

The Circus Comes to Town eBook

The Circus Comes to Town

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CHAPTER I

"Ask your mother for fifty cents"

The apple seemed to Jerry Elbow too big to be true.

He held it out at arm's length to get a good squint at its bigness and its redness. Then he turned to look wonderingly after the disappearing automobile with the lady who had tossed him the apple for directing her to the post office. A long trail of dust rose from the unpaved street behind the motor car.

Next he addressed himself to the business of eating the apple. He rubbed it shiny against his patched trousers, carefully hunted out the reddest spot on it, and took a big, luscious bite. Instead of chewing the morsel at once, he crushed it against his palate just to feel the mellowness of it and to get the full flavor of the first taste of juice. Then he chewed vigorously.

He started on to Mother 'Larkey's where he had made his home for nearly three years, ever since Mr. Mullarkey, dead this year now, had found him by the roadside one dark night. He had just started to take a second bite when a shout stopped him.

"Hi, Jerry! What you got?"

Instinctively Jerry hid the apple behind him, for it was Danny Mullarkey's voice that he had heard.

"Jerry's got something to eat!" Danny called over his shoulder to some one out of sight. "Come on, kids!"

Jerry hastily swallowed the piece of apple in his mouth and bit off the very largest chunk he could. He knew by long and bitter experience how little would be left for him after the Mullarkey brood had all nibbled at it.

Danny, who was past nine, reached him before Jerry could gulp down that mouthful and take another bite, as he had intended to do. Chris and Nora followed at Danny's heels, with Celia Jane, as usual, far in the rear.

"Save me a bite, Jerry!" called Celia Jane.

"Give me a bite of your apple, Jerry," coaxed Danny.

"Me, too," echoed Chris.

"It looks awful nice," observed Nora. "Where'd you get it?"



Jerry explained and handed her the apple first because she had not asked for a bite. Nora bit off a small piece and was passing it on to Celia Jane, who ran panting up to them, when Jerry stopped her by urging:

“Take a bigger bite than that, Nora. I want you to.”

“Not till after you’ve had your turn again,” replied Nora, who was nearly eight and was celebrated in the Mullarkey household for a finer sense of fair play than any of the others possessed.

Celia Jane was greedy and bit off so big a chunk that she could not cram it into her mouth, despite her heroic efforts to accomplish that feat.

“That ain’t fair, Celia Jane,” reproved Nora. “Mother told you never to do that again.”

“That’s *two* bites!” cried Danny. “Take it out and bite it in two.”

Celia Jane’s mouth was too full for utterance. She held out the apple to Danny, then freed her mouth of its embarrassment of riches and proceeded to bite it in two.

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"Here, Chris," invited Danny, "take your bite next."

Jerry became immediately suspicious at such unaccustomed politeness on Danny's part and he was not at all surprised when Danny, once the remainder of the apple was again in his hands, took to his heels.

"Save me a bite!" cried Celia Jane, swallowing the morsel in her mouth so quickly that she came near to choking, and tagged after her older brother as fast as she could run.

"Danny!" cried Jerry. "That's no fair!"

He started to run after the vanishing apple, but was quickly passed, first by Chris and then by Nora, who called back to him: "Maybe I can save the core for you, Jerry."

Bitterness arose in Jerry's soul. He knew that he couldn't catch up with Danny, but he kept on running. That old, odd feeling that he did not belong to the Mullarkeys, though living with them, came over him again, and he had already begun to slow down his pace when he was brought to a full and sudden stop by a picture blazoned on a billboard.

He stared spellbound, without even winking. Of all delectable things, it was the picture of an elephant! A purple elephant jumping over a green fence, its trunk raised high in the air until it almost touched the full, red moon at the top of the poster. The elephant had such a roguish and knowing look in his small eyes and such a smirk on his funny little mouth that Jerry began to smile without being the least bit conscious that he was doing so.

The smile kept spreading in complete understanding of the look on the elephant's face and he probably would have laughed aloud had not the picture somehow made him think of something, he couldn't just remember what. A dim idea seemed to be trying to break into his mind but couldn't find the right door. In his effort to puzzle out what it was the elephant made him think of, Jerry entirely forgot the large red apple and the perfidy of Danny.

"What're you lookin' at?" called Danny, who had stopped half a block farther on when he no longer heard Jerry's pursuing footsteps.

Jerry did not answer. Instead, he squatted down on the grassy bank between the sidewalk and the billboard and feasted his eyes on that delightfully extravagant elephant which seemed almost to wink at him. Jerry half expected to see the elephant grab the moon and balance it on the end of his trunk, or toss it up into the sky and catch it again as it fell.

"Come on, Jerry, if you want the core," called Danny again. "That's all that's left."



“Don’t want the core,” said Jerry. “It was my apple. The lady gave it to me.” He didn’t even look at Danny but kept staring at the very purple elephant and the very red moon almost on the tip-end of his trunk. He just wouldn’t let Danny Mullarkey know that it made any difference to him whether Danny and Chris and Nora and Celia Jane liked him very much or not.

No, and he wouldn’t feel so terribly bad if Mother ‘Larkey and little Kathleen didn’t like him, either.

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"You ain't lost your tongue, have you?" cried Danny.

"Maybe the cat's got it," said Celia Jane, following as usual her elder brother's lead and laughing at her own wit.

"What you starin' at so hard, Jerry?" called Chris.

Jerry disdained to reply or to let his enraptured gaze wander for a moment from the dazzling poster. Curiosity soon got the better of Chris and he started to walk back.

"El'funt!" shouted Chris, when he was near enough to see the poster. His shout started the whole Mullarkey brood galloping towards the billboard.

"The circus!" cried Danny, from the superior experience of his nine years. "The circus is coming to town!" He threw himself on the grass by Jerry and pressed the uneaten apple core into his hand.

"I don't want it," said Jerry.

"Aw, take it, Jerry. I didn't mean to eat so much of it, honest I didn't. I just wanted to tease you." He closed Jerry's fingers around the core.

"It doesn't say the circus is coming," Nora observed, pointing to some lettering in one corner of the poster. Nora was nearly eight years old and proud of her ability to read print, if the words weren't too big,—an ability shared by none of the others except Danny.

"It does, too!" contradicted Celia Jane, wrinkling up her nose preparatory to crying with disappointment if the circus were not coming. "There's some writin' on it."

"What does it say, Danny?" eagerly asked Jerry, going close to the billboard as though that might help him to make out what was printed on it. "Ain't it coming?"

"Read it quick, Danny! Please! I can't wait!" cried Celia Jane.

Thus besought, Danny read somewhat haltingly, for the "writin'" was in queerly formed letters, these words which are known to all children:

Ask your mother for fifty cents
To see the elephant jump the fence,
He jumped so high he hit the sky
And never came down till the Fourth of July.

"Is that all?" asked Celia Jane, very much disappointed.

“Didn’t I just read it to you?” was Danny’s rejoinder.

“Then the circus ain’t comin’, is it?” said Chris.

“It don’t say so,” replied Nora. “It don’t say whether it’s comin’ or whether it ain’t.”

“It doesn’t say it’s a *circus*,” said Danny. “It might be just an ‘ad’ for—for any old thing.”

“For a menajeree?” asked Celia Jane.

“Or chewin’ gum?” suggested Chris.

“Or something,” affirmed Danny decisively.

Jerry forgot to be disappointed about the circus not coming, for he was bothered about what it was that the picture of the elephant made him almost think of. He tried and tried with all his might to think what it was, but didn’t succeed. Then something almost like faint music seemed to hum in his ears and his lips unconsciously formed a word, “Oh, queen,” he murmured.



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"Oh, what?" said Danny sharply, turning to him.

"I didn't know I said anything," replied Jerry. "I didn't mean to."

"You did," said Celia Jane. "You said, 'Oh, queen.'"

"What does that mean, 'Oh, queen'?" asked Danny.

"I—I don't know," replied Jerry.

"What did you say it for then?"

Jerry felt that he was being treated unfairly when he wasn't conscious of having said anything and he didn't answer. He was sorry that the humming almost like music wouldn't come back,—it was so comforting.

"If you don't know what 'Oh, queen' means, what did you say 'Oh, queen' for?" persisted Danny.

"I don't know," Jerry replied, at a loss. Then he brightened, "I might have heard it, sometime."

"Maybe it was somebody's name?" suggested Nora.

"I don't know."

"It's an Irish name, if it's got an O in front of it, and you said 'O'Queen'," Celia Jane stated.

"Did you ever know an Irish man or Irish woman by the name of 'O'Queen'?" questioned Danny.

"I don't know," repeated Jerry, his lips twisting in real distress at not being able to think what could have made him say a thing like that.

"You don't know anything, do you?" asked Danny in the teasing, affronting tone he sometimes adopted with Jerry.

"I do, too," affirmed Jerry, his lips tightening.

"You don't know how old you are," said Celia Jane, following Danny's lead.

"Do you know what your name is?" asked Danny.

"Jerry Elbow," replied Jerry, hot within at this making fun of his name which always seemed to give Danny so much enjoyment.

“Jerry *Elbow*,” said Danny, putting so much sarcasm into pronouncing the name as to make it almost unbelievable that it could be a name. “What kind of a name is that—Elbow! Might as well be Neck—or Foot.”

“It’s just as good as Danny Mullarkey!” declared Jerry.

“There’s nothing the matter with your name, Jerry,” interposed Nora. “Eat the core of your apple,” she continued, pointing at it, forgotten, but still clutched tightly in his fist.

“I don’t want the old core,” said Jerry and threw it against the billboard.

Celia Jane ran after it, grabbed it eagerly, wiped it off on her skirt and popped it into her mouth.

“Celia Jane!” called Nora, “Don’t you eat that core after it’s been in the dirt.”

But Celia Jane had quickly chewed and swallowed it. “It’s gone,” she said. “Besides, it wasn’t dirty enough to amount to anything.”

Jerry had returned to contemplation of the elephant jumping the fence, when a youthful voice called from across the street, “Look at it good, kid. I guess it’s about all of the circus you’ll see.”

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Jerry and the Mullarkey children turned and faced the speaker. It was “Darn” Darner, the ten-year old son of Timothy Darner, the county overseer of the poor, and a more or less important personage, especially in his own eyes. You had to be very particular how you spoke to “Darn” unless you wanted to get into a fight, and unless you were as old and as big as he was you had no desire to fight with him. He was especially touchy about his name. He had been “Jimmie” at home but once at school he had signed himself, in the full glory of his name, J. Darnton Darner, perhaps to do honor to his grandfather, after whom he had been named. Thereafter “Darn” was the only name that he was known by outside of the classroom and his own home.

He had fights innumerable trying to stop the boys calling him by that name, but it persisted until at length he came to accept it. You could call him “Darn” or shout “Oh, Darn!” and nothing would happen, but if, in your excitement, you grew too emphatic and said “*Darn!*” or “Oh, *Darn!*” you might have to run for the nearest refuge, or take a pummeling from his fists.

So now Jerry answered very politely. “It looks good,” he said.

“Is the circus coming?” asked Danny.

“Of course it is. What do you suppose they’ve put up the posters for?”

“It don’t say so here,” said Nora. “All it says is—”

Darn interrupted. “Where’ve you kids been? That old poster has been up for a week. Two new ones were pasted up to-day—one at Jenkins’ corner and the other on Jeffreys’ barn. It’s Burrows and Fairchild’s mammoth circus and menagerie and it’s coming a week from Thursday.”

“Are you going, Darn?” asked Danny.

“Am I going?” repeated that youth. “I should say I am going—in a box seat.”

“Is it a big circus?” asked Chris.

“It’s one of the biggest there is,” replied Darn, “with elephants and clowns and a bearded lady and everything. I’ll tell you all about it the next day.”

Without more ado, he began to whistle and continued on his way. When he was out of sight, Jerry turned back to the billboard, and the Mullarkey children lined up at his side and stood in silent contemplation of the delights forecast in the picture. They felt a new respect for that elephant.

“I don’t suppose we can go,” said Chris at length in a voice that invited contradiction. His remark was met by silence and they continued to stare at the elephant.



Jerry was puzzled. "What does it want you to ask your mother for fifty cents for?" he asked Danny.

"To buy a ticket for the circus, of course."

"Will she give you fifty cents?"

Danny seemed struck by some sudden thought; whether or not his question had inspired it Jerry was unable to tell. After pondering for a time, Danny set out towards home on a run without having answered the question.

"Where're you goin'?" asked Chris, with a tinge of suspicion in his voice.

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"I'm goin' to ask mother and see."

"That's no fair!" cried Chris. "You can run the fastest and 'll get to ask her first."

"She can't give fifty cents to all of us," replied Danny and kept on running.

"Danny Mullarkey! You're a mean old thing!" called Nora.

Already Chris was racing after Danny; the contagion soon spread and first Nora and then Celia Jane were running with all their might after their brothers.

Jerry started to run after them, but it was a half-hearted run and he brought up a very laggard rear. He never tried to get anything for himself that the clannish Mullarkey brood had in their possession, or to which they could with any shred of justice lay claim. If he did, he knew by experience that they would all unite against him—all except Mother 'Larkey, who, trying to earn money to support them all, could not always know what was going on under her tired, kindly eyes, much less the things that took place behind her back. And baby Kathleen, who was too little to feel the claims of the Mullarkey blood and who loved everybody.

But Jerry was sure he had never seen a circus and he *did* want to go to this one and see the elephant jump the fence. He felt very friendly to that elephant and well acquainted with it. The roguish look in its eyes, in the picture, made it seem a very nice sort of elephant and he knew he would like it.

But he also knew that Mother 'Larkey found it very hard to make both ends meet since her husband died—he had often heard her say so—but there might be a possible chance that she would have several fifty-cent pieces, so he started again to run after the other children, keeping close enough to be in time if Mrs. Mullarkey *should* happen to be distributing fifty-cent pieces among her brood and there *should* happen to be an extra one for him. Even though she were not his mother, she *might* give it to him, she had already done so many things for him.

CHAPTER II

THE BLACK HALF-DOLLAR

Jerry's progress was brought to a sudden halt and he was sent sprawling to the ground by running full tilt into a man who tried to turn the same corner at the same time Jerry did, but from the opposite direction. The impact was so swift and so hard that Jerry was whirled clear around and fell on his face, striking two small pieces of board lying near the sidewalk and loosening a plank in the sidewalk itself.

"Oh!" gasped the man's voice.



Before Jerry could stir he heard a clink as of metal falling on board. He half turned on his back and looked dazedly up at the man, who was pressing both hands into the pit of his stomach. His face was very red. He spoke to Jerry hesitatingly, as though he could not get his breath.

'Are you—hurt—much?'

"N-no, I guess not," Jerry replied, sitting up and feeling of a bruised place on his arm.

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"You just about knocked the breath out of me," said the man in a more natural voice and one which Jerry now recognized as belonging to Harry Barton, the clerk at the corner drug store.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Barton. If I'd of seen you—"

"You wouldn't have run into me," finished Mr. Barton. "Of course not. There are a lot of things we wouldn't do if we could see what the results were going to be. Why, bless me, it's Jerry Elbow! Well, I guess there wasn't much harm done this time. You seemed to be in quite a hurry. Have I delayed you?"

"Yes, sir, I was in a hurry," Jerry answered. "Danny was running to ask Mother 'Larkey for fifty cents to see the circus."

"And what were you running for?"

Jerry started to get up as he replied.

"To see if she had fifty cents for Da—"

He stopped speaking and stopped getting up at the same time. A glint of silver on the sidewalk back of Mr. Barton caught his eye. It was a half-dollar! Jerry sank to a sitting posture and gazed in rapt wonder at this answer to an unsaid prayer.

