

THE FAMILY STORY

GOING TO THE CIRCUS.

One time Lou and I were hoeing potatoes, when we saw a man in blue uniform coming down the road. Lou was my older brother, and he didn't like to hoe potatoes any better than I did, but he could dissemble better. Twice that hot August morning in 1864 he had left me to tread the wine press alone—I regard that simile as a heap pleasanter than is the fact—while he pretended to fix something on the shady side of the barn. He explained each time when he came back that he much regretted the necessity of leaving this nice, easy work in the potato field for such unpleasant tasks at the barn, and I grew quite sorry for him. I offered to go next time in his place, but he was the most self-abnegating fellow you ever saw, and insisted on this systematic martyrdom.

When the man in the blue uniform came down the road we stopped hoeing long enough to look at him and wonder who he was. We had stopped several times before, but that was not to wonder who the travelers were. We knew who they were. We even knew where they were going. We knew they were neighbors going to the circus at the county seat—the circus that had been advertised with tremendous posters and intemperate print for just four weeks. We knew in a general way people did go to such places, but we thought about it as almost as distant as the battles with which the uniformed man was associated. A circus was not for us. We must hoe potatoes.

The man in blue uniform turned in at our house and sat there in the shade of the locust trees while mother rinsed the milk pails and set them in the sun.

Presently he came out in the field and shook hands with us. We remembered him as a hired man who had formerly worked for us—an excellent fellow, as you shall see. He was something far removed from potato hoeing. He had seen big battles, and we believed we had found his portrait in a colored print of the times, which showed a column of even-stepping heroes rushing to conflict as to a carnival. We were a little embarrassed in his presence, and scarcely asked him about the weapons he wielded and the foemen he had slain. Our library contained some books which treated of conflict in those rarer times when men went single-handed into the ranks of an enemy and swept down swaths of weaklings—those rarer times before a rifle bullet made one man as good as another.

John asked us how the cattle were getting along, and something about the neighborhood gossip, and then marched away very straight, as if he were under the eye of a drillmaster. Another neighbor came along and John signaled him.

"I guess I'll go to the circus, too," he said to us, laughingly, over his shoulder.

Oh! soldiers could do anything. This proved it. Men who could suddenly think of something desirable, something wonderful, and who could instantly decide they wanted it and so have it—these were the favored among men.

As to the circus! Why, I would have given anything—everything, discounted hope and banded the future for the plain privilege of "going to the show." You cannot know the heart hunger felt for the circus by a country boy in war time. It was an expected, an illimitable, an inexhaustible case of wonders.

John ran to the fence, placed his hands on the top rail and vaulted over, as became a soldier home on furlough, while the people in the wagon—they were dressed in the very flower of gala attire—pushed forward to shake hands with him. Then they called across to us:

"Ain't you going to the circus?" and so went on. Fate was a despot. We did not question the decree, though we could very freely understand the charm that was crouched in that one phrase—"Going to the circus!"

We had hoed out the row when mother called to us, and we went to the house. It was not nearly noon, but there was a luncheon of bread and butter, of milk and of warm currant pie on the little table in the vine-shaded porch. The spread astonished us. Mother was getting at her spinning wheel.

"Do you want to go to the circus?" she asked.

Of course that meant permission. No mother can taunt her child. John had said he would pay for our tickets if she would let us go. He wanted to do that much for the sake of old times, he said. And, dressed in the best those trying war times afforded, we started on foot for the county seat.

My people were church members, and we knew about miracles. But no sun waiting the will of Joshua was ever more miraculous than this instant change in our condition. But an hour

ago hoeing potatoes; now going to the circus!

I had never seen a lion nor an elephant nor any of the curious beasts from foreign lands. I knew their presence in the garden of Eden and in the ark. I knew that African travelers had found them. But that was far away. At the end of these little miles, just beyond these business buildings, already in sight, I should find "wild beasts of the field," and should drink my fill of marvels.

The season was right. Harvest was over, corn needed no more plowing. There was a midsummer lull in all activity. Even in a time when few men remained at home, and when women and boys did much of the farm work, there was still time and inclination to visit "the show." The proportion of men in blue uniform was greater than it had ever been. The army pervaded everything. Men home on furlough were guests of honor and were feted royally—they, too, had money and could reciprocate, were that permitted. They were sought continually. And they told when the war would cease.

