apiece; they had their little ruby lamp burning behind the closed door of the wash-room, and had just settled to their work, when Cut Nose entered that ear by the other end!

As must have become evident long since, Messrs. Togo and Nogo rarely needed to be instructed in the meaning of things.

“It is too soonly for Mr. Niehibo’s hack-drive to return,” said the first, putting down a film.

“And we know that the honorable Mr. Halligan-o at this hour plays pin-ochle with the porters of the cars most



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furthest forward," said the second, taking his hand from a bottle of developer. "It is therefore a 'thief-stealer.'"

And with every moment there came to their ears more proof of that.

For a long, cruel minute they stood there, rubbing their bare feet together. They had all the Oriental's desire to keep out of trouble; but, compelling them like a quadruple conscience, was an overmastering feeling of what was due from them to the country they were in, and, much more, to The Big Show.

"It is of the greatest unhappiness we are not permit to carry some guns," said Togo, almost faltering.

"It is for that we must try catch him with some of our hands," responded Nogo; "we must become those great heroes like the honorable Red McGaw."

For a few seconds longer they stood there. Then they nerved themselves to it. Putting out their light, they noise-

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lessly opened the wash-room door, and began to advance, extended across the aisle much like the letter H.

If you are after fat English club bags and suit-cases padded out with silver-backed brushes, the "freak car" is hardly the coach in which to look for them. With furtively twitching fingers Cut Nose had groped into half a dozen profitless valises scattered among the rear berths, — when "snitching" he had always found himself horribly "shy on his nerve" at the best, — and only by forcing himself to it, had he now started on down the car again, when he halted quaking. "*Cripes!*" — He could have sworn that he had heard something moving, and something — he stood there seeming to feel the very blood go out of him — something *that sounded like neither human being nor animal!* Already, too, he believed he heard it again. In the sheer need of

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proving himself wrong, he took a step forward, breathed, and took another. At that second step he struck as it were the connecting bar of the "H" which at once, and with all its limbs, gibberingly closed up on him.

A group of loaders had followed the bigger herd of elephants as far as the sidings, when, from six tracks over, Cut Nose's first yell came to them. They went to it, tumbling over each other, guided by the yells that followed. For, until they found that the sounds came from the interior of the train, they fully expected nothing better than to find some runaway "cat" standing over its convulsively expiring victim. And indeed, when they had plunged themselves breathlessly into the darkness of the car, it was some time before they could form any conception of what the thing was that now shriekingly rolled itself along the aisle, now battered itself against the

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berths. "I tell you, boys," they said afterwards, "it sure scared *us!*" Cut Nose was not trying to fight back. He had from the first moment lost all command of himself. His only thought was to get away. "Lemme go! Lemme go! Lemme go!" he shrieked. "Oh, for cripes' sake, lemme go!" And he had fairly jerked himself to pieces in his frenzy, when at last those loaders realized the situation and pried Togo and Nogo off. Even then their victim did not wait to see what it was that had got hold of him. He broke through his deliverers, screeching out anew whenever his hands touched anything that might still be *it*, — threw himself from the end of the car; he was still running, mouth open, when Red saw him from the back of Deva. And, for the matter of that, — save perhaps for some chance mention later, — he may herewith be allowed to run himself out of this story.

## THE FREAK CAR

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Among the keepers whose sympathies Big Heinie had attempted to enlist in behalf of the loud-roaring Micky was McNally. But, for the remainder of the night, McNally had other things to think of. When those first elephants were coraled in the gravel pits, and sent in contumely back to take their accustomed climb into their proper show cars, a counting of heads had soon made clear the absence of Deva and the other three along with her. A little examination of the lot and the roads around it under the returning starlight showed plainly enough which direction they had taken. And then four keepers were called in to the G. M. and the menagerie boss, and received their campaign orders.

Next morning about seven, at the door of that very log shack where Mr. Red McGaw was then eating a large and filling bowl of oatmeal porridge,

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two muddy buckboards from the town livery came to a stand. They had followed the runaways thus far, and had stopped to make inquiries as to the next road through the swamp to the westward. In the first livery were two young German-American animal men whom Red knew only slightly. But McNally was in the other, and beside him Coakeney as well!

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN ELEPHANT HUNT

*McNally and Coakeney, a buckboard and a cooked ham; latest and approved methods of stalking "unparalleled performing pachyderms" in Michigan.*

THEY had a bag of oats behind them, and a cooked ham and two loaves of bread in a box. And they were in for an elephant hunt which, McNally said, might last a week!

That was enough for Red. His porridge went unfinished. And it was no use for Coakeney to doubt whether they had the authority to take him along. "Heh," he said, "ain't I been in *charge* of them elephants right up to here?" They might just make room for him, and drive ahead, and tell him what had happened since he'd left the lot.

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Much of what had happened has now been told, and space can be given only to one or two of McNally's comments. When he had left, the three lions were still wandering about loose. But, 'as he viewed it, "A thing like that is *good* for a town now and again, you know. It keeps people from gettin' up too blame' early for a while."

As for Cut Nose's affair, "And that's a funny thing, too," said Elephants, reflectingly; "it's funny, because it touched him off the way it did. But you never can tell what 'll scare a man, can you, Coak, old boy?"