"You *are* hurt!" cried Mr. Barton solicitously and stooped to help Jerry up. "Where does it pain you?"

"It's fifty cents!" cried Jerry, his lips unsealed at last, and he scrambled eagerly for the coin.

"Well, there's nothing very painful in that, is there?" laughed Mr. Barton.

Jerry rose, clutching the dirty half-dollar tightly, a light of joyful anticipation in his eyes.

"There's not much need of asking what you will spend it for," observed the drug clerk.

"For a ticket to the circus!" cried Jerry, his eyes sparkling at the thought of future delights.

"I guessed it the first time," said Mr. Barton. "I thought I heard something metallic fall on the sidewalk when you ran into me, but I had such hard work getting my breath back that I forgot all about it."

Such a harrowing thought now popped into Jerry's mind that unconsciously he closed his fingers entirely around the precious half-dollar. What if it were Mr. Barton's!

Perhaps he had knocked it out of Mr. Barton's pocket when he ran into him. He had heard the clink of its fall just after the collision, as he lay on the ground.

After a short but sharp struggle with himself, Jerry looked up and held out the money to Mr. Barton. He tried to smile, but was conscious that the twisting of his lips didn't look much like a smile.

"It's yours, I guess, Mr. Barton."

"Mine!" exclaimed the surprised drug clerk. "You saw it first."

"Yes, but I heard it fall just after I ran into you. I must of knocked it out of your pocket. I didn't have no half-dollar."

"No more did I," replied Mr. Barton.

"You didn't!" exclaimed Jerry, and joy came unbidden back into his eyes and there was a very different feel to his lips. He knew that it was a real smile this time.

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“Not this late in the week,” Mr. Barton informed him. “It’s too long after pay day for me to have that much money. I’ve got just thirty-five cents.”

He drew some small coins out of his pocket.

“Yes, it’s all here. The half-dollar must have been lying on one of the boards that you struck in falling. Let’s see it.”

He took the money and examined it.

“It was almost covered with dirt,” he said. “So was one end of both boards. Hello! That’s a funny black mark on the other side. Looks as though somebody had smeared it with black paint.”

“That doesn’t hurt it any, does it?” asked Jerry in trepidation.

“Not a bit! It’s good for a ticket to the circus.”

“If I hadn’t of run into you, I wouldn’t get to go,” observed Jerry.

“That’s so,” responded Mr. Barton. “I wouldn’t let any one know you found the money. Just sneak off to the circus when it comes and buy your ticket. Danny would find some way to get it away from you if he knew you had it.”

“I guess mebbe he would,” Jerry responded.

“You just keep it to yourself and enjoy the circus,” Mr. Barton advised him and went on to the store.

Jerry trudged slowly back toward Mrs. Mullarkey’s, thinking intently.

The gloom that pervaded the house was so deep that Jerry perceived it as soon as he opened the door. Danny sat glowering by the window; Celia Jane was weeping unashamed, while Chris and Nora were trying not to show their disappointment.

So Mother ‘Larkey had not yet been able to make both ends meet—those troublesome, refractory ends that made her life a continual round of hard work—and there were no fifty-cent pieces for the children to buy tickets with to see the elephant jump the fence. Jerry hugged himself just to feel the half-dollar in his blouse pocket and a glow of exultation ran over his body at the thought that he was going to get to see the circus.

Mrs. Mullarkey, looking tired and worn, was ripping apart the dress for Mrs. Green that she had just finished at noon. Baby Kathleen sat at her feet, playing with the old rag doll that had once been Nora’s and was now claimed by Celia Jane.

Jerry entered the room slowly and took a seat on the chair without a back. He said nothing at all and finally Mother 'Larkey looked up at him.

"Why don't you ask for fifty cents, too?" she inquired. "Don't you want to see the circus?"

"Yes'm," replied Jerry, "but I ain't got no mother."

"What difference does that make?" she asked, in a voice sharper than she was accustomed to use in speaking to Jerry. "Haven't I done everything a mother could—"

"Yes'm," Jerry interrupted hastily, for he didn't want her to think he thought *that*. "But it said to ask your *mother* for fifty cents and I ain't got none to ask."

"Sure and you haven't, you blessed boy," said Mother 'Larkey. "If I had it to give, you wouldn't need a mother to ask it of. I wish I could send all of you to the circus and go myself."

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"We never get to go no place," muttered Danny gloomily.

"It costs money to go to places," his mother explained, "and there's no money in the house. It's all I've been able to do to put enough food in your hungry mouths to keep soul and body together and to get enough clothes to keep you looking decent and respectable. I was counting on some money from Mrs. Green to-day, to buy a little meat for supper and get some more cough medicine for Kathleen, but she wasn't satisfied with the dress and I've got to do part of it over before she will pay me."

"Is Kathleen's cough medicine all gone?" Jerry asked, suddenly feeling hot and uncomfortable.

"Yes, and she ought to have some more right this minute. Summer coughs are bad things for babies."

Jerry went to Kathleen and she welcomed him by raising her arms and gurgling at him. He put his face gently against hers and she patted his head and tugged at his hair.

And all the time Jerry felt guiltier and guiltier and the half-dollar in his pocket seemed to become bigger and heavier. He was relieved when he heard Celia Jane, recovered from her crying, asking:

"Did you ever see a circus, Mother?"

"Yes, once. Dan took me to see one in the city right after we were married. If he was living, he would find a way to take you all and him liking the fun and the noise and the crowd and all."

"Some day I'll be big enough to earn lots of money and take us all to the circus," asserted Danny. "And Jerry, too."

"Sure and you will," his mother said. "And now, if you children will pick me some gooseberries, I'll make you a gooseberry pie for supper."

Jerry did not join the rest in the scamper for cups and a pan nor follow them out into the back yard. He patted Kathleen's head and then went into the kitchen when he had heard the screen door slam and knew the Mullarkey children were all out of the house. He took down a bottle from the shelf by the table and slipped quietly out to the street.

When he was out of sight of the house he looked to see if the half-dollar were still in his pocket. The sight of it made him recall vividly all the joys that he would miss if he didn't get to see the circus. He took the coin out of his pocket and looked at it and the longer he looked the slower grew his pace. Then he thought of Kathleen and the summer cough that Mother 'Larkey said was bad for babies, and his lips suddenly closed in a firm, straight line. He clutched the half-dollar tightly in one hand, the bottle in the other,

and set out as fast as his legs would carry him. He did not dare waste a moment for fear the temptation to change his mind would prove too great to be resisted.

Not once did he slacken speed till he reached the corner drug store. Speechless for lack of breath, he passed the bottle over the counter to Mr. Barton.

“Well, Jerry, what is it this time?” asked the clerk.

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Jerry panted a moment before he could reply.

"Some more of—that cough medicine—for Kathleen."

"That won't take long," said Mr. Barton. "All I've got to do is to pour it from a big bottle into this little one."

He disappeared behind the prescription case, but was back long before Jerry's pulse had had time to slow down to its customary beat.

"There you are," he said. "Forty-five cents."

Jerry passed over the precious half-dollar. The pang of regret at the thought of circus delights, once so nearly his, now beyond his reach, he resolutely forced out of his mind every time he caught himself thinking about it. He tried to whistle to help forget the circus, but to his surprise not a sound issued from his lips. They were too dry to whistle. Then he suddenly heard the drug clerk exclaim:

"Gee whillikens! This is the identical half-dollar you found this afternoon! I can tell it by the black mark on it."

"Yes, it is," Jerry admitted in a forlorn tone.

"So you told about finding it—"

"No, I didn't," interrupted Jerry, "but Kathleen was all out of cough medicine and Mother 'Larkey didn't have no money."

"I see. Then you told what—"

"No, I just got the bottle and brought it here."

Mr. Barton whistled.

"Jerry, you're some boy, and there's my hand on it."

Jerry felt himself flushing as he took the proffered hand which shook his warmly.

"Grit!" exclaimed Mr. Barton. "Pure grit. That's what I call it, if anybody should ask you. And you won't get to see the circus at all."

"I guess Kathleen's cough is more important than the circus," replied Jerry. "Summer coughs are bad for babies."

"You're right there, but I'm mighty sorry you can't go. I know how my two boys will feel if they have to stay away."

He rang up the forty-five cents and returned a nickel to Jerry.

"There, I guess you've earned the right to spend the nickel on yourself."

"Give me a nickel's worth of cough drops—the kind with honey in 'em," said Jerry.

"You don't want cough drops, Jerry. Here's some good candy. It's got lots of lemon in it."

"Kathleen likes the cough drops with honey in 'em," explained Jerry. "She doesn't cough so bad after eating one of them."

"Well, you beat my time, Jerry! You must like Kathleen an awful lot."

"I do," admitted Jerry in a low voice, as a customer entered the store. He took the bag of cough drops and darted out through the door, but not too quickly to overhear Mr. Barton saying to the man who had entered:

"That boy's got enough sand to supply all the contractors in town. Plucky as they make 'em."

Jerry was not quite sure that he understood what Mr. Barton meant about the sand, but his saying that he was plucky made him feel glad and uncomfortable at the same time. Somehow it didn't seem quite so hard to have given up seeing the circus. He wouldn't mind not seeing the elephant jump the fence—well, not so very much. He could look at the billboard poster all he wanted to and that would be almost as good.

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He started home on a run but soon slackened his speed, and the nearer he got the slower became his pace. He didn't want Danny to know that he had bought something for Kathleen, for Danny called him "Kathleen's pet" as it was and he didn't like to be laughed at. Perhaps he could sneak in without any of them seeing him and put the bottle back on the shelf and no one would know how it got full.

The Mullarkey children were still picking gooseberries and Mother 'Larkey was still in the living room sewing on Mrs. Green's dress. Jerry tiptoed carefully into the kitchen, replaced the bottle, stuffed the cough drops into his blouse pocket and went into the living room, where he squatted down by Kathleen.

Hardly had he done so when the voices of the other children coming back to the house were heard.

"Gooseberries all picked?" sighed Mrs. Mullarkey. "Then I must be getting supper."

When she left the room, Jerry fished a cough drop out of his pocket and gave it to Kathleen. She smiled in delight at sight of it and at once popped it into her mouth, cooing at Jerry.

"Mother, why didn't you make Jerry help pick gooseberries?" asked Danny, as soon as he entered and caught sight of Jerry.

"He can't have any pie, can he, Mother?" said Celia Jane.

"Why, he was out with you," replied Mrs. Mullarkey. "He just this minute came in."

"He wasn't near the gooseberry patch," Danny informed her.

"He didn't pick a single gooseberry," Celia Jane interpolated.

"Nora," appealed their mother, "you always tell the truth. Didn't Jerry help you?"

"I didn't see him, Mother. Ask Jerry."

"Did you help them, Jerry? Not that it makes any difference; you'll get just as big a piece of pie as any of them."

"No'm, I didn't," replied Jerry. His lips parted again as though he wanted to say more but closed without a word.

"You're such a willing worker, I thought Danny was just trying to get even for something," said Mother 'Larkey.

"Where'd you go, Jerry?" asked Chris.

“Yah! Tell us that,” demanded Danny.

“I just thought I’d run over to the drug store,” replied Jerry.

“What did you want to go there for?”

Jerry said nothing.

“I bet he found a penny and bought himself some candy,” cried Celia Jane, falling into the habit that many older people have of judging others by themselves.

“Tandy,” said Kathleen, struck by that word, and she pulled the remnant of the cough drop out of her mouth and displayed it proudly.

“Jerry, you ate all the rest yourself!” accused Celia Jane. “Greedy, greedy, greedy!”

“Oh, did um buy some tandy for um’s ’ittle Tatleen?” mocked Danny.

“I want some,” said Celia Jane. “Mother, make Jerry give me some candy.”

“It was cough drops for Kathleen,” said Jerry.

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"Where'd you get the money?" Danny demanded sharply.

"Found it after you ran home first to ask for fifty cents to see the circus," Jerry explained.

"Gee, I never find nothing!" ejaculated Danny. "How much was it?"

Jerry did not reply immediately and Celia Jane, watching him sharply, was at once full cry right on his trail.

"I bet it was a whole lot more'n five cents an' he bought something for himself. How much did you find, Jerry?"

"It was half a dollar," Jerry stated, thus brought to bay.

"Half a dollar!" exclaimed Danny and Chris.

"Why, that's fifty cents!" Celia Jane cried.

"Enough to buy a ticket to the circus!" Danny added. "Where is it? Let's see it."

"It's all gone," Jerry told his tormentors.

"Fifty cents! And you spent all of it at once!" wailed Celia Jane.

"That must of bought a whole lot of candy," said Danny. "Fork out. No fair holding any back."

Jerry produced the small paper bag of cough drops and gave it to Mother 'Larkey.

"They're cough drops with honey in 'em for Kathleen," he said. "I ain't eaten one of them."

"Give me one, Mother," pleaded Celia Jane.

"They're for Kathleen," replied her mother. "She needs them and you don't."

"Jerry's Kathleen's pet! Jerry's Kathleen's little honey cough-drop boy!" chanted Danny.

"Jerry's done more for Kathleen than her own brothers and sisters have ever done, unless it's Nora," declared Mrs. Mullarkey. "It's no wonder she loves him best."

"That's not fifty cents' worth of cough drops," Danny accused. "Where's the rest of the money? Make him tell, Mother."

Kathleen saved him the necessity of replying.

"Toff meddy," she gurgled, looking up at the shelf where the bottle was kept. "Tatleen want toff meddy."

"It's all gone, Kathleen," her mother said soothingly.

"No," said Kathleen, shaking her head and pointing up at the bottle.

"Mercy sakes! It's full!" cried Mrs. Mullarkey. "I could have sworn I emptied it this morning."

Then she looked at Jerry, a sudden softening coming over her face and into her eyes.

"Jerry, you went and spent every cent of that half-dollar on Kathleen, didn't you?"

"You said there wasn't any money in the house," Jerry defended himself, "and that Kathleen needed more medicine because summer coughs are bad for babies."

"The Lord love you, Jerry, I'm not scolding you. It's more apt to be crying I am at the big heart of you. It's as big as my Dan's was. You're more like him in heart and disposition than any of his own children, unless it's Nora. That's why I can't ever let them take you away, ever."

"Who wants to take Jerry away?" It was Nora's startled voice that asked.

Jerry's heart stood still. Had the man with the red scar on his face found him at last? He looked up at Mother 'Larkey, his lips starting to twist.

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"Nobody's going to take him away!" said Mrs. Mullarkey almost fiercely. "Just let anybody try it!"

"Why didn't you tell us you had fifty cents?" asked Danny. "I bet you was going to spend it all for yourself for a ticket to the circus."

"Mr. Barton told me not to tell," replied Jerry. "He said you'd get it away from me if you knew I had found it and for me to go to the circus all by myself."

"And you gave that up just for Kathleen?" queried Mrs. Mullarkey.

"I guess Kathleen's cough is much more important than any old circus," said Jerry.

Mother 'Larkey thereupon gathered Jerry up in her arms and kissed him.

CHAPTER III

THE WIDTH OF AN ELEPHANT'S TAIL

Jerry tried all the next day and the next to think what it was that the picture of the elephant jumping the fence almost made him remember, but it just wouldn't come and finally he gave up trying. After playing with Kathleen until Mother 'Larkey put her in the crib for her afternoon nap, he wandered out towards the woodshed from behind which he heard the voices of Danny and Celia Jane.

On the way an idea popped all of a sudden into his mind. The dazzling splendor of it first brought him to a dead halt and then set him running breathlessly to join the Mullarkey children. He found them all gathered about Danny, hungrily watching him eat a green apple.

"Couldn't we play circus!" he exclaimed, in eager excitement at the idea that had come to him.