The circus was there. All lurking fear that at the last something might happen to disappoint me was dispelled when we came to the courthouse square, for there, just beyond the temple of justice, in the vacant lots, was spread the mighty tent. Sure those vacant lots had been doubled in size since last I saw them, for no common space could entertain an establishment so vast as this. Why, there were walls of canvas on the right hand and on the left hand of the mammoth tent, and there were successions of smaller tents that stretched away into bewildering vistas, and before them all everywhere tugged the great advertisements, wonderful in picture, exotic in text. There was a noise, a bustle, a hurry, a nervous tension, unknown in the town. No man had more time than sufficed for the scantiest of greetings, unless accosted by a soldier, in which case he would talk interminably, or a sharper, in which case he would invest disastrously. The only calm, contained men were those law-defiers who looked with such honest faces into the waveling eyes of honest men and beguiled them to their ruin. For there were three-card games and "chuck-a-luck," popular among the soldiers, and wheels of fortune and straight fare. Only the most beggarly pretense of secreting all this crime was made. The "short change" man, who flourished in one place and disappeared to rise in another, was on the ground and was remembered. There were assistant marshals with large stars, and they walked in and out of all tents at will. But they saw nothing less than quarrelling men, and roused to activity only to prevent fighting.

Just before noon the parade started. We watched the wonderful aggregation of marvels form into line. To youths bred in an environment where some of the odor of sanctity might reach them it seemed most shocking that so much profanity was needed in assembling a great moral aggregation. Furthermore, there was a quality about that profanity I have never known equalled. It was intense, incisive, terse, emphatic, sulphurous, full of murder and flashing with the lightning of blasphemy. I have ridden behind "mule whackers" on the plains and have spent vacations where the voice of the first mate of a river packet could assail my ears. But I have found no man whose profanity matched the splendid wickedness of the circus employe in the old days of wagon transportation.

The parade was a thing to marvel at. In the front was a carriage resplendent above above anything in the town and bearing the dusty human who was yet more than mortal, for he owned "the show."

Then came the band in a golden chariot that quite satisfied me. If anything in my reading equalled that I could not recall it. How many there were in the band, what they played, or whether they played well, these things did not impress me. For behind them came the elephant. He walked alone, stately—or sore-footed, and how was I to know? He swung like the rocking of a haystack in a storm and his driver prodded him. Then came the cars. Upon the sides of each were painted such pictures as must have whetted the curiosity of the unlearned. But two were opened. In one was "the massive and blood-sweating behemoth of holy writ"—a hippopotamus! In the other a man sat in safety with unchained lions on his every hand.

What more there was in the parade, how many ladies in remarkable skirts and gentlemen in the armor of knights, how many clowns and how many cages, I do not know. But it was a magnificent spectacle. It wound about those streets

that had always before been commonplace, and it grew more wonderful as it advanced. I know, for I followed it.

And then it vanished into the spreading walls of the canvas city and was lost. The beauty and the loveliness would have vanished from the earth but for the glare and flare and marvel of that circus day.

John was in the line before the ticket wagon, but his progress was slow for a time, and again he was pulled from his place to give a frantic greeting to someone whose son or brother or father was in the service. That was why soldiers came home on furlough—to tell when the war would end and to talk hopefully to the friends of the boys at the front.

But finally he stood at the wonderful door of the ticket wagon, where money was leaping from the hand of the countryman in exchange for pleasure. Instantly he was away again. The fat, hot man that sold tickets cared nothing for the blue uniform. He saw nothing that interested him beyond the bills laid down. And these he whisked from sight half savagely.

Our tickets were in our hands. We had passed the insolent, broad-jawed fellow at the gangway of ropes, and stood in the most amazing place in the world. To the left were rows of wonderful cages—now opened—and in each was a marvel of animal life. I never had seen them, but somewhat of natural history had been opened to me in books, and I could call them by name.

A man may live a thousand years and win great honors, but he will never feel so keen a joy as thrills in the boy of 10 when he stands in the center of an unexpected circus and menagerie.

I sought the elephant in vain, because my little eyes had not been adjusted to the huge dimensions of the pachyderm. And I was touched by his trunk before I gave him recognition. And in the midst of that wonder, but half filled with the charms of the animal portion, I was dragged away to the smaller entertainment of the ring.

The old circus was near at hand, and a single ring embraced the limit of its possibilities. There was the band above the place of entrance, and on each side of it were the higher-priced seats. Our tickets called for but common sittings and we found place in a coatless, fanning, perspiring, but happy crowd. The men were vociferous, the women broadly smiling. Girls giggled and blushed when the clown tossed kisses at them and their escorts bought what they called refreshments and tried with prodigality to purchase popularity.

There was bareback riding—and, being old, I will say these later days have taught us nothing in that. There was the leaping through "balloons," which seems to have come with the first circus, and a trapeze performance which was doubtless good. There was trick riding and performers on a horizontal bar. And then there was a bout at boxing.