Then Red heard about Big Heinie, and Micky and the milk. "I want to say, too," McNally ended, "if I know that big feller, he ain't goin' to hang on much past Chicago. If the G. M. 'll give them their release, it'll certainly be good-bye to The Big Show for the



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Müller family now. No jokin' about it this time."

"Aw, say, now?" said Red.

"That's right."

It was an announcement that gave Red's heart a sudden sense of emptiness. He had n't known till then that he liked those Müllers quite so much. He fell into silence, and did not speak again till they had reached the bridge where Dan had left him and the road together.

The two German-American keepers were waiting for them there. One man took the bridles of both teams, and the rest of them pushed a little way into the swamp. And then even Big Heinie could no longer hold first place in Red's thoughts. He saw that on the bank of that little creek the great tracks came completely to an end!

"Skids!" he said, "there ain't any quicksand or anything, is there?"

"Quicksand your ear!" answered

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McNally. "Those beasts are simply doin' just what they 'd be doin' at home if they 'd never seen a white man in their lives. They 're goin' to keep followin' this creek bed, or portage over and follow others, as long as they 're in here. They won't leave much more trail than a musk-rat."

They returned to the buckboard and climbed in again.

"If we 'ad a cl'y bottom to work on," Coakeney took it up, "we 'd 'ave some chance, but these black swamp creeks won't tell you anythink at all. We know'd they 'd strike for the runnin' water. And as soon as we saw what the runnin' water was like 'ereabouts, we saw that all we could do was to drive the roads till we 'it the trail good and fresh. They 'll keep on goin', but they 'll have to cross the roads when they come to them. And there 's where they 'll print us our fingerposts."

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Elephants had managed to get hold of some county maps, which showed that it was a thirty-five-mile circuit around that swamp alone. But the "animal men" did not seem to regard that as anything out of the way. The other buckboard had gone straight ahead. And now McNally turned his team off to the left at the first soggy concession line.

"We'll meet them on the other side an' compare notes," he said. "If we hit the trail again before dark, we'll be doin' well for to-day. And now it's time we were gettin' a litt'e somethin' to eat."

They filled a tin tea-pail at the next spring, and got out their bread and boiled ham. And, as they cut off big slices with their jack-knives, they expanded on the nature of the contract ahead of them.

According to McNally, elephants

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being big animals, once they start out *fast*, their momentum is bound to carry them a long way. Even after they have forgotten what has stampeded them they will keep on going just on general principles. Out in Nebraska, he said, in the middle of a farming country, too, an elephant hunt after a railroad smash once lasted ten days! For the beasts seem to have an instinct that keeps them to the water whenever it's anyway possible, *in order* not to leave any trail behind. . . . You could be pretty sure, too, continued McNally, that they'd never do any traveling between sun-up and sun-down. In the daylight they'd make for the thickest bit of woods they could find and lie doggo there. But then, again, in the case of elephants, you never could tell, you never could tell. If it looked like it might be to their interest, they might do anything at all!

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It must have been seven or eight miles to the next road which paralleled that taken by the runaways. It was an abandoned logging trail, almost overgrown. But the team was a good one, and McNally pushed them into it and let them take their time.

And it was the middle of the afternoon when all three occupants of the buckboard raised a cry at once. Through the roadside and across the road itself were tracks that could not be mistaken for any but elephants', even by one who had seen elephants only in picture books.

They all jumped out. The horses were willing enough to rest. And with Coakeney leading, the three pushed their way into the prickly thickset mass of evergreen. There was still a vague, balsamy aroma of bruised and broken cedar twigs. And if it seemed impossible that the great animals could have

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gone through there, as McNally put it, an elephant is just a pig in a good many ways; and he will go through where only the pig kind can.

Within another hundred yards they struck water again, and the trail disappeared at once.

Shielding their faces, they got themselves back to the road. McNally tore a page out of his notebook, wrote a line of instructions to the other two keepers, spitted it on the end of a branch, and followed Red and Coakeney into the rig.

“And there’s no danger of their gettin’ past it,” he said; “so now all *we* can do is turn around and begin another loop.”

That night they stayed in an old lumber camp. The long-deserted stable furnished them hay for their bedding, and they built a smudge fire to keep off the mosquitoes. For a time they sat around it and talked. Strange night

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noises came in to them. And McNally, with his experience of almost every species of wild thing, was able to tell what most of those night calls were. . . . Red was, at any rate, mighty glad that they were now about twenty miles away from where the three lions had escaped.

Led by that, by degrees his thoughts went wholly back to The Big Show.

“How long d’yuh think they’ll wait for us?” he asked.

“Wait for us nothin’! We got to catch up to them. They’re playin’ in Bay City to-day; and to-morrow they’ll be in Grand Rapids. We’ll likely make connections again in Chicago. A circus don’t wait for *anything*, son. It plays right ahead to its circuit, even if it has to leave *all* its elephants behind, playin’ to the bull frogs.”