"We could if we wanted to," replied Danny, in that superior, ardor-dampening way of his.

Jerry felt his enthusiasm for the idea oozing out of his bare toes. "I—Don't we want to, Danny?"

"Oh, yes, let's!" cried Nora eagerly. "I'm tired of ante-over and run-sheep-run and pump-pump-pull-away—"

"And hidin'-go-seek and tree-tag," interrupted Celia Jane. She turned to Jerry. "How do you play circus?"

"You just—just *play* it," he answered. "'Maginary you're an el'funt jumpin' a fence and all."

"I'll be the el'funt!" cried Danny.

"I want to be the el'funt," objected Chris.

"The el'funt's mine," Jerry asserted and he closed his lips tightly. Danny didn't have any right to that elephant. "I saw it first," he added.

"I said 'I'll be the el'funt' first, didn't I?" asked Danny.

"Jerry orter have first choice," said Nora, the conciliator, "seein' it was him thought of playin' circus."

"I guess I can jump the highest, can't I?" Danny asked in a tone that said as plain as day that that settled the matter.

"It's my el'funt!" insisted Jerry.

"You always take first choice," Chris complained.

"You could take turns about being el'funt," Nora suggested.

Jerry wanted with all his soul to play that sublime elephant jumping the fence and he summoned up all his courage. "I won't play," cried he, with a suspicious quiver of his lips. "I won't! I won't!"

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"I'll let you be el'funt part of the time," Danny promised, "just to keep you from cryin'."

"I ain't goin' to cry," returned Jerry hotly. "I ain't!"

"We can't have a circus with just a el'funt," said Celia Jane.

"Of course, we can't," said Danny decisively and turned to Jerry. "What else'll we have?"

"Couldn't we have more'n one el'funt?" Jerry asked hopefully.

"What'd we want with more'n one el'funt?" Danny queried in scorn. "I guess one el'funt's enough for one circus. Anyway, we want something besides el'funts."

"What?" asked Jerry. "I ain't never seen a circus."

"No more have I," replied Danny.

"Can't you 'maginary something?" asked Celia Jane.

"We could 'maginary things'," interposed Nora, "but they might not be in a circus."

"There's more'n one circus picture up," said Jerry. "Darn Darner said there was one at Jenkins' corner and one on Jeffreys' barn. P'raps they'll tell us what's in a circus."

"Of course," said Danny. "It's funny I didn't think of that. It's usually me who thinks of everything. I'll be the first one at Jenkins' corner," and he was off at a run.

Thereupon they all followed at full speed. Any other rate of progress was too slow for them. Jerry ran as hard as he could, leaving Celia Jane behind and keeping right at Nora's side. It was more than a quarter of a mile to Jenkins' corner and Jerry felt that his legs were ready to give out and send him sprawling in the street before he got there, but he kept running just the same. Celia Jane tagged along, far in the rear, and called to Jerry to wait for her, but a boy couldn't stop and wait for a girl without Danny's making fun of him, so, as much as Jerry would have liked to rest, he kept pantingly on. He was glad to plump down flat on the ground in front of the billboard and rest till Nora and Celia Jane arrived.

"Whoopee! I'll be the clown!" exclaimed Chris, pointing to the poster which showed trapeze performers turning somersaults in the air, a clown playing ringmaster to a dancing white pony and a girl walking a tight rope.

"I'll be the dancin' pony!" cried Celia Jane.

"I'll be the rope-walker," Nora said.

“And what’ll I be?” asked Jerry plaintively, feeling left entirely out in the cold.

“Why didn’t you speak up and grab onto something before they were all taken?” asked Danny. “You’ve got a tongue, ain’t you?”

“He could swing up in the air hanging by his hands,” Celia Jane suggested.

“We ain’t got no net like they have in the picture to catch him if he falls,” Nora objected.

“That would be too dangerous for us kids to try,” Danny stated. “Maybe the picture on Jeffreys’ barn will suggest something.”

Again they were off at a run. It was not far to the barn, where they all squatted on the ground, nonplussed at the picture of half a dozen funny little animals balancing toy balloons on their noses.

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"What are they?" Jerry asked.

"They're some kind of a fish," returned Danny promptly.

"Fish nothing!" exclaimed Chris. "Who ever saw a fish with hair on it? They're some kind of animal."

"They've got fins," retorted Danny. "I'd like to know what kind of animals's got fins. Tell me that."

"I don't know," Chris confessed, "but what kind of fish has hair?"

"This kind," said Danny authoritatively.

"Mebbe it's half fish and half animal," Jerry ventured.

"Who ever heard—" Danny began but was interrupted by Nora.

"It tells under the picture what they are," she said. "Trained s-e-a-l-s, seals. That's what rich women get their coats from."

"Then Jerry can be a trained seal," said Danny. "He can have a ball of carpet rags for a balloon to balance on his nose."

"I don't think I could," Jerry protested. "I know it would fall off."

"Not if you practise enough," returned Danny. "Besides, that's all that's left for you. I guess if one seal can throw it to another and that seal catch it on its nose like it does in the picture, you ought to be able to *balance* it on *your* nose. All you'll have to do is to lie on your stummick on the ground and throw back your head."

So it was decided that Jerry should play the part of a trained seal in their circus. Mother 'Larkey got out a ball of carpet rags, when they reached home, for Jerry to balance on his nose in place of a balloon, and gave Danny an old green wrapper, just ready to be cut up into carpet rags, out of which to make his elephant costume. She made Chris a clown costume out of a piece of old white skirt upon which she sewed large dots of red and blue cloth.

The two following days were busy ones for Jerry if not quite so happy as for the Mullarkey children. He had made up his mind, after practising until his back, chest and neck ached from throwing his head back to balance the ball of carpet rags on his nose, that he didn't like trained seals and wasn't going to care to be one at the circus. Chris's clown costume was finished and looked very much like a white union suit miles too big for him.

Nora had become quite proficient at walking the tight rope, stretched between two poles in the yard about ten feet apart and two feet from the ground, *if* she remembered to keep one end of her balancing pole touching the ground all the time. Mrs. Mullarkey had decided that Celia Jane didn't need any costume to play the part of the dancing pony except her good, white dress that she probably wouldn't ruin this time as all she had to do was to dance.

Danny was having more than a peck of trouble. His elephant costume had all sorts of queer mishaps. He wanted to make it all himself, even to the sewing, and he couldn't sew for sour apples, as Nora very readily told him. Two small palm-leaf fans, fastened to an old cap of his father's so that they flopped with every movement, served as the elephant's ears, while out of an old brown coat sleeve Danny had fashioned what passed for an elephant's trunk. He fastened it with a string to the visor of the cap.

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Danny was stuffing the leg of an old pair of blue trousers with straw, flattening it out until it bore a faint resemblance to the paddle-shaped tail of a beaver.

"What is that you're making?" Jerry asked.

"Why, that's the el'funt's tail!" said Danny. "Anybody could tell that."

He held it proudly up, displaying it in all its blue glory.

"El'funts' tails are small like a rope," Jerry remarked.

Danny laughed derisively. "Much you know about it! I guess a el'funt's about the biggest animal in the world and it wouldn't have a little ole tail like a rope."

"They are little, like a rope," Jerry insisted.

"How do you know they are?" asked Danny. "Just tell me how you know anything about it."

"I don't know, but I know," Jerry said, feeling all his obstinacy aroused by Danny's air of conscious superiority.

"There, you just said you didn't know," Celia Jane interposed, going to her elder brother's aid, as she always did in a dispute with Jerry.

"I didn't neither," asseverated Jerry.

"You said you didn't know," insisted Celia Jane.

"I don't know how I know," said Jerry, "but I know el'funts have little tails—like a rope."

"Have you ever been to a circus?" asked Chris.

"Not that I remember."

"Have you ever seen a el'funt?" pursued Danny.

"N-n-no, but it kind of seems as if I almost had."

"I guess you'd know if you had seen a el'funt, wouldn't you?"

"Y-y-yes," responded Jerry doubtfully.

"Then if you ain't ever been to a circus or seen a el'funt, I guess you don't know what you are talking about."



"El'funts' tails are little, like a rope," Jerry insisted.

"Like a cow's tail?" asked Celia Jane.

Jerry nodded assent. "Only they haven't so much hair on the end," he added.

"A el'funt's a hundred times as big as a cow, I guess," interposed Danny, "an' it wouldn't have a little tail like a cow. I guess I know more about it than you do. I'm older, ain't I?"

"Yes," Jerry admitted, "but they are little."

Nora now interposed. "Why don't you go see the picture of the elephant jumpin' the fence and find out?" she asked.

"Of course," said Chris. "The picture'll show whether they're small like a rope or great big ones."

"I'll beat you there," challenged Danny, as he dropped the flat, beaver-like elephant's tail and darted at a run out of the woodshed, followed by the others. As they lined up in front of the gaudy, delectable poster, there came a simultaneous gasp of amazement from all of them.

"Why, it ain't got no tail at all!" exclaimed Celia Jane.

True enough, there was no tail in evidence, as the elephant seemed to be headed straight towards them. Jerry flushed as they all turned and looked accusingly at him.

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"Yah!" exclaimed Danny. "Mr. Smarty Know-it-all didn't know so much, after all!"

"Mebbe you just can't see it, but it's there," suggested Nora.

"That's so," Danny reluctantly admitted. "A el'funt's so big that when you stand right in front of it, its tail might not show at all, no matter how big it was."

"A little tail wouldn't," Jerry said quickly.

"A big one wouldn't either," Celia Jane asserted, taking sides against Jerry. "A el'funt's enough bigger to hide its tail."

"If it was very big it would show," said Jerry.

"The el'funt I play is goin' to have a tail all right," Danny informed the children collectively. "I ain't goin' to all the work of makin' a tail and then not wear it. I guess a el'funt's got some kind of a tail, anyway."

CHAPTER IV

JERRY LEARNS THAT O-U-T SPELLS OUT

The first and, as it turned out, the last performance of their circus took place that afternoon. Jerry felt a thrill of expectancy as they began to don their costumes. Once he thought he almost heard again that low, cheerful strumming that had seemed to beat upon his ears when he first saw the poster of the elephant jumping the fence. He said nothing about it and soon lost all recollection of the rollicking strains in the anticipation of the circus joys that he was about to behold.

Chris and Danny got into their costumes in the woodshed while Celia Jane went into the house and put on her white dress, the one she wore on Sundays. Mrs. Mullarkey had decided that Nora didn't need any special costume to be a rope-walker and that all Jerry needed to be a trained seal was a sort of apron made out of a gunny sack to protect his clothes while he crawled about on his stomach. He did not put this on at once but watched Danny getting into the skin of the elephant, wishing with all his heart that he might be the elephant, even if its tail was big and flat instead of being small like a rope.

It might have proved a mirth-provoking elephant to others had there been others present to see it, but to Jerry's eager imagination there was nothing laughable about it. The green wrapper hung most loosely about Danny's small, slim figure, great folds almost touching the ground, while the brown trunk and the blue, beaver-like tail waggled and wiggled about until they met between the front and hind legs of the elephant.



There was something about that awkward elephant that made Jerry feel all friendly inside and struck the chord of envy in his heart. He was not at all inclined to laugh when the cap with the very floppy palm-leaf-fan-ears attached fell off, as Danny started to gallop around the woodshed on all fours to see if the costume was all right.

Celia Jane now came dancing out of the house in her white frock, her hair loose and flowing for the pony's mane, while pinned to the back of her dress, at the waist line, was her mother's switch to represent the pony's tail. The strands of gray in the black hair did not match with the brown of the pony's mane, but that presented no difficulties to the imagination of the circus performers.

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"Come on!" Celia Jane called. "Let's play circus. I'm all ready."

"Wait a minute, can't you?" complained Danny. "I guess I'm the head of this circus. I've got the biggest part and I ain't quite ready. Just hold your horses."

"Whoa!" cried Celia Jane. "I'm just one pony. Get up!" She flapped her side with one hand, as though urging a horse to quicken his pace, and galloped out back of the woodshed where the circus "tent" had been set up and began prancing and dancing and preening about. Jerry was torn between desire to watch her graceful whirling and pirouetting and to keep fascinated eyes on the green elephant. He just had to stay and see if the elephant's ears fell off again. But Danny was equal to the occasion and tied the cap on with a piece of string.

"Celia Jane, you just come back here," he called. "I guess the elephant has to enter the circus ahead of the horse. Horses always get scared of el'funts unless they're behind where they can see them. How do you expect us to parade if you're there already?"

"All right," replied Celia Jane and came prancing back into the woodshed, "but hurry."

"I'll be first," said Danny, "an—"

"An' I'll be second!" cried Chris.

"I'm third!" Nora and Celia Jane exclaimed together.

Jerry said nothing. He knew where his place would be,—the very tail end of the parade.

"Boom!" sang out Danny and again, "Boom!"

"What's that for?" asked Chris.

"It's the music so that the people will know the circus is about to begin," replied Danny. "They always have music for the parade an' everything. Darn Darner said so."

"Let's sing then," suggested Nora.

"Sing what?" queried Danny crossly, seeing a threat to diminish his importance in the circus.

"We might sing 'Heigho, the cherry-o,'" said Celia Jane.

"'I Went to the Animal Fair' will be much more appropriate," Nora suggested.

"All right, sing," consented Danny, "but the crowd's gettin' restless; I can hear them stampin' and whistlin'!"

"I'll start it," said Nora. "All ready."

Thus the parade started and entered the main circus tent, which consisted of a pole in the center, with no canvas at all, to the strain of,

I went to the animal fair;
The birds and the beasts were there;
The little raccoon, by the light of the moon,
Was combing his auburn hair.
The monkey he got drunk,
Ran up the elephant's trunk,
The elephant sneezed and fell on his knees
And what became of the monkey-monkey-monk?

Jerry tried to sing, too, but he had a very hard time, for he couldn't crawl as fast as the others walked and the carpet-rag balloon wouldn't stay balanced on his nose but kept rolling off to the ground. The rest of the parade was halfway around the ring (marked by a circle of sawdust which Danny had made after sawing wood energetically for half a day to get enough sawdust) when the trained seal had just reached the main entrance.

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“Run and catch up with the parade,” came Danny’s voice through the circus music. “We can’t have the parade split in two that way.”

The trained seal jumped up on his hind feet carrying the balloon under a forefoot, and ran until he caught up with Celia Jane; then he plumped down on his stomach again.

Jerry was very hot and flushed and the muscles of his back and neck ached. He tried desperately to balance the ball of carpet rags on his nose, but it kept rolling off, and Jerry had to scramble after it and the parade was soon away ahead again. In desperation, he held the balloon on his nose with one hand and tried to creep ahead with but one arm and his legs as motive power. His progress was slower than ever.

He could see Danny—or, rather, the elephant—stalking majestically ahead to the strains of “I Went to the Animal Fair,” his trunk and his tail wobbling about until they met under his body, and the palm-leaf ears flopping with every step. Jerry felt hurt and out of sorts as he panted from the exertion of trying to crawl on one arm. He had suggested playing circus and he ought to have been allowed to play the part of the elephant. There was no fun in being a trained seal balancing a balloon on its nose, as there was in being a green elephant with floppy ears and wobbly tail and trunk. It would serve that greedy Danny just right if he should refuse to play in his old circus.

Jerry saw that he was again falling far in the rear and tried to scramble on faster. Then, of course, the balloon fell off and Jerry was almost in tears as he jumped after it.

Then the music of the parade came to a sudden end. The rest of the performers were at the main entrance, having marched clear around the ring while Jerry had not covered much more than half the distance.