Nothing could have been more timely. No doubt amusement purveyors are the same yesterday, to-day and forever, and even before rural audiences, which they hold in contempt, delight in making applause. Well, this sparring exhibition was no "frost." Very likely that undertake combativeness, which, appealed to by drum and fife, set a nation at war, was just sufficiently assertive to respond to this matching of man against man. For there was nothing of the hippodrome about the affair. The men were fearfully, exhaustively in earnest. But to me, who got even in war time my first sight of human blood drawn in anger, there was something so horrible, so heart-sickening, so impossible, that I appealed with tears to the man at my right to stop them. He was a powerful fellow, but he laughed at me.

The circus was almost over when loud voices to the right announced the beginning of a quarrel. There were at least ten years, beginning in 1861, when circus men counted themselves fortunate if they got out of a town without a battle. They hired canvas men who were as good at fighting as at work. The whole corps of workers was organized and constantly prepared. And the towns in which they showed were sure to have "hard men." Fighting was the order of the day. The circus simply provided the occasion.

Sitting up there in our lofty place, we could hear that premonitory speech in an ominous lull of other sounds, could feel, as sentient humans always do, the gathering of human muscle and the hardening of human hearts. And then we could see a little rush, for the words had ceased, and the fight was on. I don't remember the "Hey, Rube!" exclamation, which later years have told me is the showman's slogan; but I know that a great wave of horror rolled over the hearts of those who did not love a fight, and the soul of slaughter leaped up in those who scented battle afar off, and basted to join in it.

Who began it, what it was about, how many were hurt, and who finally triumphed are matters of small concern. I have an idea none of the combatants is still living, so it does not matter. But I do know the seats were overturned, law officers were defied, bleeding men surged across the ring chasing other bleeding men before them, and were chased back in turn. And at last it was all over. Someone said the combatants had transferred the field of their activities "up town."

and we avoided that quarter on our way home.

There were many neighbors from beyond our farm, but the battle separated us from them, and we walked back to the farm. Just as we came to our meadow gate the first wagon of that show came along, driving already for the next town, thirty miles away. The driver was asleep, his horses taking the way of their own free will. A man ahead on horseback seemed, although half a mile away, to mark out the line of march. The great golden chariot, housed in dull trappings to keep off the dust and the rain and the sun, rolled heavily past, and the gaudy men who rode so proudly by day slept in it miserably by night and blessed their stars they could find the solace of even so meager a repose.—Chicago Chronicle.

Napoleon's Last Official Act.

Next day Napoleon performed his last official act, which was one of great courage, both physical and moral. The national guard in Paris had been reorganized, but its officers had never been thoroughly loyal to the Empire, many of them being royalists, and some radical Republicans. Their disaffection had been heightened by recent events, but they were nevertheless summoned to the Tuilleries; the risk was doubled by the fact that they came armed. Drawn up in the great chamber known as that of the marshals, they stood expectant; the great doors were thrown open, and there entered the Emperor, accompanied only by his consort and their child in the arms of his governess, Mme. de Montesqueu. Napoleon announced simply that he was hoping, by the aid of God and the valor of his troops, to drive the enemy beyond the frontiers. There was silence. Then taking in one hand that of the Empress, and leading forward his child by the other, he continued, "I intrust the Empress and the King of Rome to the courage of the national guard." Still silence. After a moment, with suppressed emotion, he concluded, "My wife and my son." No generous-hearted Frenchman could withstand such an appeal; breaking ranks by a spontaneous impulse, the officers started forward in a mass, and shook the very walls with their cry, "Long live the Emperor!" Many shed tears as they withdrew in respectful silence, and that night, on the eve of his departure, the Emperor received a numerously signed address from the very men whose loyalty he had hitherto had just reason to suspect.—Century.

Li Hung Chang's Liberal Views.

It is claimed that, notwithstanding Li Hung Chang has shown some liberality of views toward modern improvements and education, he is at heart a hater of foreigners, and has an abiding faith in Chinese institutions and methods of government. He is, it is true, a great admirer of the Confucian philosophy, and remembering the enduring history of his people we can hardly wonder at his devotion to the institutions which have made that history possible. When we call to mind the experience China has had with certain Western nations, it might not be considered strange if his attachment to foreigners was not very ardent; but in all his public life his conduct shows that he feels the need of foreign aid, and is disposed to give it proper welcome, and of all Chinese statesmen he is the most liberal minded and free from prejudice. He is far from claiming that the present system of government is perfect. He has, in fact, urged upon the authorities at Peking two important changes which look to a reform of the most serious defects in the system; to wit, the withdrawal from the viceroys of provinces of powers which should be exercised only by the imperial government, and such a change in the method of admission to the public service as will liberalize the examinations, and make fitness rather than scholarship the test. There are other changes which he would gladly bring about if he had the power; but, as he confessed to Marquis Ito, "China is hampered by antiquated customs which prevent desirable reforms."—Century.

Napoleon's Army in 1813.