They fixed a screen of old boards, edge up, between their hay shake-

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downs and the fire, put more wood and smudge on the blaze, and stretched out. And McNally and Coakeney, at least, were soon fast asleep. If you start out to catch elephants in Michigan, you can make sure of success only by taking lots of rest as you go along.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOME THRILLS AND SHIVERS

*Continuation of the elephant hunt; Red is almost in danger of losing his nerve; "tutt cum min"; the "hand-shake with one finger"; and a special train to Chicago.*

THE day following was almost a repetition of the first. But the three elephant hunters were gradually getting through the swamp into higher ground. And now, too, they laid out a new plan of campaign. That afternoon they gave the horses a long lay off. They themselves went to bed with the hens,—or the partridges if you like,—and they got up again at moonrise.

"It'll give us a chance to gain half a day on them," said McNally; "for in

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the light of the moon they'll likely enough heave to."

But driving those old logging trails at night was about the most creepy, qualmy business that Red had ever been engaged in. There were mile-long stretches where there might as well have been no moon at all. The trees met over their heads and turned the road into a tunnel that *bristled* with darkness. Yet in the blackest places of all something white always seemed to come quietly out of the bush and go sliding along beside you. When the silence was most deathly, you could hear it making low, soughing noises. And when, by getting up all his nerve Red had made himself look the other way, — *E-e-ee!!* — something clammy-cold would leap straight for his face! Of course next moment he realized that it was only another cluster of low-hanging leaves. But, cats, why can't next mo

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ments come first once in a while. Might as well kill a fellow as scare him to death.

And McNally and Coakeney made things a hundred times worse with their stories. Those stories were all about ghosts and dead men, and elephants that had gone mad and become man-killers. And when, in one of those tunnel-like stretches, from the depths of the woods there went up a fearful, blood-curdling scream, which in reality came from nothing more terrible than a Canada Lynx, McNally dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, and began to tell about those things called by the French Canadians *loups garous*.

These creatures said to be part man and part wolf, — and worse than any wild animal on earth! “A visit from a *loup garou*,” he said, “was enough to send a whole lumber camp to the asylum. In fact, he and Coakeney would have been

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a heap sight wiser if they'd brought their revolvers along. But, as far as that was concerned, some people said that no powder and lead was any use against a *loup garou*. Once one fastened onto you, and got well started sucking your blood —"

"*What's that!*" Coakeney and Elephants both clutched at Red's knees together. He almost jumped out of his skin!

And then both those low-down wretches fell back and haw-haw'd till you'd think they'd die of it! And serve them just about right if they had! Once more Red saw they had been jollyng him.

"*Ah-h!*" he said, when he could articulate at all. "*Ah-h*, you silly gawps, you! Youse think you're gettin' me leery, don't youse?"

Yet it was not two hours afterwards, — and when they were none of them

## SOME THRILLS AND SHIVERS

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listening, — that, bringing their talk to an instant stop, they *did* hear something! They halted the team in their tracks, and for minute after minute sat rooted and unmoving.

It might be only the night wind. But from that yawning blackness away to their right there came a steady rustling. And every little while there followed a crackle, as of breaking underbrush. Another moment and one of the horses flung up its head and began to rear.

In an instant Coakeney was on the ground. "That's h'all we need to know," he said, catching at the head of the plunging animal; "an' they're jolly well comin' our way, too."

Red and McNally jumped out after him.

It *was* the runaways! It was not long till they were giving evidence that was unmistakable.

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“But how are you goin’ to get hold of them?” asked Red, very nervously. “What’ll they do when they see it’s us?”

“Ho,” said Coakeney, still forced to hang to the horses with both hands, “it’s these ’ere beasts that’ll give the most trouble,—I sh’d s’y. Never—never know’d the Michigan ’orse yet that could stand to meet four h’elephants in one of these swamps when the moon is down!”

“That’s right,” said McNally; “will I take them on ahead, Coak? I reckon that’ll save us time in the long run.”

“You can’t take ’em along too quick,” responded Coakeney. The rustling and crackling in that outer blackness became every moment louder. “W’ot about you, Red? Thinkin’ of st’yin’ with me?”

“Sure,” said Red. But never did “sure” more plainly mean the other

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thing. "Which — which one was you wantin' me to ketch?"

Coakeney bubbled. "Well, maybe we can settle that best when they get a bit nearer."

For a little longer he merely waited there. Then he curved his hands about his mouth, and sent forth a long call: "Oh-*hy-y*, Deva! *Tutt cum min!*"

And, to Red's stupefaction, they began to "*cum min*," as if that had been the one thing they'd been asking the chance to do for the last three days!

"Ho, it's some good byled h'y they're lookin' for *now*," said Coakeney, as Deva's great bulk broke the blackness, and she chugged across the ditch and up upon the road. The other three were close behind her. "Ho, yes, — h'eyn't that the truth, you old fool, you? An' they're willin' to risk the biggest lickin' to be 'ad in the Show to get it! They've 'ad enough of runnin' aw'y

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now to last them a barmy century! —Come along, Red. No need for us to do h'any more than show them the road."

Another minute and the four elephants were hurrying along behind in a guilty double shuffle.

Of the unlimited thrills and shivers which Red had been expecting at that capture, he had been most comfortably disappointed. For two or three miles he tramped it with Coakeney. Then, at the brotherly suggestion of the latter, who saw how tired he was, he struck on ahead and climbed back into the buckboard with McNally.