“Can’t you hurry any?” asked Danny. “You’re spoilin’ the circus all the time, ’way behind like that.”

“I can’t crawl as fast as you can walk,” answered Jerry, in a voice that threatened to break into a sob.

“I guess a trained seal had orter crawl as fast as a man can walk,” said Danny, “or how could they have them in circuses?”

“I’m comin’ as fast as I can,” returned Jerry. “I wish you’d just try bein’ a trained seal for a time and see how fast you can crawl on your stummick.” Jerry rose to his hands and knees, holding the ball of carpet rags in his teeth, and progressed much faster.

“Who ever heard of a trained seal carryin’ a balloon in his teeth?” Danny protested. “I guess his teeth would go through the balloon and let all the air out.”

“Let’s not have no trained seal,” pleaded Jerry. “It ain’t no fun.”

“We got to have a trained seal,” replied Danny.

“You be it then,” suggested Jerry, “an’ let me be the el’funt. You said I could part of the time.”

“I’m going to be the el’funt,” proclaimed Danny. “The circus ain’t even begun yet.”

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"I won't be a trained seal, so I won't," said Jerry, at last catching up with the parade. "The balloon won't stay on my nose and my neck hurts and I've cut my hand on a piece of glass or a splinter or something till it bleeds." He held up one hand with a little trickle of blood on it. "I want to be something else. I won't play if I've got to be a trained seal any more."

"All right," Danny acquiesced, after a moment's thought, "you can be the audience. We need an audience to clap their hands and holler so's we'll know the crowd likes us and we're doin' all right. This circus can get along without no trained seal."

"I don't want to be the audience," replied Jerry dismally, seeing that, as the audience, he would have nothing to do with the circus.

Nora now put in a word. "Let's count out," she said, "and the one who's counted out will be the audience."

"I guess not," replied Danny emphatically, but after Celia Jane had whispered something in his ear, he considered a moment, looked at Jerry and then whispered something to Nora.

Nora looked at Jerry and counted on her fingers rapidly. Then she counted on her fingers again, after a quick glance at Danny. She nodded to Danny, who said:

"All right, whoever's counted out will be the audience. You count out, Nora." Starting with Danny and pointing to a child in rotation with each word, Nora chanted and counted:

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.
All good children go to heaven.
O-u-t spells out."

Her finger was pointing at Jerry.

"Jerry's out!" cried Celia Jane, skipping about. "He's the audience!"

"I won't be no audience," said Jerry.

"You'll have to be," asserted Danny, "you was counted out."

"I won't be! I won't play!" cried Jerry. He threw down his carpet-rag balloon, took off the gunny-sack apron, tossed it on top of the balloon and ran to the house.

"Cry baby!" shouted Danny after him, but Jerry did not even wait to refute that charge, for he knew he was in danger of proving it if he remained out there a moment longer.

Jerry felt the hot tears start to come as the screen door slammed after him. He dashed them angrily out of his eyes and ran up the stairs to the room he shared with Danny and Chris. If Mother 'Larkey had been at home and not away sewing for Mrs. Moran, he would have gone to her in his bitter disappointment, sure of finding comfort in her arms as he had so many times.

It was not fair for Danny to take the part of the elephant away from him and not even let him play it for a teeny little while, as he had promised he would. For two cents he would run away as he had from the man with the—the scarred face. He looked quickly around, half-fearful, as always, that *that* man might have learned where he was and be lurking around the corner ready to pounce upon him. The room was empty and he took a long breath. He would run away if it weren't for Mother 'Larkey and for little Kathleen who always cried when he even said anything about running away. He heard the screen door slam shut after a time and Nora's gentle footsteps coming up the stairway. He turned his back to the door.

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"Jerry," pleaded Nora's coaxing voice, "come on out and play. Danny didn't mean anything."

Jerry did not answer. He did not even look around.

"Danny wants you to play with us," continued Nora. "Won't you?"

"No," Jerry replied at length.

"Why won't you?"

"He didn't play fair."

"I'll count over again, Jerry, so's I'll be the—" The voice stopped and then continued chokily, "—the audience."

Jerry knew what it cost her to say that, but he hardened his heart. "I don't want to play no more," he said.

"Please do, Jerry. I'm sorry I didn't play fair, Jerry."

"I won't," pouted Jerry. "He said I could be the el'funt some of the time."

"Mebbe he'll let you after while, after he's tired of playin' it," suggested Nora, without any great fervor of conviction in her voice. "I'll ask him to."

With that Nora left the room. He wondered if she could persuade Danny to let him be the elephant part of the time. He might play then, if Danny coaxed him to.

He heard the screen slam after Nora and waited, listening for it to go slam-bang much louder. That would mean that Danny was coming to let him play elephant. Danny always let the door go shut slam-bang. He waited a long time and then he heard the shouting of the children. They were playing circus without him! Danny wouldn't let him be the elephant. Very well, if they didn't want him around and wouldn't let him play with them, he would run away. Danny would be sorry then. Perhaps he would be killed on a railway track or something and Danny would cry over his dead body, he'd be so sorry he didn't let him be the elephant.

That thought comforted him and he began gathering up the things he wanted to take with him. There was the fur cap that Mother 'Larkey had made for him out of an old muff of hers, the winter before. He couldn't leave that behind, nor yet the overcoat which she had made for him out of an old coat of her husband's just after Mr. Mullarkey had died. The other things he didn't care much about. Yes, after all, he would take the ragged, fuzzy cloth dog that Kathleen had insisted on giving him. The dog had lost an ear, a forepaw and one eye; still he cherished it because Kathleen had given it to him of

her own free will, something that Danny nor Chris nor Celia Jane nor even Nora had ever done.

He would wear the cap and overcoat, even if it was summer; then he wouldn't get so tired carrying them. He put on the fur cap, pulling it well down over his ears, and slipped into the overcoat. Slowly he took up the woolly dog and started down the stairs. Then he remembered the red mittens which a lady had brought him at Christmas, and returned to get them. He put them on carefully, smoothing them over his hands, and then went downstairs and out by the front door, prepared for any kind of weather.

He was going to run away again, as he had from that man with the scarred face. He heard the children shouting at their play and decided he would first watch them a minute and perhaps let Danny know what he had driven him into doing. He went down the alley which led past the woodshed, behind which the circus performance was going on, and stopped to watch with his face wedged between two pickets of the fence.

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Nora was walking the rope slowly. She was doing it very well as long as she kept one end of the balancing pole on the ground, but when she got halfway across the rope, the end of the pole was so far behind that she couldn't steady herself with it. She tried to drag it up even with her and in so doing lost her balance and had to jump to the ground. As she straightened up, she saw Jerry's face between the palings.

"There's Jerry!" she called to Danny.

"Thought you would play, after all," Danny remarked.

"I'm not," said Jerry.

"He's got his cap on!" laughed Celia Jane. "What've you got your cap on for, Jerry?"

"And your overcoat?" said Nora.

"And your mittens?" chimed in Chris. "You ain't cold, are you?"

"I'm running away," Jerry responded, addressing no one in particular. He tried to say it indifferently as though it were a matter of everyday occurrence, this running away, but in spite of himself a note of pride crept into his voice. None of them had ever run away.

"Running away!" gasped Celia Jane in an awed voice.

"Oh, Jerry, don't!" pleaded Nora.

Danny stared at him in open-mouthed amazement.

"I'm running away," Jerry repeated and sat down on the ground by the fence where he had an unobstructed view of the circus.

CHAPTER V

THE GREEN ELEPHANT BUYS AN AUDIENCE

The Mullarkey children regarded Jerry for a long time without a word.

Jerry, knowing that for once he had Danny at a disadvantage, wanted to prolong that pleasant sensation.

"I'm running away," he repeated, without stirring from the fence.

"What'll mother do?" Danny asked from underneath the elephant's trunk and Jerry knew from the earnestness of his voice that Danny was scared. "What do you want to run away for?"

"Because," replied Jerry.

"That's no reason," Chris stated.

"What'll become of you?" Danny asked, drawing closer to the fence, the elephant's beaver-like blue tail dragging forlornly on the ground.

"I dunno," Jerry replied carelessly.

"You won't find many folks who'd bring you home like father did and keep you," Danny pursued.

"I'm going to run away," was all that Jerry replied.

"What'll you do for something to eat?" demanded Chris, in a tone that showed admiration for a boy not afraid to run away, even if he wasn't a Mullarkey.

"I dunno," said Jerry, "but I'll find a way."

"Come on an' play, Jerry," coaxed Danny, "an' you can be the el'funt the next time we play circus."

"I want to be the el'funt this time," said Jerry.

"You can't be this time, because you're too little for the costume to fit you," Danny told him. "It'll have to be cut down an' made over for you. It's a little too big for me an' it's awfully hard work actin' as a el'funt would when your skin's so loose it gets in the way of your feet when you walk."

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Jerry hadn't thought of that but it looked reasonable to him. He hesitated and Danny, seeing his advantage, was quick to push it.

"Besides, mother wouldn't like it if you ran away. She'd think I was to blame when I'm not at all. I never even once thought of your runnin' away. You thought of it yourself, now didn't you?"

"Yes," Jerry admitted.

"Mother'd think I had done something to you when I ain't, have I?" Danny appealed.

"You wouldn't let me play—" Jerry began but was interrupted by Danny's saying quickly:

"You can next time we play circus, when I've had a chance to make the el'funt skin over for you."

That did not seem inducement enough for Jerry and he decided to continue his interrupted running away. He rose and turned slowly away from the fence and tried to imitate Darn Darner's off-hand style of leave-taking. "Well, so long, fellows," he called nonchalantly over his shoulders, "I must be on my way."

"Good-by, Jerry," said Nora.

"Oh, Jerry! Don't go!" pleaded Celia Jane.

"You stay an' be audience for this circus," said Danny quickly, "an' I'll give you one of my tops."

Jerry returned to the fence. "The one with the red on it?" he asked.

"No, the other one."

"It's broken," Jerry objected.

"An' I'll give you two fishhooks," Danny hurriedly promised, "an' a line an' pole, an' a horseshoe nail."

"The rusty one!" cried Jerry, in a tone that was sarcastic.

Danny hesitated, swallowed quickly and responded, "No, the shiny one."

"I don't want no fishin' pole an' all," said Jerry; "an' the broken top an' the shiny horseshoe ain't enough."

"I'll give you my toy pistol," said Danny.

"The trigger's gone," Jerry objected, "an' a pistol ain't no good without a trigger."

"The golf ball I found in the weeds," Danny offered.

"I don't know how to play golf."

"Aw, be reasonable, Jerry. I can't give you what you want. I bought it with the money I got for mowin' old man Barnes's yard for a month."

"I'll be the audience for your white rabbit," Jerry bargained, "an' I won't run away."

"You want too much," Danny objected. "'Tain't as if I could get another rabbit right away."

"An' then Mother 'Larkey won't think you made me run away," pursued Jerry, pressing home his advantage. "I won't say nothin' to her nohow about that."

Danny did not reply at once and Jerry spoke again.

"You can keep your top an' your shiny horseshoe nail, too."

"You won't say nothin' to mother a-tall?" Danny weakened.

"No," Jerry assured him.

"Cross your heart, hope to die an' spit?"

"Cross my heart, hope to die an' spit," repeated Jerry, suiting the action to the word.

"All right, you can have the ole rabbit. You'll have to feed it, though. I wouldn't raise my finger to feed it, not if it was starvin' to death. I'd got kinda sick of always havin' to feed it whenever I wanted to do something else, anyway."

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"All right, I'll be the audience," Jerry promised, "but the rabbit's mine."

"Then go in the house and put away your cap an' coat an' mittens, so's mother won't suspect nothin'. An', Chris, don't you dare ever tell, nor you, Nora, nor you, Celia Jane. I'll get even with you if it takes to my last livin' day if you do."

"We won't ever tell," his brother and sisters assured him.

Jerry flew back to the house, and put away his winter clothes and the cloth dog Kathleen had given him, and then dashed out to the circus ground and climbed upon an old barrel which Danny and Chris had turned upside down for a seat. He kicked his heels against its sides and whistled as best he could as a sign of the audience's impatience for the circus to begin.

"We'll begin all over again," announced Danny and marshaled his three fellow performers back to the woodshed and led them forth in parade to the strains of "I Went to the Animal Fair." Jerry duly applauded the parade and waited for the real performance.

Then the green elephant rose up on his hind legs and with one front leg pushed his trunk to one side while the voice of Danny Mullarkey announced, "Ladies and gents, I'm pleased to make you acquainted with Flora, the lady tight-rope walker, who will now walk the tight rope for you an' I hope you'll like her."

This time, by dragging one end of her balancing pole on the ground as she walked forward on the rope, Nora, or, as the circus-master called her, Flora, managed to walk the ten feet to the opposite post without falling off.

Jerry, rejoicing over the possession of the white rabbit, applauded her generously.

"The el'funt will now jump the fence," came the voice of Danny, issuing from the mouth of the green elephant. "Hey, you kids! Get the boards for the fence," he called to Chris and Celia Jane, who had sat down on the ground while Nora walked the rope.

With a front foot, the elephant put his trunk in place and took a curious little huddled run on all fours up to the very low fence made of two boards, together not more than ten inches high, which Chris and Celia Jane held for him, and then half rose on his hind legs and leaped over the fence, palm-leaf-fan-ears flopping and brown trunk and blue tail wobbling. No elephant jumping up into the sky and balancing the moon on the end of his trunk was this, truly, but, Jerry thrilled at the first jump, imagining what it might have been.

"Wheel!" trumpeted the elephant as he turned back and jumped the fence again. He seemed to develop a very passion for wheeing and jumping the fence, returning to the charge again and again.

Jerry clapped his hands and kicked the sides of the barrel in approval and laughed at the ungainly antics of the jumping elephant, but by dint of the frequent repetition of the jumping he began to become disappointed that Danny didn't jump higher. He grew tired of the performance before Danny wearied of jumping the fence.

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"It's my turn now!" Chris called, after Danny had jumped for the twelfth time. "Come on, Celia Jane."

They dropped the fence and, as there was nothing for the green elephant to jump unless he could clear the tight rope, two feet from the ground, Danny performance gave way to the dancing pony and the clown.

Chris was trying to crack an old whip which he and Danny had made by braiding three strands of leather, with a "cracker" at the end, and Celia Jane was dancing gracefully about the ring, her tail switching and her mane blowing, when the unexpected voice of Darn Darn from the alley brought the circus to a sudden halt.

"Hullo! What do you kids think you're doin'?" he asked, in the gruff voice which he adopted when he wanted to be particularly disagreeable.

Jerry squirmed around on the barrel until he could see Darn. "We're playin' circus," he answered with a feeble, placating smile, before the others had recovered from their surprise.

"Yah! You call *that* a circus? Chris can't even crack the whip."

"I can, too, sometimes," Chris disputed.

"I'll show you how to do it," Darn offered, clambering over the fence. "Here, give me the whip!"

He took it out of Chris's surprised and reluctant fingers and began circling it over his head and giving it a sudden jerk. It didn't crack at first, but soon he got the knack of it and cracked it loudly as close to Celia Jane's ears and ankles as he could come without touching her.

"Giddap!" he commanded the dancing pony. "Show your paces." That time he tried to crack the whip too near Celia Jane and the end of the lash wound around her leg.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the dancing pony, hopping about on one leg. "That hurt! It ain't no fair makin' it crack so close an' I won't play no more." Half crying from the pain, Celia Jane ran to the house, followed by Nora.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," Darn called to Celia Jane. "The whip must be a little too long, or I wouldn't have sized up the distance wrong." He turned to Danny. "What do you think you are?"

"I'm a el'funt," said Danny proudly, "an' I jump the fence like the circus el'funt."

