

A COUNTRY CIRCUS.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

From New York Letter.

One by one, the Unparalleled Attractions had been put forward: the time-worn clown, the spangled equestrian, the trained elephants, the bicycle-riders and the swarthy snake-charmer with the gold crescents dangling from his ears and the great glittering stage-diamond in the front of his turban.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful!" cried Alice Ames.

"Pretty fair—pretty fair," answered Captain Cassell, tapping the ivory knob of his cane against his teeth. "But those rattlesnakes don't compare in size to a cobra capello I once killed in our tent at Dangapore, when—"

And the rounds of applause dropped the end of his sentence. "Ah! a tiger-taming act!" said the captain, consulting his program.

"The Marvelous Signor Mabindini and his pupil, Rajoh!" Call that a Bengal tiger, do they? I wish you could have seen that fellow shot, that last summer in Hoodah. My Sister has his skin on her drawing-room floor now, made into a rug. It had killed four men and a sacred ox, and the natives called him 'The Feource of the Shore.' O yes, I don't deny that the fellow handles him very neatly, but—"

At that second, just as the "Beast of the Tropics" was drowsily going through with his list of accomplishments, the lash of his keeper struck a trifle sharper than usual, or some other unseen cause ignited the powder magazine of the animal's slumbering savagery.

With a ferocious roar he sprang forward, felling the keeper with a single blow of his paw, and leaped toward the row of footlights, whose ruffled flicker seemed to irritate him as a red rag enrages a bull.

There was a shriek, a rush, a moment or two of wild confusion. Allyn Ames uttered a scream. Captain Cassell had turned as pale as a tallow candle.

"We'd better get out of this," said he, hoarsely. "Quick! quick!"

But Alice, paralyzed by fear, sat as still as death.

"I—I can't move!" she gasped. "I think I'm going to faint."

The captain hesitated a second, and finally decided matters by taking to his heels, with the rest of the flying crowd. Alice shut her eyes with a chill shudder; she could not see the tawny Death spring upon her; but in a moment, she opened them again at the sound of a triumphant shout that went up around her.

Leander Rockwell was in the arena lately occupied by the vanished band, struggling with the savage monster. She could see his set teeth, the veins standing out on his forehead, the red fire in his eyes, and she knew that it was for life or death.

"After all," said the minister, "these circuses are sinful risks to human life. I never shall see my way clear to attending one again. Suppose that brave young fellow had been killed before our face and eyes, in the noble effort he made to save our lives."

"Golly, though, pa, wasn't it grand?" said John Henry, the good man's eldest hope. "Most equid to a Spanish bull-fight. Everybody knows that Leo Rockwell's the strongest fellow in Durkhill Four Corners, but the old tiger'd got the best of him if it hadn't been for that Heck Lee gave him over the head with the sharp edge of the cornet that the musician had dropped when they got under the stage, like lightning. It was as good as a Damascus gimlet, Leo says; and, once stunned, it was easy enough for the property men to kill him. It'll be an awful loss to the circus folks though!" reflectively added John Henry.

"There ain't many tigers of that size in the travelling ring in this country."

"But wasn't it funny, husband," said the minister's wife, "about Captain Cassell's being found hiding under the mat-rug—the trained pony's stable, with the door tightly locked. A man who, according to his own account, has killed a score of leopards and half a dozen elephants in India, and is afraid of nothing. I'm told that the engagement between him and Alice Ames is off, and that she is spending a week with Terebith Rockwell."

The fright and the danger together have made poor Terebith quite ill."

But if the minister's wife had only known it, Terebith was a great deal better, now, and she and Allyn were busy making a gown of white sarah silk, with a great deal of soft lace and ribbon bows above it.

"Because," said Allyn, laughing, "Leander says he won't wait—and a man that can conquer a tiger, oughtn't to be contradicted by a woman?"

"You really love me, then?" said Leander.

"I really love you," repeated Alice. "And oh, Leander! I am so very, very proud of you!"

A DART FOR LIFE; OR, A WOMAN'S MISTAKE.

BY RUFUS HALE.

From N. Y. Letter: "Overboard with him! Away with the Jonah, and let him swim ashore for his life!"

Words like these broke from many of the fore-most hands, mostly Portuguese and Spaniards, aboard the ship Canton, one moonlight night, while the play beamed off a small, rock-strewn island in the Pacific ocean.

The person who had been unfortunate enough to awaken Jack's superstitious notion that he was a "Jonah"—one who would bring bad luck to the vessel—was a tall, long-haired New Zealander, with big brass rings in his ears; with black eyes, as round as a cat's; and a broad, square face, the latter grotesquely covered with tattoo-marks, which certainly gave a sort of weird, fustian aspect to his visage.

He had been picked up, weeks before, from a canoe, which had evidently been blown out at sea, and which, containing line and harpoon, showed that the occupant had been hunting for whales or creatures of that kind. Not a word of English could he speak, and it was his strange way of talking to himself and gesticulating, with other peculiarities, which had impressed his ship-mates with the foolish belief already mentioned.

Now, as they rush toward him, to carry out their design of throwing him overboard, the ship's captain, George Wilkins, a fine young fellow of twenty-five, whose right leg had recently been injured by his falling from the rigging, came limping forward, and sharply ordered them back.

"He is a Jonah, Captain!" cried one.

"Nonsense! Don't molest him again. It will be mutiny if you do, as it's against my orders."

"But, sir, beggin' your pardon, he'll bring bad luck to us," said an old sailor. "As spokesman for the rest, I ask you to put him ashore."

"I cannot think of it. As you all know he has so far proved himself a good sailor. You will leave him alone in future."

So saying, the captain walked off, to find his wife, Mary, a handsome young woman of twenty, just come up on deck.

"What was the matter, George?" she inquired.

He told her, when she said: "Of course, I do not believe in that absurd notion about a Jonah; but I must, own that Warlock, as you call your New Zealand savage, there, is a strange, fierce-looking fellow, and frightens me every time I look at him."

"He is not handsome; I'll own, but he is as strong as a horse, and a good stevedore."

"Yes, but are you not afraid that he may do mischief, some time—may take a notion to kill us all in the cabin, set the ship on fire, or—"

The captain interrupted her with a laugh.

"It is his dark skin and tattoo-marks that frighten you. You look only on the outside. I look deeper, and can tell you that this Warlock has a good heart."

But Mary shook her head, saying she could not feel easy until the native was out of the ship, and she then tried to induce her husband to send him ashore.

The captain shook his head. "I cannot consent to do that," he said. "We are short of hands, and Warlock is a good man."

Next morning, Mary, who had come on deck with her husband, again broaching the subject of the night before. She had to coax the captain to send Warlock ashore, but in vain.

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