There had been no thrills and shivers at the moment of the capture itself. But for one person, at any rate, in that Southern Peninsula there were a few new ones before the night was over. A little before dawn the fagged-out cavalcade came out on the railroad at a small



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way station. The young man, who was ticket-agent, baggage-man, and telegraph operator all in one, slept in a little cubby-hole behind the lamp-room. McNally did not wait for Coakeney and the elephants. He rapped him up and began with apologies to explain that he'd have to get him to wire headquarters for —

He had got so far when he was sworn at; and the young man went back to bed again.

As patiently as wearily McNally set himself the task of getting him up a second time; and having done so, he started to repeat his explanation.

He got no further than he had at first; and this time he was sworn at not once, but with effusion. It appeared that the young man had been out late on pleasure the night before, and did n't propose to get up now till the down freight came through at ten. The flow

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of profanity with which he accompanied this declaration lasted till he was again in bed and under the covers.

"All right," said Elephants, "all right! Some people you can talk to one way and some you've got to in another. In your case I guess it'll be up to us to give you the hand-shake with one finger. Only I hate to do it, now."

He plodded back through the soft tan bark of the station yard to where Coakeney was waiting in the shadows up the road. And when he returned to that open bedroom window it was with Deva. Pointing to the window, "*You* fetch him out, old girl," he said, "and fetch him out *good*."

As if it were an "act" she had been doing all her life, her trunk licked silently in over the sash. And a moment later it produced something. It produced a screech, — a screech that

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must have made the best efforts of any *loup garou* or even of Cut Nose in the freak car sound like the cooing of a love bird. It was a screech, too, that went on interruptedly amid the overturning of furniture and the breaking of crockery for the next two minutes. And then, having made her grip sure at last, Deva "fetched him out."

The message, inexplicably shaken in its delivery, which shortly afterwards began to arrive at division end, called — in a "three-nine" rush — for the immediate sending of an emergency engine and two "opens." And it continued to call for them, at five-minute intervals, until they were on the way. Indeed, in Michigan railroad circles that message still stands as the most urgent ever sent down the line.

Of the following twelve hours Red could have told only the most fragmentary story. He was half dead for

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sleep. When for a few minutes he did wake up, he was again lying beside McNally. But this time they were in the end of an open freight car, on a bed of fragrant spruce and tamarack. And they had just pulled out for Chicago.

Deva, not tied in any way whatever, was standing with her head toward them. And after a time she reached out shamefacedly and snuggled her trunk up under Elephants' arm.

"Oh, that's all right now, old girl," he said; "that's all right for you. You need n't try any soft-solderin' at all. — But maybe," and he gave her "finger" a little pinch, — "maybe if you see that that lad behind you don't fall out or do us any mischief, maybe all'll be forgiven yet."

Then Red went off to sleep again as if he were in the old "Newsies" Lodging House, and slept for seven hours more.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LAST OF FAT

*Is it possible for one to have too many adventures for one's truest happiness? Even while answering this question Red has one more, and Fat takes some lessons in gymnastics.*

THEY reached West Chicago and found the lot just in time to get to the cook tent before supper was over. The Big Show was blithely and serenely unchanged. It looked as if it had never known a blow-down or an elephant stampede in all its existence. The band was again playing *Make a Noise like a Hoop and Roll Away*. You might have believed that it had gone straight on playing it since the night Red had heard it last from Deva's back!

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And at the bottom of his heart Red felt that it showed a very little feeling, especially as the Müllers were going to leave. He had been thinking about them more than any one else. And he wanted to see Big Heinie right away.

They were n't on the lot, the costume man informed him. But neither had they left the Show as yet, and they couldn't for some time. They were living at a boarding-house with the rest of the Saxon Samsons and some German trapeze people. The place was two blocks straight over, on K Street. It was just at the corner, and he'd know it by the upper veranda; most likely his friends would be sitting out in it at that minute. "And say," he shouted after Red, "there's two new members in the Saxon Samsons. They're the biggest thing in the Show just now. Only they ain't on salary yet."

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Two new members? — The biggest thing in the Show, and not on salary yet? — Now what did the costume man mean by that? But Red didn't try to figure it out then. It was enough to learn that the Müllers would be staying on for a while longer anyway, — that he wouldn't be getting back from that elephant hunt only in time to say good-bye to them.

The truth was, altogether too much had been happening of late. He had always felt, of course, that a circus was a place where more things can happen in a week than you generally get in a lifetime. But in that last week things had piled up on him so fast that he couldn't sort them out. He wanted time to sit down somewhere and think for a day or two and kind of catch up. In the matter of adventures, for the first time in his life, he felt that he had had his fill. No use a man's being scared

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to death *every* day. It seemed to him that he'd be content to go along for several months now and have no more at all. Or, better still, what he wanted was some place like Spider's, where you could go out and get an adventure once in a while, but where they were n't everlastingly *coming at you*.

But even as he was having these very wise reflections, the law of mysterious chance had moved again, and one final adventure was "coming at him" then and there.