"An el'funt!" cried Darn, turning his eyes up to the sky. "And he calls that an' el'funt!"

“It is a el’funt,” protested Jerry.

Darn Darner laughed derisively.

“You can ’maginary it’s a el’funt,” Chris explained.

“It would take some imagination,” was Darn’s only comment on that.

“What’s wrong with it?” asked Danny. “I bet you couldn’t do any better.”

“What’s wrong with it!” exclaimed Darn. “Ask me what’s right with it. Everything’s wrong with it.”

“It looks like the picture of the el’funt—almost,” defended Jerry.

“It looks as much like that as I do like a giraffe.”

Danny turned his back on Darn and the latter exclaimed:

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"What's that blue pants leg for, hangin' down from your coat tail?"

"Why—why—that's the el'funt's tail," Danny replied reluctantly.

"My gorry!" cried Darn, giving way to shrieks of laughter so that he had to sit down on the ground and double up with the paroxysms of mirth. "*An el'funt's tail!* Oh, my gorry!" and again he rocked back and forth, holding his sides. Then he was attacked by a fit of coughing and finally, when he got his breath, he said:

"Don't you kids know nothing of national history? Hain't you ever seen a picture of an el'funt? Its tail is nothing like that a-tall."

"How's it different?" Danny asked in a very meek voice.

"It's small and round, like a rope," Jerry interposed quickly.

"Of course it is," was Darn's comment.

"I told him so!" exclaimed Jerry.

"But how'd I know that you knew," asked Danny, aggrieved, "when you didn't know how you knew?"

"I don't know," was all the explanation that Jerry could give.

"All I can say is, you'd better study national history, Danny, and learn how the four-footed friends of man are made," remarked Darn.

"How do *you* know el'funts' tails are small and round?" asked Chris.

"Because I'm no dumb-head and learn things."

"I ain't no dumb-head," protested Chris and at the same time Danny asserted:

"Chris ain't no dumb-head."

Jerry saw the green elephant's front feet double up and he jumped down from the barrel, a little bit scared.

"He is, too," said Darn, "and so are you. Jerry Elbow there's got more sense than both of you put together, even if he ain't got no father and mother."

"I haven't either," said Jerry. "I jest somehow knew one thing Danny didn't about el'funts' tails. Danny knows lots more'n I do."

"I guess you'd better take that back about Chris bein' a dumb-head," threatened Danny, scowling from under the elephant's trunk.

"An' you'd better take it back about Danny's bein' one," remarked Chris.

"I won't any such thing," retorted Darn.

"We'll make you," challenged Danny, all his Irish fighting blood up.

"I'd like to see the kid could make me do anything I didn't want to," and Darn doubled up his fists and flung them out in the air at an imaginary adversary.

"I'll show you," Danny boasted and quickly divested himself of the elephant's skin.

"Take a board," cautioned Chris, "an' then you can keep him from runnin' in on you." Chris followed his own advice and Darn, seeing himself attacked from two sides, one of his foes armed, decided he would live to fight another day and scrambled over the fence.

"Yah!" he cried in derision from the alley. "Dumb-heads! Dumb-heads! Oh, Chris, you blue-eyed beauty, turn around and do your duty! Blue-eyed beauty!"

He dodged just in time to avoid the board which Chris, incensed at that most horrible of epithets—for his eyes were blue—had hurled at him with all his might.



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"Ole Danny dumb-head! Blue-eyed beauty! Ole Danny dumb-head! Blue-eyed beauty!" chanted Darn, thrusting his face between two palings of the fence and sticking out his tongue.

Then Danny picked up a board and, flanked by Chris, advanced to the fence, whereat Darn took to his heels, shouting, "Blue-eyed beauty! Ole Danny dumb-head!" as loud as he could.

At the end of the alley he turned and shouted,

"A pants' leg for an el'funt's tail! Oh, my gorry!"

When he disappeared from sight, the three boys surveyed the elephant's skin lying on the ground.

"Let's not play any more," said Danny.

"I'm tired of the ole circus, anyway," replied Chris.

They went into the house, Jerry slowly following them. Even he could not 'maginary the old green wrapper and the stuffed brown coat sleeve and blue trouser leg into an elephant any more.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILDREN THAT CRIED IN THE LANE

The days slipped by and none of the children played circus again. Jerry thought of it often and would have liked to be the elephant just once, but he never said anything. That made him dream all the more about the real circus which was coming and wish that he could see it. He was very careful not to put his longing into words, so he wouldn't remind Mother 'Larkey of the ends that wouldn't meet and make her feel badly. One day she came across the old green wrapper elephant skin in the woodshed.

"Why don't you children play circus any more?" she asked Danny.

"El'funts don't look like that," he asserted, pointing disdainfully at the discarded costume. "Their tails are small like a rope."

"Are they now?" she asked. "And how might you be after knowing that?"

"National history says so," Danny replied in a very decisive tone.

Mrs. Mullarkey gave one of those low, fleeting laughs that always made Jerry feel so good inside and which had become so rare of late. “Yes, I guess national history would be after telling about the elephant’s tail as long as it deals with elephants and eagles and donkeys and camels and all.”

Jerry felt there must be something funny in what Mother 'Larkey said, because her nose went all crinkly, and he smiled in sympathy anyway, although he didn’t understand.

But playing circus no longer appealed to the Mullarkey children. Darn Darner had had a blighting influence on the power of their imaginations, and Danny in the elephant costume would have been to them now only a little boy in an old green wrapper much too large for him, dragging about a stuffed blue trouser leg for a tail,—a very ridiculous spectacle. Jerry realized that there would never be a next time and that he would never play the elephant.

A few days before the circus was to come to town Jerry and the Mullarkey children were returning from the woods by the creek, where they had gone to see what the prospects were for a good yield of hazel and hickory nuts in the fall, and had just entered the edge of town when they saw Darn Darner approaching. They had not set eyes on him since the day he broke up their circus and they were doubtful as to how he would behave towards them.

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"Just pretend as though nothing had never happened," Nora suggested.

"Yes, that's best," Danny agreed. "Let him speak first."

They watched Darn's nearer approach without seeming to do so. They tried to keep talking and laughing so he wouldn't think they were the least little bit afraid of him, but Jerry and Celia Jane first fell silent and then Chris and Nora, and finally Danny, so that when they met Darn they were as quiet and subdued as a funeral party.

"Hello!" said Darn, as they were in the act of passing. "Where you kids been?"

"Hullo, Darn," replied Danny. "We just been out in the woods."

"There's goin' to be lots of hazelnuts in the fall," Nora informed him, in a voice which she tried to make genial.

"And hickory nuts too," added Jerry, feeling that such good news would help keep Darn in his present state of good humor and from thinking about what had happened at their circus.

"That don't interest me much just now," Darn remarked. "I'm goin' to the circus. We're goin' to have reserved seats, a dollar and a half apiece. There ain't no better to be had."

"A dollar an' a half for one seat!" exclaimed Celia Jane. "I thought it cost only fifty cents to see the circus."

"That's just to get in and set on an ole board without any back to it," Darn informed her. "We're goin' to have reserved seats in the boxes, with chairs to sit on."

"A fifty-cent seat would suit me all right," observed Danny.

"An' me, too," echoed Chris and Nora and Celia Jane and Jerry.

"Are you kids goin' to see the circus unload?" asked Darn.

"Will they let you get close enough to see?" questioned Danny in turn.

"Of course. They can't keep you from lookin', I guess."

"No, I guess not." Danny answered his own question as though it had been asked by Chris. "Anybody knows he could look."

"Could you see the el'funt?" Jerry asked timidly.

"You could if you had eyes," replied Darn loftily.

"Where're they goin' to unload?" Danny queried.

"On the sidetrack by Smith's house, just back of the depot, at five o'clock in the morning. I'm goin' to see them unload."

"So'm I!" cried Danny.

"An' me, too!" asserted Chris.

"An' me, too!" Jerry hurried to make that statement so that Danny could not say he couldn't go because he had not chosen to go when there was a chance.

"No, you're not," Darn asserted with a sudden frown.

"I am, too!" cried Jerry. Then after a moment he asked plaintively, "Why ain't I?"

"I guess you ain't got nothin' to say about whether Jerry goes or not," Danny interposed quickly. "He can go if he wants to."

"No, he can't," contradicted Darn.

"Why can't he?" Nora asked.

"They don't let anybody in the poor farm go to the circus," was Darn's unexpected reply.

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"That's not got nothin' to do with Jerry!" cried Danny hotly. "I guess he ain't in no poor farm."

"He's goin' to be, though," pursued Darn calmly, in that restrained, superior, informative manner which sometimes can be so maddening.

"I ain't either, am I, Danny?" Jerry appealed dolefully.

"No, you ain't," Danny assured him. "Darn's jest tryin' to make you cry. Don't you let him scare you."

"Jerry Elbow's goin' to the poor farm before the circus gets here," stated Darn.

"I ain't!" cried Jerry in a shaky voice. "I won't go! So there!"

"They'll take you," Darn informed him, "and you won't have anything to say about it."

"Mother 'Larkey won't let them take me, will she, Danny?" asked Jerry in a voice that was becoming shrill and high from fear.

"No, she won't," asserted Danny. "Darn Darner, you jest let Jerry be. You ain't got no right to scare a orfum boy like that."

"We won't let them take you," comforted Celia Jane, suddenly affectionate, and put her arm about Jerry's neck.

Darn stepped directly in front of Jerry and stared coolly down at him until Jerry was so uncomfortable that he couldn't raise his eyes from the ground.

"You're goin' to the poor farm Wednesday morning," he said calmly, "because Mrs. Mullarkey's too poor to keep you any longer. She can't make enough to keep her own kids."

Jerry felt suddenly very little and all alone in a big cold world. Fear had entered his heart. He felt that Mrs. Mullarkey not only hadn't been able to make both ends meet but that she was never going to be able to do it. He some way knew that Darn Darner was telling the truth and that soon he would be torn away from the only home he could remember. His lips twisted and he felt the hot tears filling his eyes. Yet he denied Darn's statement with all his soul.

"They won't! They shan't take me! I'll run away first!"

"Much good that would do you," commented Darn unsympathetically. "It'd be easy enough to find you."

“How do you know they’re goin’ to take Jerry away?” asked Chris.

“He don’t know it!” cried Nora. “He’s jest tryin’ to scare us.”

“No, I ain’t,” denied Darn. “My father’s overseer of the poor in this county and I guess I heard him tell mamma last night that he was goin’ to take Jerry to the poor farm Wednesday morning. He said Mrs. Mullarkey had agreed as to how she’d hafta let him take Jerry because her insurance money from Mr. Mullarkey was all gone and she couldn’t make enough to support her own kids.”

“It ain’t so!” blustered Jerry, but all the time terribly frightened. He tried to think of something to say that would show he was not afraid of Darn Darner, who was always picking on little boys.

“You shan’t go!” Celia Jane cried, tears running down her cheeks. She flung both arms around Jerry’s neck and squeezed him passionately.

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"What will Kathleen do without Jerry?" asked Nora in a choked voice.

Jerry looked up and saw that she was quietly weeping, too. They believed it! Believed that Mother 'Larkey would let them take him away! He had been somewhat comforted by their stout assertions that Darn's words were false, but now—!

He was stunned. Then his lips twisted and twitched and the tears that had been forming in his eyes spilled silently over.

"Don't get scared, Jerry," Danny tried to comfort him. Then he turned to the tormentor. "*Darn* you, Darn, why can't you let him be!"

There it was! Just what Jerry wanted to show Darn he couldn't scare him. His oozing courage flamed up in a final flare of desperation. Through his tears and the choke in his throat he cried:

"*Darn Darn Darner! Darn! Darn! Darn! Darn Darn Darner!*"

"That's about enough from you, Jerry Elbow!" shouted Darn. He gave Jerry a resounding slap in the face. "No kid like you can call me that without takin' the biggest lickin' he ever got."

"No, you don't!" cried Danny and quick as a flash he rushed at Darn and began pounding him over the head and shoulders with his fists. Chris and Nora went to Danny's aid and the three pairs of fists caused Darn to duck and run a short distance.

Jerry slumped down into the dust of the road, weeping bitterly, and Celia Jane flopped down by him, hugging him tight and mingling her tears with his.

Danny and Chris and even the usually gentle Nora, but for once with all her gentleness vanished, gave vent to their feelings against Darn by making a chant out of his name.

"*Darn Darn Darner! Darn! Darn! Darn! Darn Darn Darner! Darn! Darn! Darn!*"

Into that chant boiled over all their pent-up dislike for him which had been simmering under cover for so long. Darn started back towards them, angry through and through, but stopped as they rushed to meet him, fists doubled up ready for battle. He had fought many boys bigger than himself, but he fled before the numerical strength of the present enemy, flinging back over his shoulder from a safe distance, "Blue-eyed beauty! Ole Danny dumb-head! Blue-eyed beauty! Ole Danny dumb-head! Yah! You'll *hafta* go to the poor farm if you want to see Jerry Elbow after Wednesday."

Upon hearing Darn's words Jerry stretched out at full length in the road and his voice rose in a quavering wail of anguish. Celia Jane emitted a thinner, shriller wail. Nora

came back to comfort them and was caught by the contagion so that she too plumped down in the road and wept.

Danny and Chris, being boys, were ashamed to give vent to their emotions in a similar way and stood looking down at the huddled forms in the road. Chris, after a time, found himself weeping in sympathy and openly rubbed away the tears with his shirt sleeve. Even Danny swallowed hard and dabbed at his eyes.

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"Well, I'll be horn-swoggled!" exclaimed a startled, mystified voice back of the children.

Jerry opened his eyes on a blurred picture of Danny and Chris turning suddenly about and of Nora springing to her feet. A man was just getting out of a two-seated buggy. All sound of his approach had been drowned out by the vociferous lamentations of Jerry and Celia Jane, which still continued.

"What's the trouble here?" asked the man in a deep, pleasant voice that carried even through the clamor into Jerry's consciousness. He raised his head and looked up through swollen and tear-drenched eyes at the man.

"They're g-goin' to take Jerry Elbow to the p-p-poor farm Wednesday morning," Danny stutteringly explained.

"Then you must be the Mullarkey children," observed the man, speaking to the group.

"I'm Danny," said Danny, and Chris identified himself.

"Then this must be Jerry Elbow," the man remarked, stooping to pick Jerry up.

Jerry flung his arms about the man's neck and clung there desperately.

"Yes, sir, he's Jerry," Nora explained, as Celia Jane got up out of the road and brushed the dust from her dress.

"My name's Tom Phillips," said their new friend. "I knew your father, Dan Mullarkey, very well. He told me once how he found you by the roadside one stormy night far from any house, Jerry Elbow."

Jerry felt comforted in the strong arms of Mr. Phillips and at the pleasant, deep quality of his voice. He stopped crying except for the long, shuddering sobs that always came at intervals after he had cried so hard.

"Who said anything about taking you to the poor farm?" he asked Jerry.

"D-D-Darn," Jerry sobbed out.

"Darn!" said Mr. Phillips, puzzled. "I say darn, too, but who was it?"

"It was Darn Darner," Danny told him.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips. "That scalawag!"

"He said his father said so," Nora explained.

“That will have to be looked into,” Mr. Phillips remarked. “Now you children climb into the buggy and I will take you home. I want to have a talk with your mother.”

“She’s not to home,” said Chris.

“Mebbe she’ll be back,” observed Nora, looking at the sun. “It’s gettin’ on towards supper time.”

“We’ll see,” was Mr. Phillips’ only comment as he placed Jerry on the front seat and helped Celia Jane in beside him.