In order to arm and equip the men raised by conscription, Napoleon had recourse to his private treasure, drawing 55,000,000 francs from the vaults of the Tuilleries for that purpose. The remaining ten were transferred at intervals to Blois. But all his treasure could not buy what did not exist. The best military stores were in the heart of Europe; the French arsenals could afford only antiquated and almost useless supplies. The recruits were armed sometimes with old muskets, the use of which they did not know; they wore for the most part bonnets, blouses, and sabots. There were not half enough horses for the scanty artillery and cavalry. Worse than all, there was no time for instruction in the manual and tactics. On one occasion a boy conscript was found standing inactive under a fierce musketry fire; with artless intrepidity he remarked that he believed he could aim as well as anybody if he only knew how to load his gun.—Century.

In an argument the average man does not listen to what the other fellow is saying, but spends the time formulating a reply.



When the mercury's a sprinter
"Twill cool you if you try
To remember how last winter
Made the coal-pile fly.
—Chicago Record.

"Who was best man at the wedding?"
"The bride's father, if cheerfulness
counts for anything."—Puck.

Jaglets—Who invented work, Bill?
Raglets—I don't know, but he ought to
have stayed and finished it.—Truth.

"Doctor, my wife has insomnia—she
awake most of the night. What shall I
do for her?" "Get home earlier."—Life.

"Does your husband spend much
at the races?" "No. George doesn't
draw a very large salary."—Town Topics.

He—Let's kiss and make up. She
If you kissed me, I'd have to make up
all over again, sure enough.—New York
Press.

Mrs. Sequel—I understand your husband
can't meet his creditors. Mrs.
Equal—I don't believe he wants to, especially.—Truth.

Customer—I would like to have a nice
gown to wear around the house. Sales-
man—Size of the house, please?—Phila-
delphia Record.

Dyer—Colonel Kaintuck hasn't laughed
in years. Dyer—Why? Dyer—Some
one told him his laugh sounded like
rippling water.—Town Topics.

Gainsby is a fellow who under-
stands economy. "That's what—
has just had a composite portrait made
of his three other wives."—Puck.

Block—Riches do not bring happi-
ness, my son. Chipp—Neither does
poverty. And riches do not prevent
happiness, and poverty does.—Truth.

She—The Billingtons have an eight-
pound gift, and I suppose we ought to
send a gift of some sort. He—Why not
send Billington a pedometer?—Puck.

Nodd—I've got to raise one hundred
dollars this week. Todd—Is it a case
of necessity? Nodd—I should say so.
My wife will come back if I don't.—
Truth.

Miss Gotham—It must be awful to be
buried alive! Miss Penn (thoughtfully)
—Well, I don't know. I have spent all
my life in Philadelphia.—Somerville
Journal.

"Claribel" is respectfully informed
that milk does not come from milk-
weed, and that pies are not plucked
ready grown from the pie plant.—Bos-
ton Transcript.

Gertie—Where do you get shaved,
Freddie? Freddie—On the face—hal hal
Gertie—Pardon me, Freddie; I mean
where do you get shaved on the face?—
Roxbury Gazette.

Richard—What makes you so sure
that she will marry you? Harry—Well,
you see, her mother and I have engendered
a mortal hatred of each other.—
Boston Transcript.

"Well, old man, I've spent every cent
of money I have in the world on my
doctor." "Does he know it?" "I guess
he does. He has pronounced me a well
man."—Buffalo Courier.

Mrs. Kidd—There, now, thank good-
ness! I've sung the baby to sleep. Mr.
Kidd—Poor little chap! When he is 23
he won't dare to go to sleep over a
woman's singing.—Truth.

She—For my part I would never for-
give a young man who would kiss a
girl against her will. He—Nor I; but
do you suppose a young man really ever
did?—Somerville Journal.

Pip—A lawyer's highest aim should
be to keep his clients out of law. Flip-
True; but the trouble is so many of
them are content to take a humbler
view of the matter.—Truth.

"The butcher offered me his hand this
morning," said the hired girl. "Is
that?" "Yes'm. He tried to sell it to
me with the steak, but I made him
take it off the scales."—Cincinnati En-
quirer.

"What made you return from Eng-
land so soon?" "The Prince of Wales
manifested a disposition to become
chummy with me," replied the wealthy
but eminently sensible American.—
Puck.

"What are your politics, my man?"
asked the portly visitor of the prisoner
behind the bars at the penitentiary.
"Well," replied the latter, hesitatingly,
"I haven't come out for anybody yet."
—Buffalo Times.

Mrs. Hendricks (proudly walking out
of the sewing room)—Well, Perry, how
do you like my bloomers? Mr. Hen-
dricks—Oh, they do very well; but, dear
me, how much older than usual they
make you look." On the following day
a neat package, intended for the far-
away heathen, was forwarded from the
Hendricks home.—Cleveland Leader.