The two blocks between the show grounds and K Street were almost taken up with low cheap saloons. And as he got their sour and rancid odors through their wicker swinging doors, there came back to him that afternoon in Buffalo when he stood in front of a saloon waiting for Fat and Cut Nose. He guessed, with a return of all his power to grin, that The Big Show would n't see Cut



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Nose again, — not while a pair of Japanese Twins named Togo and Nogo were travelling with it. But Fat had been going to Chicago, and *he* might still be snooping around. If he was —

The saloon door he was just passing swung open, and Fat came out of it!

There was one staring, dazing moment of recognition. Then, — perhaps it was the sight of Red's grin, — all the pain of his stone bruises came back to Fat in one consuming flame. With a bellow he flung himself to grip him. And Red's grin, for all its vitality, froze to death. As he turned he tried to yell, but he could n't seem to get the sounds out. He almost fell back into the road. He dodged a push-cart and a string of coal wagons. And, feeling Fat gaining on him every moment, he put all the strength that was in him into a one-hope rush for K Street.

It was not yet seven, and therefore

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still quite light. As the costume man had prophesied, the Saxon Samsons were sitting out in that upper veranda. Another minute and they were gaping over the side of it. Followed by such a voice of infuriate pursuit as might have come from a whole pack of hunting dogs, Mr. Red McGaw had dashed sliding around the corner below them! He looked about him for one choking half jiffy, then fled up the steps and into the open front door. And now those Saxon Samsons saw that behind him came one of that pair of misguided organizers of trouble whom they had had the pleasure of dealing with several weeks before, in Buffalo!

And they felt quite equal to dealing with this present gentleman again. If Cut Nose's parting visit to Big Show circles had been unexampled in its painfulness, Fat's was, if anything, to be rather more so.

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Red plunged into the open door— Fat followed. Half-way up the stairs he followed, too. But he got no further.

That is to say, he got no further on his own feet. The company from the upper veranda had rushed into the upstairs hall. And just as Fat's hands were upon Red's ankles, Ludwig bent himself swiftly backward and down over the banister directly above them. He buckled himself to it with a "knee-and-hock cinch." His large white hands closed upon Fat's shoulders. He jerked him a yard into the air as if he had been a sack of clothes, and then gave him the "lightning turn-over."

Fat yelled like a man who has lost his grip upon this whirling earth.

But if he believed that he was going to break his neck when he came down again, he was at any rate wrong in that. Big Heinie had now reached the bottom

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of the stairs, and was waiting only till the flying Fat felt ready to descend.

The great Saxon caught him on the drop, and in his turn gave him that "lightning turn-over," — this time *backwards*. "Circusses — iss — derrible — dangerous — blaces," he said most concernedly. "If you ain'd gareful, — sometime you *sgare* our frient Red!"

Then Big Heinie "cartwheeled" Fat through the lower hall, down the steps, and out upon what had formerly been a grass plot beside the area. "Mague a noise ligue a hoop and *roll* away, *roll* away, *roll* away!" he chanted, panting. "*Aber*, no doubt you haf come back to take some yimnastic lessons, yess?"

And he delivered him over to the eagerly hovering Gustav and Franz.

One on each side, they took him "wing and hip," and shot him heels over head. He lit on his feet, it is true, but he was net to waste any time in



“Again and again they flipped him over.” Page 243



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that position. Again and again they flipped him over, faster and faster, till he fairly spun.

“Dass iss ‘turnin’ spotters’ called,” explained Big Heinie, “und you do it *sehr* goot. In two t’ree weeks you know a lot! Shall we now mit der ‘revolving barrel’ begin?”

He dropped upon his back, swung his feet into the air, caught Fat almost as deftly upon his canvas soles as if that hapless wight had been the parti-colored barrel of the circus ring itself, and “tossed him for position.”

By this time there was an audience on all sides that blocked the street. An audience, however, was only inspiration and encouragement to the Saxon Samsons. Ludwig had dropped upon *his* back opposite Big Heinie. And now the two began to “play catch” with Fat.

But just at that juncture, a large,

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red-haired, and gaping policeman broke through the crowd. His club was in his hand, but he almost let it fall. "Will, in the name o' the Great Bog of Athlone!" he gasped.

The two recumbent Saxon Samsons rose to their feet. But Fat did not. He continued to sit there, still feeling himself revolving, "turning spotters," doing the "lightning turn-over." And he sank his fingers into the soil as if he never intended to let go of it.

"Will yez jist till me what it manes, new?" repeated the policeman.

"Ach," said Big Heinie, spreading his hands, "we wass all yoost having some friently yinks togedder,—for digestion's help." And he beamed upon him pacifyingly.

"'Frindly yinks!'—I can see by *him* how fri'ndly it was! I've a mind to land the whole gang of yez in the cooler!"



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Fat was beginning to get back his senses again; and, for the first time, he found himself regarding a slate-blue coat and brass buttons as emblems of protection.

“Youse can take me just the quickest youse can,” he said, swallowing wind in gulps. “Anything as long as youse get me away from *this* bunch!”

“Take *youse!* An’ who’s been makin’ a charge ag’in’ ye? I’m thinkin’ it’s for youse to make it ag’in’ *thim!*”

“Ya,” said Big Heinie, again; “we wass all great sinners togedder.”