Danny and Chris and Nora, in the meantime, had climbed into the back seat. Mr. Phillips clucked to the horses and they trotted off into town.

Jerry felt greatly comforted to be riding home with this big, pleasant man, and the cruel edge of Darn’s words began to wear off. He felt that this new friend’s words, “That will have to be looked into,” meant almost as much as though he had said, “I’ll see that nothing of the sort happens.”

His body was still shaken, at longer and longer intervals, by shuddering sobs, but when the Mullarkey home was reached, they had subsided and he was enjoying the unaccustomed buggy ride.

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Mrs. Mullarkey was home, and she came running out to see why her children were being brought back in a buggy.

"Who's hurt," she asked anxiously, "that you're bringing them home in a buggy?"

"None of them is hurt, Mrs. Mullarkey," Mr. Phillips assured her quickly, and helped the children out. "I'm Tom Phillips. I knew your husband quite well. I found these children crying in the road because Mr. Darner's young scalawag of a son had told them that Jerry Elbow was to be taken to the poor farm."

"Oh, Jerry, you blessed child!" crooned Mother 'Larkey, taking Jerry in her arms. "And you to find it out from some one else when I'd been trying for this week past to get up courage enough to tell you."

"Mother!" cried Nora in a shocked voice.

"It's true, then?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Mullarkey, drawing Jerry tightly to her. "I don't want to let you go, Jerry, but Dan's insurance money is all gone and how I am to make enough to keep the bodies and souls of all you children together I don't know. I love you as though you were my own, you're that sweet and gentle."

Jerry began crying again, but softly this time, because he knew Mother 'Larkey wouldn't let him go if she could help it. She kissed him and turned to Mr. Phillips.

"Mr. Darner told me I'd sooner or later have to let some of my own children go there or be adopted out, if I didn't consent to Jerry's going. I'm at the end of my string."

"I see," observed Mr. Phillips gently. "I didn't know just how Dan Mullarkey left you fixed, but I can do something to help you. Darner can be made to listen to reason and I can bring some influence to bear upon him. I don't see why the county can't let you have as much as it would cost it to keep Jerry at the farm. I belong to the same lodge as Dan did and we'll help you some there. I'll find something for Danny to do. He can be earning a little money in the summer time and help you out that way."

"You're an angel if ever there was one in this world, Mr. Phillips," said Mrs. Mullarkey. "If the county will allow me for Jerry's keep, I'll take better care of him than he'd get at any institution and it would help me in keeping the brood together."

"I'll see what I can do," said Mr. Phillips.

"Then Jerry won't hafta go?" Celia Jane questioned.

"I hope not," he replied. "Keep a stiff upper lip, Jerry!"

"I—I'll try," Jerry promised, already feeling certain that the danger which threatened him had passed.

"I'll come back in a day or two," said Mr. Phillips, "and let you know what I have been able to do."

Jerry watched him from over Mother 'Larkey's shoulder as he drove off. He thought he had never seen a man who looked so big and strong and as though he could make people do just as he wanted them to.

CHAPTER VII

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TICKETS TO PARADISE

On Wednesday Mr. Phillips reported that while the matter of allowing Mrs. Mullarkey to keep Jerry had not been decided, he would not be taken to the poor farm on that day at least and he thought it could be arranged that he shouldn't go there at all.

Consequently it was with a joyous heart that Jerry awoke early on the morning of the great day that the circus was to reach town. He had slept fitfully all night, thinking of the circus and fearing that he might not wake up in time. Mrs. Mullarkey had promised to call him, but for once Jerry had waked up himself.

He heard a stir downstairs and called to Mother 'Larkey that he was up. He roused Chris, who in turn called Danny, but Danny was a sound sleeper and merely turned on his side. Chris and Jerry then rolled him over and pulled the covers off and finally pummeled the sleeper into a state of semi-consciousness.

"It's time for the circus to unload," they told him. "We're all dressed, ready to go."

Danny opened one swollen, sleepy eye, "Aw, it's not time yet," he muttered drowsily and went back to sleep.

"All right, let him be," said Chris in disgust. "We ain't got time to wake him. We'll miss the unloadin' if we do."

So Jerry and Chris tiptoed carefully downstairs, for they knew Mrs. Mullarkey had gone back to bed, and ran through the dim light of dawn to the railway station.

The circus train was in and the unloading had already begun. Nearly all the small boys in town seemed to be perched on fences, roofs, and in trees, watching the proceedings. The circus men were tired and cross and made the children keep out of the way.

Jerry was dreadfully excited and exhilarated upon seeing four elephants on the opposite side of the train, and his delight knew no bounds when one of them was hitched to a heavy circus wagon on a car and pulled it down a board incline to the road. The funny, awkward animal walked right along as though the wagon were as light as a feather. Many of the boys complained because the sides of the wagons in which the wild animals were kept were closed, but not so Jerry. As long as he could feast his eyes on the elephants he was content. He had but a passing glance for the humpbacked camels and the two long-necked giraffes until after the elephants had been taken away.

When the train had been unloaded and the last wagons were hauled away, the troop of small boys—and many older ones and grown men as well—followed them out to the circus ground.



Already one big tent and several smaller ones had been erected and the elephants and the other animals were not to be seen. There was a delightfully circusy smell of oils and sawdust and hay and animals pervading the air. Then through it all came another smell that made Jerry and Chris and many of the boys and men sniff. It was the smell of bacon and eggs frying. The cooks were preparing breakfast for the circus troupe.

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"I'm hungry," said a man back of Jerry to the two boys with him. "We'd better get home. Mother will be waiting breakfast for us." They left the circus grounds reluctantly, the two boys stopping every now and then to look back.

That inviting odor of frying bacon and eggs was a clarion call to breakfast to scores of the onlookers, and the crowd fairly melted away until not more than a dozen boys were left, among whom Jerry saw Darn Darner.

"I'm awful hungry," said Chris, after they had wandered around half an hour longer. "Let's go home. I guess we've seen about all there is to see."

Jerry protested. "Let's wait a while longer an' mebbe they'll bring the el'funts out."

"Mebbe they will," said Chris and seemed straightway to forget all about his hunger. They went about the tents again and once caught sight of the elephants and camels in the second largest tent, as one of the canvasmen came out and held back the flaps. He was followed by another man with a thick, black beard, who wore something that flashed in his shirt front.

"Gee, look at the size of that diamond!" exclaimed Darn Darner's voice back of Jerry.

The man looked sharply about. Jerry thought he seemed very much surprised and was afraid he might be angry because he and Chris were so close to the tent. He started to go away, but upon hearing the man speak he stood rooted to the spot.

"What in the world has become of all the small boys?" the black-bearded man had asked the other. "There were hundreds about a few minutes ago. Don't they know they can get to see the circus if they want to carry water for the elephants?"

"I guess the boys in this town never saw a circus before, Mr. Burrows," replied the canvasman.

"Here, you," Mr. Burrows called to Darn. "Want to earn a ticket to the circus?"

"No," said Darn loftily. "I've got a reserved box seat." He turned and walked off.

"What did I tell you, Sam?" laughed Mr. Burrows. "There's money in this jay town and we're going to get a bunch of it."

Jerry stepped hastily forward, a light of joy dancing in his eyes, with Chris treading on his heels. "Please, mister," said Jerry eagerly, "we'll carry water for the elephants."

"We want to see the circus," added Chris.

"You're too little to carry water," said Sam. "Where're all the bigger kids?"

“They’ve gone home to breakfast,” replied Chris. “Please, mister, we can carry water. I’m big enough.”

“Yes, I guess you’re big enough,” said the man with the diamond in his shirt, “but the elephants are awful thirsty and it will take you a long time. Sam, you see if you can find some other boys to help you.”

Sam departed instantly.

“Where’ll we get the water?” asked Chris.

“From that house across the road. You’ll have to pump it. Your brother there had better go home; he’s too little to carry water.”

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"No, I ain't, mister," said Jerry eagerly. "I'm awful strong for my age."

"How old are you?" asked the man.

"I don't know," Jerry confessed. Then, fearful of losing this opportunity to see the circus, he continued, "I guess I'm almost seven or mebbe eight."

"You don't know how old you are!" exclaimed the man. "You look much younger than seven or eight."

"He's not my brother," Chris explained. "He's a orfum my father found when he was alive. My brother's at home with mother and my sisters. We couldn't wake him up. But Jerry's awful strong."

"A orfum, hey? And awful strong?" said the man and seemed to be studying over something in his mind. "Have you ever seen a circus?" he asked.

"No, sir," they both assured him and Chris continued: "Mother did once, just after she was married to father. She wished she could bring us all to the circus but she didn't have money enough."

"H'm," said the man. "I used to be a orfum myself and I know how you feel."

"Did you?" asked Jerry, and he smiled up at the man, unafraid, with a sort of fellow feeling.

"I sure did," the man smiled down at Jerry. "I got to see my first circus through carrying water for the elephants."

At this moment Sam returned with four other boys, all older than either Jerry or Chris.

"I never saw boys so shy of a circus before, Mr. Burrows," he said. "They've melted away as though the circus were a plague. But I guess we can get along with these."

"All right, Sam," replied Mr. Burrows, "but I want you to pump the water and let the boys do the carrying. These two boys," and he put a hand on Jerry's head and one on Chris's shoulder, "have never seen a circus. They'll help carry water and be sure that they get a matinee ticket apiece."

"All right, sir," replied Sam. "Come on, boys."

"Let these two carry a pail between them," continued Mr. Burrows, "I don't want them breaking their backs."

Jerry felt an unusual warmth go surging through him. He was going to carry water for the elephants and get a ticket to the circus, after all! He was gladder than ever that he had bought the cough medicine for Kathleen with the black half-dollar. He looked up at Mr. Burrows, and it was such a look as a friendless dog might give to a man who had just petted it and given it something to eat.

"Thank you, mister, for lettin' me carry water for the el'funts," said Jerry.

"That's all right," replied the man. "Here, there's a dime for peanuts. Have a good time."

Jerry was too surprised to take the dime and Mr. Burrows pressed it into his hand and went back into the tent before Jerry had recovered.

"The boss must have taken a fancy to you!" said Sam to Jerry. "Well, them elephants is awful thirsty and we've got to get to work. Come on."

Jerry, envied of all the boys, put the dime in his blouse pocket. He seemed to be treading on air instead of the solid earth as he followed Sam to another part of the ground where the boys were given large pails.

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He felt in his blouse pocket every now and then to make sure that he really had a dime and also that it had not grown wings and flown out of his pocket, or made a hole in it and dropped out. It was always there and his feeling of exhilaration at his good fortune kept up, despite the hard work of carrying that pailful of water from the pump across the street to the back of the second biggest tent, where he and Chris emptied it into a kind of a tub. There were half a dozen of the tubs to be filled, and before the third one was full Jerry's arms and back ached, but he gritted his teeth and kept on. He would show them that he wasn't too little to carry water for the elephants.

Under the ache in his arms and back, his exhilaration at the possession of the dime and the prospect of a ticket to the circus wilted but did not die. When the fourth tub was about full he sat down on the pump platform while Sam filled their pail with water.

"El'funts must drink a nawful lot of water," he said.

"Gettin' tired, ain't you?" asked Sam.

"No, I could carry water all day, I guess. It makes my back ache some because I ain't used to it."

"You kids have made more trips than the other boys," said Sam, "and I ain't going to fill your pail clear full any more. Don't try to go so fast with it. There's plenty of time."

"We want to carry enough for two tickets," said Jerry quickly. "Chris wants to see the circus, too, don't you, Chris?"

"You bet," replied Chris.

"You'll get a ticket apiece, all right, as long as I'm on the job," said Sam, giving them the pail not much more than half full of water.

"That's a whole lot easier to carry," Jerry assured Sam, as they started for the tub.

It seemed to Jerry that he and Chris had been carrying water for hours by the time the last tub was full. He felt almost starving. The sun seemed to be 'way up and he was so tired and hot that he was about ready to drop; but he found that when the work was done and Sam gave each boy a ticket it wasn't very late, after all.

"It's just nine o'clock," said Sam, "and you kids'd better scoot home and get some breakfast. Just show your mothers them tickets if they scold you for stayin' so long and I guess they'll hush right up. The matinee starts at 2:15, but if you want to see the menagerie, you'd better come about half-past one or right after the parade."

Those magic pieces of paper, which Jerry and Chris held tightly in their hands for fear of losing them, made them forget their hunger and weariness and they set off for home at

full speed. They raced breathless into the house and found that Mrs. Mullarkey and Nora had finished washing the breakfast dishes.

“Look, mother!” cried Chris, panting for breath after almost every word, “we’ve got tickets for the circus for helpin’ carry water for the el’funts!”

“Oh, how nice!” said Mrs. Mullarkey. “They will be tickets to paradise to you. Now you’ll get to see the circus, after all. But you must be about starved.”

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"We are, almost," Jerry admitted.

"Gee, my arms ache," Chris remarked.

"You boys had better rub each other's backs with liniment while I get your breakfast," Mother 'Larkey said, getting a bottle down from the cupboard.

"Did Danny get a ticket, too?" Celia Jane asked.

"No," said Chris.

"Why, where is Danny?" inquired his mother.

"I don't know," replied Chris. "He was asleep when we left. We tried to wake him but he wouldn't get up."

"Land's sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Mullarkey. "He must still be upstairs, fast asleep! I heard you calling him and then heard you tiptoeing downstairs and out of the house and thought he was with you." She went to the foot of the stairs and called and the sleepy voice of Danny answered:

"All right. Is it time for the circus to unload?"

"It unloaded hours ago," she replied, "and Chris and Jerry have got back with each of them a ticket to the circus for helping carry water for the elephants."

"Why didn't you call me!" wailed Danny.

"Chris and Jerry called you," answered his mother. "I heard them and heard you answer. It's your own fault for being such a sleepyhead."

It didn't take Danny long to dress and get downstairs, his hair all tousled and his eyes still heavy with sleep. "Let's see your tickets," he demanded.

Chris let him see his, but kept a possessive hold of one end. There it was:

BURROWS AND FAIRCHILD'S

MAMMOTH CIRCUS AND
MENAGERIE

ADMIT ONE

COMPLIMENTARY



"That's a ticket, all right," Danny remarked. "Was that all you had to do to get it—carry water for the el'funts?"

"Yes," replied Chris, "but it took hours and hours. I'm sore all over."

"So'm I," said Jerry.

"Why didn't you make me wake up?"

"We called you and pounded you and turned you over," Chris replied, "but you went back to sleep."

"Why didn't you kick me or pull me out of bed?" Danny asked. "Then mebbe I'd've got a ticket, too."

"Mebbe you can, anyway," said Celia Jane. "The el'funts'll want a drink at noon."

"I'll go out and see," said Danny and was hurrying off at once, but Mrs. Mullarkey made him wait for breakfast. He bolted the oatmeal and bread and raced out of the house.

"I'm glad I'm not a sleepy-head like Danny," said Chris.

"So'm I," echoed Jerry.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CROCODILE TEARS OF CELIA JANE

Jerry could hardly wait until time for the parade. He and Chris were both too excited to play; they stayed in the house most of the time and questioned Mother 'Larkey about what she had seen at the circus the time her husband had taken her to one in the city. She was busy sewing on a dress for Mrs. Johnson which was wanted by Saturday night and was at length obliged to send them out of doors with orders to stay out until dinner was ready.

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They soon exhausted each other's conversation relative to circuses and their knowledge and guesses about what they would see, and fell silent. And the minutes dragged their slow length out towards eleven o'clock.

They could smell the mush and potatoes frying for their early dinner when Danny returned from the circus ground. They knew at once that he hadn't succeeded in getting a "ticket to paradise", as Mother 'Larkey had called their circus passes, nevertheless Chris asked:

"Did you get a ticket?"