And then, as Fat gazed at those large, child-like German faces, his own gradually filled with another expression. He saw more and more plainly that if he was to be given over to what we call justice, it would never be by them, nor by Red, either, now standing beside them. . . . Very well did he remember that day at the spider-work trestle in

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those Pennsylvania hills. Very well, too, did he remember a great many other things which should have registered black marks against him.

But, "Ach," Big Heinie was deprecating. "we're not goin' to *sboil* der fun alretty. You yoost come inside mit us, und talk about dings a leedle."

Frankly, the result was another case of justice defeated and the law set shamefully at naught.

"Und so," Big Heinie called in farewell after Fat at last, "you yoost go along now, und stop der trinkin' und be goot! Ain't dot what *you* say, Red?"

"Sure!" glowed Red, and he felt a wonderful relief. "Sure! An' y' see, Fat, I knowed that you ain't never been so bad, right all the time."

And if mankind really lost anything

## THE LAST OF FAT

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because one bruised and dusty and world-battered mortal was, despite all his iniquities, given another chance, we have never heard any complaint of it as yet.

## CHAPTER XX

### TWO ARRIVALS

*The new members of the Saxon Samson troupe; great embarrassments and difficulties; and the G. M. shows the real depths of his genius in the solution thereof.*

THE costume man had said that there were now two new members in the Saxon Samson troupe. And that night Red made their acquaintance.

In the first place, when he spoke of what the costume man had told him and asked who those two new members were, all the Saxon Samsons he already knew boomed out at once into roars of deep-chested German laughter. They punneled each other hilariously, and caught Red in the floating ribs, and

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tried to shove each other over the chairs, and acted more and more as if it were simply the biggest joke that had ever got loose.

At least all of them acted so save Midget Hans. And upon him there settled a mantle of gloom that nothing whatever seemed to have the power to lift!

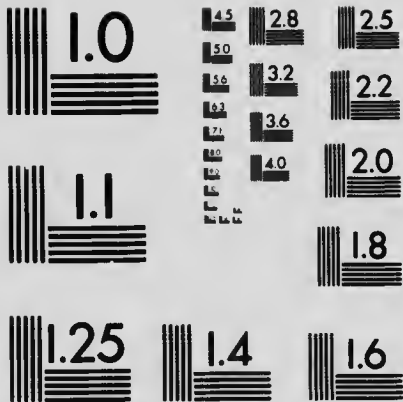
Red was once more trying hopelessly to figure it out, when those ecstatic Samsons finally decided to enlighten him. He was taken up to two rooms on the third floor back, and introduced.

In the arms of a stout German-American girl sat unquestionably the roundest, whitest-headed, and most vigorous year-old baby in existence.

*It was "leedle Heinie"!*

"Und it wass *he* dot made her bring him!" cried his exulting sire from the summit of his pride. "Two days ago alretty he haf resolved he should no





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longer parted from his elters be. Und he yoost yell und gick und roll der florr upon till Elsa allerdings gif oop, und bring him by Chicago!"

And, in the room behind, not to be moved out of her straight-backed chair by the riotous and unseemly conduct of a hundred Saxon Samsons, sat the leanest, grayest, most masterful looking old lady, wearing the highest horn comb and the biggest horn spectacles ever seen out of Altmünsterstadt.

*It was Hans' great-grandmother!*

She had arrived not ten hours after "leedle Heinic." And though she had found friends on the way, how she had got through the immigration office was yet to be discovered!

But this much was known. It was no mere chance that had brought her. She had begun to pack her belongings the day she had received Hans' letter



## TWO ARRIVALS

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telling how he had been made to fight with Red. And in the first minutes after her arrival she explained her coming clearly.

She gave the one solemn and dignified member of the Saxon Samson troupe to know that she had promised his grandmother ever and always a constant care over him to take; and since she could no longer do it from Altmünsterstadt, that care over him to continue she had come even to America out!

And, after a speech like that, can you wonder now at the gloom that darkened and embittered the countenance of Hans? When, for more than two years, you have done your work under the respon — responiss — when every day and hour you have thought thereon of what it means to have a great-grandmother to take care of, what is there to be said when, at the end of

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it, you discover that, as *shē* has been viewing it all along, it is *she* who has been taking care of *you*? Earth has many sources of embitterment. But let us be thankful that few of us can know any such bitterness as that!

More, too:

Both "leetle Heinie" and Hans' great-grandmother had joined themselves to The Big Show without giving any due warning and notice. And in consequence there presented itself the question of what was to be done with them. Doubly to complicate the business, too, both of them had very plainly given notice that the objects of their anxiety must at once abandon the circus profession! And signed contracts can hardly be broken in half an hour.

It was the wisdom of the G. M. that now entered in. As a Solomon, a man of innumerable emergencies, and an

## TWO ARRIVALS

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indulgent Providence all in one, he settled those baffling questions to the satisfaction absolutely of every one!

To begin with, he recognized the inevitable. He did not argue the matter, but commenced immediately to cast about for substitutes for Mrs. Müller and Big Heinie and Hans.

In the second place, he took into consideration the fact, well known to every one, that for Hans to part from the Müllers would be like saying good-bye to a father and mother. And therefore it began to be entirely evident to him that what the Müllers had been needing in their business from the beginning was a great-grandmother! For that matter, too, here was a great-grandmother who would undoubtedly insist upon paying her own way! And he called all concerned before him, and laid before them certain suggestions, herein to follow:

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They, the Müllers, had said that they wanted to take up farming out West. But they had no settled idea just where and how. Well, he, the G. M. for his part believed that he could count upon having their substitutes with The Big Show by the time it made Dubuque. According to Mr. Red McGaw, Dubuque was the place where *he* was aiming to get off. And, as it happened near Dubuque there was a big German farming settlement. Was not Sonnenschein the name of the people Red was going to ?

That was their very German name. And, again according to Red, they were mighty swell nice people at that !

Well then, pursued the G. M., in all probability from those same Sonnenscheins the Müllers could get exactly the kind of advice and information that they needed. If, then, they would just go along to Dubuque the way they

## TWO ARRIVALS

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were,— and after they left Chicago it would mean only three days for “leedle Heinie” and great-grandmother Sohmer to make shift on the circus sleepers,— the M. thought that in the end everybody would be suited beautifully!

The Müllers *were* suited. They wanted the G. M. to know that they had made up their minds to adopt Hans and Hans’ great-grandmother *days* ago. And then they came back and expressed another desire. They wanted to take Red in with them as well!

One might almost have thought that the G. M. was expecting that! And, in the afternoon, he called Red in and put the matter to *him*.

Would he go in—would he go in with the Müllers! It was a question which Mr. McGaw never really answered, as far as mere words were concerned, at all! It was minutes till he

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could even smile! — “*Say! — Say!* If the Müllers could only find a farm somewheres near where Spider was, he would n’t even want to travel with The Big Show no more!”

## CHAPTER XXI

### FAREWELL

*Dubuque: Red receives a letter which has manifestly come from every quarter of the inhabited globe; enters into financial arrangements with Mrs. Müller; is advanced to the highest position in The Big Show; attends a box party with some friends both new and old, and says good-bye.*

THEY were in Dubuque, and it was Red's last day on the lot. Spider would be in town, there could be no doubt about that, but he would hardly arrive much before the parade. And in the meantime there were about five hundred people to say good-bye to.

Now, ever since he had had that rock fight with Fat away back in Pennsylvania, — “and, skids, *that* was n't any-

## REDNEY McGAW

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thing!"—two or three times a day somebody had hinted to him about something that was going to happen when they reached Dubuque.

And now—which was a great deal more puzzling—everybody he started to say good-by. to asked him if he had seen the Show postman yet?

What would he be seeing the postman for? There wasn't any one to write to him but Spider, and he had never let him know that he was traveling with the Show. Indeed there had been times enough when, seeing letters coming for everybody else but him, he had had moments of that sort of homesickness which you can only feel if you have never had any home at all.

So when the Flying Florios, and Coakeney, and the Man Monkey, and Togo and Nogo, and twenty other people all told him that the postman was looking for him, he said, "Ah, go





“The cable letter that came through the mails, or did n't?”  
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on, now, youse can't jolly me *that way!*"  
And when he did meet the postman, he  
began suspiciously to back away.

But the postman *had* a letter for him.  
The address was plain :

ROBERT EMMET IGNATIUS MCGAW,  
% THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH,  
AMERICA.

And what a letter!

The envelope was half as big as a  
pillow-case. It was fairly covered and  
plastered over with stamps. And they  
were not American stamps only, but  
English, French, and German, Italian,  
Russian, Spanish, and Japanese; like all  
the mixed but kindly population of The  
Big Show itself, they came from every  
quarter of the globe! What was even  
more peculiar, no two canceling dates  
corresponded. It was, in short, the  
most remarkable letter that came  
through the mails, or *did n't!*

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And its contents! There were, first, five crinkly new fifty-dollar bills from the Management. Of fives and tens there were at least a dozen. And as for ones and twos, that pillow-case envelope was stuffed as full of them as any pillow ever was with feathers. And, enwrapping all, was a double sheet of foolscap which bore this legend, in the handwriting of Elephants McNally:

From The Big Show  
to Red McGaw,  
who held the fort,  
and who  
for about six weeks  
has never stopped wearing  
One of the best things we know of under the blue sky,  
*The Smile That Won't Come Off!*

“Ah, say,” said Red, some half-hour later, — and he was at that moment beaming like a whole constellation of suns, — “I don’t know as I ever smiled so *much*.”

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He was still attempting to hold the point in argument, when a messenger from the head office called him in to another audience with the G. M.

And the G. M. had called him solely with the idea of taking that money away again.

Or, to be more accurate, he had decided to appoint Mrs. Müller temporary receiver and trustee. She and her man were already there, waiting beside the G. M.'s desk.

And, "Tell me," the G. M. was asking her, as Red came in, "what do you do with *this* small boy's coin?" He kneaded his fingers into Big Heinie's titanic shoulders.

"I put him all into der Bank for Savings," Mrs. Müller responded with decision. And then, more feelingly,—  
"But I let him haf a leedle from der interest for tobacco."