"No," replied Danny, sitting down dejectedly. After a while they knew he didn't intend to say any more. Jerry waited as long as he could and then asked in turn:

"Didn't the el'funts want any water for dinner?"

"No," stated Danny glumly.

That little word "No" seemed to be all that Danny cared to say about his experience, and the following silence lasted fully ten minutes. Danny was the first to break it. He did so after apparently awakening to the fact that dinner was preparing. He sniffed the penetrating odor of frying potatoes and mush that had got a little burned, and sat up.

"Gee, but I'm hungry," he said and sniffed again.

"Wasn't there anything you could do for a ticket?" Chris asked.

"No. The man said the early bird got the worm at the circus as well as in the garden."

After a time Jerry woke to the fact that Danny was looking at him out of the corners of his eyes in a peculiar, questioning manner that made him feel uneasy. He turned his glance away.

"I'll give you both my tops an' the shiny horseshoe nail an' baseball for your circus ticket," Danny proposed.

Jerry's hand flew protectingly to the pocket of his blouse. "No!" he cried loudly. "I won't! I earned it myself!"

"Well, I ain't tryin' to take it away from you, am I?" Danny asked, aggrieved. "I jest offered you some of my things for it. There ain't no law against offerin' to trade, I guess. I'll teach you to skate and let you use the skates I got at Christmas if you will. An' I'll feed your white rabbit for you."

"No," said Jerry, edging away from him, ready to run to the house if Danny should try to grab the ticket. "I earned the ticket and I'm a-goin' to see the circus."

"Dinner's ready, children," called Mrs. Mullarkey. "You'll have to hurry to get a good place to see the parade."

Jerry was ready to start without having anything to eat. He was too excited to be hungry, but Mother 'Larkey made him eat so he "wouldn't get too faint to enjoy the circus." It was a race between the boys to see who would finish first. Chris won. Danny, who confessed to being hungry, ate twice as much as Jerry and Chris.

"Now you children keep together at the parade," admonished Mrs. Mullarkey, as they were ready to start. "You can follow the parade out to the circus grounds for the free show outside, but Danny, you keep with Nora and Celia Jane and see that they get home all right."

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Jerry didn't see how the circus could be much more fascinating than the parade with all its cages open so you could see the animals. And with the clowns, too, especially the one with the donkey, going through such laughable antics. But he was a little disappointed that the elephants didn't jump a fence or do anything like that during the parade. However, the beautiful ladies in gorgeous raiment who rode in the little houses strapped to the elephants' backs made him forget about their fence-jumping proclivities.

When the parade was over, Jerry and the Mullarkey children, together with a hundred or more small boys and girls, followed the steam-throated calliope through the principal street of the town out to the tents, fascinated by the loudness of the music and the escape of jets of steam as the player fingered the keys. It seemed to Jerry that there couldn't in all the wide world be such heavenly music. Celia Jane and Chris shared his enthusiasm, but Nora confessed to liking a fiddle better and Danny asserted that the music of the trombone was easier on the ears.

The free exhibition on the little platform outside the side-show tent had all the fascination of the unknown for Jerry and Chris and Celia Jane and Nora, but not for Danny, who had been to the vaudeville theater twice and who knew that this outside sample never could come up to the glories to be revealed inside for fifty cents, or a dollar and a half for reserved seats in the boxes, and was critical.

The dancing girl in short skirts and the man with the beard which fell to his feet and the very red-faced snake charmer merely whetted his appetite for what was to come, while to Jerry and the rest of the Mullarkey children it was a substantial part of the feast itself.

The free show seemed to Jerry not to have much more than started when the raucous voice of the ballyhoo announced:

"This, ladies and gents, concludes the free show. The main show will not begin for half an hour, thirty minutes—just time enough to see the side show, the world's greatest congress of freaks and monstrosities. See the sword-swallower from India to whom a steel sword is no more than a string of spaghetti to an Italian. Kelilah, the famous dancer of the Nile, whose graceful contortions have delighted the eyes and moved the hearts of kings. See Major Wee-Wee, the smallest man in the world, no bigger than a two-year-old baby, and Tom Morgan, the giant who stands seven feet three inches in his stocking feet. They are all there—every kind of human freak from the living skeleton to the fat woman who weighs four hundred pounds. The price is the same to one and all—twenty-five cents, only a quarter of a dollar. This way and get your tickets for the side show. There is just time to take in all its wonders before the big show in the main tent begins."

The promise of all these delights proved irresistible to Jerry and Chris and they left the children and were almost first in line, but the ticket taker refused them admittance.

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"Those tickets are not good to the side show," he said. "They admit you to the main tent."

Stunned at this disaster, Jerry and Chris slunk under the ropes at the entrance and rejoined Danny and Nora and Celia Jane. They stood in silence as the crowd surged around the ticket seller for the side show and watched the people stream through the door. Never had the lack of "twenty-five cents, only a quarter of a dollar", meant so much to any small boy as it meant to Jerry and Chris. Some of the people were already going into the main tent, passing up the glories of the side show. Jerry wondered if they, too, didn't have the necessary quarter of a dollar.

"It would be just grand to see all them freaks," sighed Celia Jane. "If I could only see just half the circus."

Jerry, his ticket still in his hand, looked up and saw Danny glancing covetously at it.

"What'll you take for your ticket?" he asked eagerly. "I'll give you anything of mine you want."

"I won't trade," replied Jerry, stuffing the ticket into his blouse pocket. "I'm a-goin' to see the circus."

Danny made the same proposition to Chris but Chris also refused. There was nothing of Danny's that could compensate Jerry or Chris for missing the circus, especially when they were right there on the ground with their tickets in their hands.

After the crowd had disappeared—part into the side show, part into the main tent, some to their homes and some to wander about the grounds—Jerry and Chris were debating whether they should go into the big tent at once or wait until time for the main performance, when they observed Danny, who had edged away from them, talking in a low voice to Celia Jane. From the motion of Celia Jane's head and the entreating position of Danny's hands, they knew she was refusing some request of his.

If they had not just then become absorbed in watching some circus employee leading two big, fat, white horses out of a tent they would have seen Celia Jane's negative shakes of the head become weaker as Danny's attitude became more and more commanding, and all that occurred afterward might never have happened. But they didn't look around.

When the horses had disappeared, Jerry spoke:

"They might start early," he said. "Let's go in now, Chris."

"All right, let's," Chris replied.

They turned to tell the other Mullarkey children good-by and saw that Celia Jane was crying. Her shoulders shook and she seemed to be in the utmost despair.

“What’s the matter with Celia Jane?” Chris asked.

“I don’t know,” said Nora. “What ails her, Danny?”

“I don’t know,” Danny asserted quickly. “What’re you cryin’ for, Celia Jane?”

“I want to see the circus,” sobbed Celia Jane. She raised her face and there were tears running down it.

“You ain’t got no ticket, have you?” asked Danny. “Nor fifty cents?”

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"N-n-no," sobbed Celia Jane.

"Then there ain't no chance at all of your gettin' in, is there?"

"I ain't never seen no circus," moaned Celia Jane.

"Come on, Jerry," said Chris; "let's go in now, so's we won't miss anything if they start early."

At that Celia Jane started crying harder than ever and Jerry stood still, a curious something making his heart beat faster and his throat growing all choky.

"Let's go home, Celia Jane," proposed Nora, in a soothing tone. "Mebbe next time we can go. They might let us carry water for the elephants and earn a ticket to the circus, even if we are girls."

"I want to see it now," sobbed Celia Jane.

Jerry began to feel sort of shuddery inside and his mouth puckered up the way it did when he felt like crying.

He was awfully sorry that Celia Jane didn't have a ticket too. He knew he would be crying out of sympathy if Celia Jane kept on that way, and started towards Chris, who had gone halfway towards the entrance to the tent and then had stopped to wait for him. His joy at the thought of what he was going to witness was clouded through the fact that Celia Jane could not see and enjoy it too. He walked very slowly towards Chris and looked back at Celia Jane.

"Oh, J-J-Jerry!" cried the weeping girl, "I-I-I want to see the circus too."

At that appeal Jerry felt as though his heart had stopped beating and was sinking down into his bare feet. He winked hard to keep the tears from coming. He just couldn't bear to see Celia Jane so heartbroken about not being able to see the circus.

"You can have my t-t-ticket," he said slowly and pulled the treasured bit of blue cardboard out of his pocket. There were tears in his eyes but he walked slowly to Celia Jane, holding out the ticket to her.

"Oh, Jerry!" cried Celia Jane. "Will you really give it to me of your own free will?"

Jerry couldn't speak at first. He nodded his head, but Celia Jane just took one end of the ticket between her fingers.

"Do you give it to me, Jerry?" she asked, in a voice in which there was no trace of weeping. Yet the tears stood on her face.

“Yes,” said Jerry at last and let go of the ticket. “You can have it, Celia Jane.”

“Then I give it to Danny,” said Celia Jane and straightway handed the ticket to Danny, who snatched it and ran to the entrance of the main tent.

Jerry was so surprised at the treachery of Celia Jane after her recent evidences of affection and at the suddenness of it all that he could not even cry out,—could do nothing but stare after Danny. He saw the precious bit of pasteboard taken from Danny’s outstretched hand by the ticket-taker and dropped into a box and then saw Chris give up his ticket and go in.

“Celia Jane!” he heard Nora cry, “I’m going to tell mother what you did to Jerry. You’ll catch it.”

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"Danny!" Jerry at last found his voice, and it rose in a forlorn wail. "The ticket is mine! Danny!"

Jerry had forgotten how easily Celia Jane could make the tears come whenever she liked, no matter if she didn't really want to cry. He would show that Celia Jane that she had gone too far this time. He didn't know what he would do, but turned to go to her. As he did so, a crowd of persons going to the circus passed between them and when they had passed he saw Celia Jane running for home with Nora following at a slower pace.

"Why, what's the matter, little boy? Why are you crying?" he heard a man ask.

Jerry felt the hot tears of bitter disappointment coming and he did not want all those persons to see him crying. So he turned and ran blindly around the big tent; when he was alone he flung himself down on the ground and sobbed out his grief, with face pressed into the grass.

Never, never, never would he forgive Celia Jane for her perfidy,—nor Danny either for taking the ticket, when he knew that it had been given to Celia Jane because Jerry thought she was really crying because she wanted to see the circus. He would really run away this time. He would run away without going back to tell Mother 'Larkey and Kathleen and Nora good-by.

Now he would not get to see the elephants jumping the fence, nor the trapeze performers, nor the dancing pony. Even the trained seals took on a halo of enchantment now that the magic ticket that was to open all those joys to him was irrevocably gone.

His sobbing rose in a renewed outburst, but even as he sobbed he felt something shake his foot very slightly. He stopped sobbing so hard. There was no further shaking of his foot and he again gave himself up to the bitterness of his grief.

Then there came a tug at his foot; it was shaken harder than before and then pulled. Very much startled, Jerry sat up and found himself staring into a pair of twinkling yet sympathetic eyes and a face which was just as white as chalk, with very, very red lips. It was a man, and he wore a white skullcap over his head and a white, loose sort of gown with blue dots all over it.

It was Whiteface, the clown, sitting on his heels right there in front of him! That very surprising individual suddenly turned a handspring, and without standing up, kicked his heels together straight up into the air and then sat down in front of Jerry, leaned his head on his elbow and smiled with twinkling eyes, without uttering a word.

CHAPTER IX

CLOWN OF CLOWNS

Jerry was so surprised that he almost forgot that he had been cheated out of his ticket to the circus, and he stopped crying except for a long shuddering sob every now and then, though the tears stood on his cheeks.

The clown looked at him long and steadily; finally he made a little squeaky noise with his mouth, and then opened his lips as though laughing, but did not utter a sound. His mouth seemed to keep broadening in a hearty laugh until Jerry thought it would really touch his ears. It was such a good-natured grin and his eyes twinkled so that Jerry smiled ever so little.

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At that little smile the clown's silent laugh suddenly disappeared and with that funny little squeak in his mouth, which Jerry knew meant joy in spite of its being nothing but a squeak, he jumped suddenly to his feet and turned a series of handsprings around in a circle, kicking his heels in the air and ending up just where he started, directly in front of Jerry, squatting down on the ground, with elbow on knee, chin in hand, looking intently into Jerry's eyes.

The clown's lips were very sober in spite of the general laughableness of his face, but as he kept looking at Jerry a smile started right at the corners of his mouth and then disappeared. That smile seemed to be waiting for encouragement, for after a time it started up again and followed the clown's lips almost to the center of his mouth. It didn't get quite that far, however, but raced quickly back to the corners of his mouth, as though in disappointment, and disappeared.

Then a remarkable change came over the clown's face. The corners of his mouth began to droop and his eyes to close. Jerry thought he was going to cry. His shoulders hunched forward until the clown was the most forlorn looking object Jerry had almost ever seen. The corners of his mouth kept going down and down until they nearly touched his chin.

Jerry kept fascinated eyes on that chalky white face with the very, very red lips. It was the drollest expression of grief he had ever seen, and a smile began to play about his own lips.

That tentative smile on Jerry's part brought another sudden and remarkable change over the clown's countenance. He began that silent laugh again and it grew and it grew until the face was all a huge grin. Jerry found himself grinning out of pure, contagious sympathy.

Then the clown laughed harder than ever, still without making a sound, and held his sides as though he had laughed so hard that they ached. He emitted one short, little staccato laugh and stopped suddenly, as if he were waiting to see if Jerry liked the sound before continuing with it.

Jerry did like it and laughed out loud himself.

The clown's face was all changed at that laugh of Jerry's and became so comically still and sorrowful that Jerry laughed harder. Then the clown started laughing out loud, holding his sides until it became a laughing duet between them.

Jerry was happy again. He had forgotten all about Danny's perfidy and the tears of Celia Jane and the stolen "ticket to paradise."



The clown's features suddenly fell calm and he jumped to his feet and pirouetted on his heels with little graceful leaps in the air, as though he were light as a feather and going to take flight. Jerry was sure that that was the clown's way of rejoicing at having made him laugh.

Then the clown was suddenly sitting in front of Jerry again. "So you've found the secret," he remarked in a very human and pleasant voice.

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"What secret?" asked Jerry.

The clown whispered in his ear, "The secret of laughter."

"The secret of laughter?" repeated Jerry wonderingly.

"Shush!" warned Whiteface, looking cautiously about. "Don't let anybody know you've found it till it's had time to get used to you. It might like somebody else better and leave you for that somebody else, though I don't see how the secret of laughter could like anybody better than you. You're such a brave little boy."

"What will the secret of laughter do?" Jerry asked in a low tone.

"It will make you happy," replied Whiteface. "Nothing is as bad as you think it is if only you can keep the secret of laughter at your side. It will make you forget your sorrow and laugh and laugh till the sorrow slinks away."

"Never to come back?" asked Jerry.

The clown's mouth drooped again and his shoulders sunk forward.

"That's the tragedy of it," he said. "Sorrow takes such a firm hold on us sometimes, especially when one is grown up, that it comes back even after the secret of laughter has driven it away. But it is different with children; with them the secret of laughter almost always drives sorrow away for good and all and leaves them happy."

"How can it make them happy?" asked Jerry.

"By making them forget."

"Forget what?" pursued Jerry, puzzled.

"What made them cry," responded the clown, "as you have."

Then his face clouded and his white, chalky brows frowned.

"You have forgotten, haven't you?" he asked eagerly.

"Y-y-yes," replied Jerry, "almost."

"Almost!" exclaimed Whiteface, very much disappointed. "Then it has come back if you haven't forgotten it altogether. I wonder what it can be if the secret of laughter can't drive it away?"