"Excellent!" said the G. M.;

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“only instead of money for tobacco, I think it would be advisable to allow Mr. McGaw, here, a certain amount for fishing tackle and so on, in season. While I think of it, too, I don't know but what — if there are any black panthers loose in the neighborhood, — I don't know but what he'll have to have a gun.”

And then, since it was to be Red's last day with them, he bestowed upon him a privilege that was the highest even in the bestowal of The Big Show.

About eleven that morning, Mr. “Spider” Madigan, brown with good Iowa tan, had climbed twenty feet up a telegraph pole near the City Hall, and was taking in the endless splendid fascinations of “The Grand Pageant and Street Parade.” There were many circus people in that parade that he would have given a year or two of life to be. There was Madam Rosalinda, the lion

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tamer, sitting in the midst of a cage of them. There was the man in the uniform of a royal Indian Jemadar, walking beside the biggest of the elephants. There was Splinters, "the King of the Clowns." But all these became as nothing when the forty-horse band-wagon swung into view!

Those horses!—Four abreast, ten deep, every one flecklessly cream-white, and all, wave on wave, tossing their red and gold harness as if they were drawing the chariot of an emperor! In the year he had been farming "Spider" had learned about horses, and he knew that all America could not produce another such forty. He had learned the feeling, too, of sitting behind even one blooded animal. What, then, must be the feelings of the man who'd got the job of driving *those!* "*Crimminy!*" he breathed, "I bet he don't think he's the nifty lad, or anything!"

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There were two people on the gilded box. But, as the "forty-horse" made the corner, the smaller one was handed the ribbons. And, perched up there above that great swan "float" and its fifty glittering bandsmen, he looked such a little gaffer! . . . He *was* a little gaffer, too. He wasn't any bigger, and he was just about the build of—

Spider stared again, — stared till his mouth became one prodigious "O," and he all but fell from his telegraph pole. That little gaffer was not merely just the size and build of Red McGaw. *Gee!— Gee!— It was Red McGaw himself!*

At the afternoon performance in Dubuque sat two box parties, invited by special request of the management. The one consisted of Messrs. McGaw and Madigan, now after many adventures at last united, and the latter's farming



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friends and foster parents, the Sonnenscheins. In the other party were Hans and his great-grandmother, Mrs. Müller, Miss Elsa Müller, and "leedle Heinie."

But it must be acknowledged that two of those highly honored guests did not appear to be enjoying "The World's Greatest Circus and Three Ring Hippodrome" at all.

After the first half-minute Hans' great-grandmother joined her hands, shut her horrified eyes firmly behind her horn spectacles, and refused to open them again till the last "turn" of the last act had been concluded!

As for "leedle Heinie," he had already rescued his mother from the show business and had her safely beside him. But that tremendous father of his, because of the slowness of his substitute, could not be spared till the day following. And now, as time after time Big Heinie came strangely into view, re-

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mained for a few mysterious minutes, and then as suspiciously disappeared again, "leedle Heinie's" face filled with a concern which every moment became more anxiously intense. In all his thirteen months he had never seen any circus performance that he had enjoyed less. And when, in the final "act," Big Heinie whirled thunderously around the ring in his flying Roman chariot, with three other Roman chariots all fearfully pursuing him, "leedle Heinie" could abide the sight no longer. He burst into roars and howls which said in language that even the meanest intelligence could not misinterpret: "I'm t'inkin' somedings'll happen mit dot leedle feller yet!"

About two months after these events, when The Big Show had got back East and was snuggling down for the winter, the G. M. received a letter. It was a

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letter which looked very much like that letter that Red himself had had occasion to re-read the day this story took its beginning in Buffalo. Only now it was Red himself who was the writer.

“Were livin right next door to Spider an the Sonnenshines,” it ran, “an we been fishin about twice a week. Mister Sonnenshine says its a turible daingerous thing to farm too hard at first. we been swimmin a heap too. the first time, I got my back sunburnt so bad, skids I thot Ide haf to keep sleepin on my stummick till I growed up. Hans he goes along too. him and his great-grandmother takes care of each other fine only sometimes shes fierce an hard to take care of. but they say great-grandmothers are generally always like that.

“Missus Mullers began tamin things. the chickens, say they all pike after her

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the jiffy they get eyes on her. She cant hardly get to church for them. and she's tamin the chipmunks an red squirrels an a ground hog too. If there was any mountain lions round here, say it'd be only a day or two till they was eatin out of your hand.

“Big Heinie's feelin fine only he cant get work enough to do on a hunderd and sixty akers. we was at a barn-raisin last week an they had to make him stop. they said if he raised like that again he'd turn the everlastin blame shebang clean over.

“Say, I had a letter from Elefants an Cokeney last week. Elefants he writ that he thinks him an Cokeney will have to come out here for a holliday an take us into the bush an show us *how* to do things. An say, if they ever *do!* skids —

“An Cokeney he writ that every time deva sees jinjer cakes she's like

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to cry her jolly head off an keeps a hollerin in elefant talk, say, if I dont see that red McGaw an his grin again pretty soon Ime jist goin to hawl off an lay out the whole menajery. but skids I guess thats ony some more of there jollyin."

THE END