He looked up so questioningly that Jerry responded at once. "It's Celia Jane."

It was the clown's turn to be surprised.

"Celia Jane!" he exclaimed. "Cupid starts in so young nowadays!"

"It was not Cupid," said Jerry, who had no more idea than the man in the moon who or what Cupid might be.

"No?" said the clown. "That's good! What did Celia Jane do?"

"She cried."

"Was that what you were crying for—because Celia Jane cried?"

"No," Jerry answered. "I gave her my ticket to the circus which I got for carryin' water for the el'funts."

"Ah!" said the clown. "She cried to get your ticket so she could see the circus herself. I see."

"No! She gave my ticket to Danny," pursued Jerry, and his grief was coming back so rapidly that he felt his lips begin twisting again.

"And Danny went to the circus in your place?" questioned the clown. "And the crocodile tears of Celia Jane made you shed so many real ones!"

"Celia Jane always does what Danny wants her to," continued Jerry.

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"It was very naughty of her!" said the clown. "And Danny should be spoken to."

"Will you speak to him?" asked Jerry. "Then mebbe he'll give me my ticket back."

"I don't know Danny," replied the clown, "but I'll probably think up a way to get you into the circus even if you don't have a ticket."

"Oh, can you?" cried Jerry excitedly. He got to his feet and in his eagerness put an arm over Whiteface's shoulder.

"I'm sure I can if I think very hard," returned the clown.

"You will think very hard, won't you? Please."

"Oh, awfully hard," replied Whiteface. "But don't you worry. The secret of laughter made your grief slink away for good. But I must know your name. It will help me to think."

"Jerry Elbow," replied Jerry promptly.

"Well, Jerry Elbow," said the clown, "now I'll think. You may watch me think, but don't say anything, as I might get to thinking your thoughts, and if our thoughts get crossed there's no telling what would happen."

"I won't," Jerry promised.

The clown put his chin in his hand, palm out so that his thumb and forefinger half encircled his face, and began slowly rolling his head from side to side. Then with the forefinger of his other hand he tapped the top of his head slowly several times.

"Think!" he commanded his own head. "Here's a very small boy that you can make very happy. Think of a way to do it. Think!"

Jerry sat down again and watched him eagerly, holding on to himself to keep from speaking and getting their thoughts mixed up.

Every emotion pictured on the clown's mobile face was reflected on Jerry's. When the clown brightened as though he felt the thought coming that would provide a means for getting Jerry into the circus, Jerry's face likewise brightened. But when Whiteface slumped down into the most discouraged attitude in the world, Jerry knew that that idea wouldn't do and the corners of his own mouth drooped and, unconsciously, he rested his chin in the palm of his hand just as the clown did and despair made him huddle down in a heap.

All of a sudden the clown made a clicking noise with his tongue and his figure began to straighten up and his face to lighten until it was all smiles. Jerry bounded to his feet. He forgot all about Whiteface's caution not to speak and cried:

"Have you got it? Did the thought come?"

"Yes!" cried the clown. "I'll buy you a ticket!"

"Will you?" exclaimed Jerry. "*Will* you?"

"Yes, here's the money," and Whiteface reached for his pocket. His hand kept sliding down his loose, blue-spotted, white costume, but did not enter into any pocket.

"Can't you find your pocket?" asked Jerry fearfully.

"I had one this morning," replied the clown solemnly, "and there was money in it—enough to buy you a ticket to the circus and more, but now I don't seem to be able to find it. You don't see a pocket on me, do you, Jerry Elbow?"

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Jerry went close and walked all about the clown. There was not a sign of a pocket and he began to feel dreadfully disappointed.

"There ain't no pocket," he said sorrowfully.

"Then there must be some pocket. If there ain't no pocket, there must be a pocket somewhere. If you had said there is no pocket it would be so. Look again."

Jerry looked carefully, more and more sorrowfully.

"There *is* no pocket," he said at last in a voice that was trembly, all ready to cry.

"That's funny," said the clown. "I know there was one this morning because I used some of the money that was in it." He sank into thought for a moment and then looked suddenly at Jerry.

"I know why we can't find a pocket!" cried he. "While I was thinking very hard of a way to get you into the circus and almost had the thought, you said, 'Have you got it? Did the thought come?' Now, didn't you?"

The appalling truth burst upon Jerry. He had spoiled Whiteface's thought by interrupting and their thoughts had got mixed.

"I didn't know I was going to," he said. "I tried so hard not to."

"And didn't you think that it would take only fifty cents to buy a ticket?" asked the clown.

"Yes," Jerry miserably admitted.

"That's it!" exclaimed the clown. "That's what mixed my thoughts all up with yours. I was trying to think of a way to get you in without any money. Then, when our thoughts got mixed, I began thinking of the ordinary way of getting into a circus by buying a ticket."

"Can't you think again?" Jerry pleaded in a very contrite voice. "I will keep still this time. I *will*!"

Just as he spoke a band inside the tent started playing. It was so near him that he was startled, and jumped.

"The circus is about to begin," said the clown. "The band is playing for the parade. I must think quickly so you won't miss any of it."

There was no need of warning Jerry not to say anything this time. He would have said nothing if he had seen the clown turn into an elephant. It was an awful hard thought to



think, for the clown stretched out on the ground right close to the tent and looked under the canvas. Then he rolled over, sat up and wagged his head solemnly at Jerry.

"I've got it!" he cried and bounded to his feet and jumped clear over Jerry's head.

"I didn't say nothing this time!" boasted Jerry. "I didn't say nothing this time!"

"No," said the clown, "you didn't and our thoughts didn't all get mixed up."

"Will I get in before it starts?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, or my name's not Jack Robinson," said the clown.

"Is that your name?" asked Jerry.

"Only to-day," replied the clown. "To-morrow it may be Tom, Dick or Harry."

"Robinson?" questioned Jerry.

"Or Smith or Kettlewell," replied the clown, smiling. "Now you must do just what I tell you to and do it quickly."

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"I will," promised Jerry.

"Shut your eyes. Are they shut?"

"Yes," said Jerry, closing them so tight that he saw funny little green and red and purple streaks of light.

"Keep them shut. Don't open them once till I tap you on the back twice. Then you count to twenty, and if I don't tap you on the back again, open your eyes and you will be in the circus. Then you walk right ahead till you come to the first row of seats where there will be a lot of children and you just pick out any empty seat you see and sit there. Do you understand?"

"Yes," replied Jerry.

"Eyes shut," commanded the clown. "Come with me."

He led Jerry quite a distance away from the tent, Jerry thought, and then had him sit down on the ground so that the clown was directly behind him.

"Now," said Whiteface, "you are going to be carried into the circus, but don't open your eyes till I tap twice on your back and you have counted to twenty."

"I won't," promised Jerry.

"If you see me in the circus," said the clown, "you can speak to me if you want to. No, don't open your eyes."

For Jerry, in his eagerness to assure Whiteface that he would speak to him if he saw him in the circus, was about to look up at him. For fear that he yet might do so, he shut his eyes tighter, till they hurt, and covered them with both hands.

"Lean over," whispered the clown, "close to the ground."

As he did so, Jerry felt his forehead brush something that felt exactly like the canvas of a tent.

"Now," said the clown, "good-by till you speak to me in the circus."

"Good-by," whispered Jerry in a daze of delight and mystery.

He heard a swishing sound and then felt the clown push him along on the ground. A moment later he felt two thumps on his back and he started in to count. He reached twenty without feeling another thump and opened his eyes.

He was in the circus tent!

CHAPTER X

“GREAT SULT ANNA O’QUEEN”

Jerry knew that he was in the circus tent although he had not expected it to be anything like that. A band was playing and hundreds and hundreds of persons, mostly children, were sitting on boards, each one raised a little higher than the others, and whistling and clapping their hands. And clear around the tent were other sections of seats, all filled with men and women and children. Eyes wide open with wonder at the smell and the bigness of the tent and the paraphernalia used by the performers, Jerry rose to his feet. He looked back of him, but only the canvas side of the tent met his gaze. Whiteface, the clown, had entirely disappeared!

The lively air the band was playing seemed to get right inside of Jerry, for his heart began to pound fast and his eyes were dancing.

He was going to see the circus! The clown had got him in without a ticket! He saw many boys and girls and older persons, too, hurrying to find places on the board seats and he joined the throng. He remembered that Whiteface had told him to take any seat there he could find and he sat down in one in the second row between a boy a good deal older than himself and a man with a black mustache.

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He had hardly got seated when, from the farther side of the tent, there entered a gorgeous carriage drawn by a pair of milk-white horses. When the carriage got around in front of him, Jerry saw that it contained Mr. Burrows, the man who had let him carry water for the elephants even if he was too young, but he didn't pay much attention to him, for there was such a variety of different things to absorb his attention,—beautiful women in richly colored garments on horses and on sober, humpbacked camels, and even in little houses on the elephants, just as he had seen them in the street parade.

There was the sword-swallower and the fat lady, the giant and the dwarf, and so many other things that Jerry couldn't remember them all. When the last of them had passed out at the other side of the tent, he became aware of a smell that was most enticing, quite different from the smell of the circus,—the sawdust and the animals and the crowd. He had just identified it as the smell of freshly roasted peanuts when a boy in a white coat in the aisle asked if anybody there wanted freshly roasted peanuts for five cents, only a half a dime.

Jerry did, and after watching other small boys buying bags of the delicacy, he fished out the dime from his blouse pocket and gave it to the boy, who handed him back a bag of peanuts and a nickel.

Jerry had just cracked his first peanut shell and was munching the two nuts in it when he suddenly became aware that the circus was going on. In fact, there was so much going on that he could not see it all. He watched the trapeze performers for a minute, swinging and turning somersaults and throwing each other about in the air, and then his eyes wandered to the acrobats going through the most surprising contortions on a platform. He hadn't seen half enough of that when his attention was captured by the form of a woman sliding down a wire that went clear to the top of the tent and she was not holding on to the wire at all! She was hanging from it by her teeth! He expected to see her dash into the crowd of people when she reached the end of the wire, but two men stopped her.

Fast and furiously the circus stunts were performed. Men in shaggy trousers on horses threw ropes about each other and picked up handkerchiefs from the ground while their horses were running lickety-split. They just leaned over in the saddle until Jerry thought they were falling off, and picked up the handkerchiefs.

And there was a tight-rope walker. It was a woman with no skirts on at all, and the rope was way up much higher than a man's head and she didn't touch the ground with her balancing pole at all. Nora could never walk the rope like that. And the dancing ponies and the trained seals and the dog that wound in and out among the spokes of a buggy wheel and all the other acts thrilled Jerry and made him almost dizzy, they came so fast; but best of all he liked the clowns with their funny faces and droll antics. He did not pick out Whiteface the first time the clowns came out, there were so many of them and they looked so much alike with their white faces and red mouths.

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But just after the dancing horses had left the tent and the clowns swarmed in again, Jerry saw one of them stop and look up at the boys above him. He had a bulldog under his arm.

Jerry, unmindful of those about him, stood up and shouted:

"Whiteface! Here I am!"

The clown turned to him, made that funny clicking noise in his mouth and bowed.

"Jerry Elbow," said the clown and clapped his hands.

"It's Jerry!" exclaimed Danny's startled voice somewhere among the hundreds of boys and grown-ups back of Jerry. Then Danny added in an awed voice, "The clown spoke to him!"

Jerry suddenly sat down, for all eyes were directed towards him. He didn't look around for Danny and Chris, for he was too confused to face all those pairs of eyes.

Four or five of the other clowns gathered about Whiteface, looked up at Jerry and clapped their hands, too. Jerry shut his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them Whiteface and the other clowns were all doing something there right in front of him.

Whiteface was placing his bulldog down on the ground and Jerry kept fascinated eyes on him. He never could tell afterwards what the other clowns did then except that as they left to go to another part of the circus, one of them, who wore the biggest and longest and flattest shoes Jerry had ever seen, stepped on his own foot and couldn't get off! Another clown had to help him off his own foot!

But everything that Whiteface did Jerry saw and remembered, for he knew that Whiteface was playing just for him alone. The bulldog stood perfectly still until Whiteface held out a stick; then the clown jerked upon the strap which he held in his right hand, one end of which was fastened to the dog's collar, and the dog jumped right over the stick!

Next time Whiteface raised the stick much higher, but when he signaled to the dog by jerking on his collar that it was time for him to jump, the dog jumped over the stick again.

Jerry heard the crowd laughing and applauding. He thought no one could help laughing at the ludicrous expression on the clown's face as he looked up at the spectators every time the dog jumped the stick. Jerry did not awake to the fact that the bulldog was a stuffed toy one, and not a real dog, until the clown took it by the tail and struck another clown on the back with it.

The gasp of astonishment that came from many small throats told Jerry that others had thought it a real dog, too. He joined in the laughter at the easy manner in which the clown had fooled them. The look that Whiteface turned on Jerry sent a warm glow surging over his body. He liked Whiteface and was happy in the knowledge that Whiteface liked him.

He watched the clown fasten the life-size toy bulldog to the back of his costume. How he did it, Jerry could not tell, but the mock terror depicted on Whiteface's features when he found the bulldog with what seemed to be a death-grip on the seat of his clothes caused Jerry and the rest of the children to shriek with laughter. With that look of mock terror on his face, the clown started to run to get away from the dog, and he ran and cavorted and leaped so ludicrously that many eyes besides Jerry's followed him all the way around the arena until he disappeared through the entrance.

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Then Jerry found that there were several acts going on, of which he had missed much. When they had finished, another clown came along with a big head that looked like some kind of a bird's head. It was way up in the air on a long neck with a wide yellow bill that every now and then opened and showed a red tongue.

Almost in front of Jerry, the clown stopped, bent down his bird-head sideways and suddenly gave a loud kiss to a little girl sitting on the end of the first row.

The little girl gave a shriek of surprise and terror and jumped from the seat and ran up the aisle back of Jerry, amid a roar of delight from the crowd. The girl hid her face and refused to go back to the front row, despite the coaxing of her mother.

Jerry offered to let her have his seat. He wasn't afraid of the clowns. Then the boy next to him got up and the woman and the girl took their seats while Jerry and the boy sat down in the front row, Jerry at the very end. He would be close enough to touch Whiteface the next time he came around.

He had forgotten all about Danny and Chris and the trick Celia Jane had played on him. He was so happy that he would willingly have shared with them the pleasure of seeing the circus and getting acquainted with Whiteface, if that had been possible. He wished Kathleen and Nora and Mother 'Larkey could see it. Never in all his life had he been so excited and so happy. He wanted more and more. If only the circus would never end! —Anyway, not until he was too tired to stay awake one second longer.

Suddenly the band struck into a different air,—one that set Jerry's pulse to beating even faster. It was like an echo from the past; he had heard it before. It was the music he had thought he heard when he stood before the circus poster of the elephant jumping the fence! Unconsciously Jerry began saying something softly under his breath.

And the elephants were coming! Several clowns were running ahead. Among them Jerry espied Whiteface, and in his excitement rose to his feet, as they came closer and closer.

As the band played on, words seemed to be coming of themselves to Jerry's tongue, and in a sort of rhythmical chant he was repeating in time to the music as the elephants got directly in front of him:

"Great Sult Anna O'Queen, in the jungle, Carryin' water for the ellifants, Great Sult Anna O'Queen, in the jungle Carryin' water for the ellifants."

Jerry was aware that he was crooning, but did not know that he had risen to his feet and was repeating those two lines of verse out loud.

The band suddenly stopped playing, and in the ensuing silence the childish treble of Jerry's voice was heard by every one in that section of seats saying:

“Great Sult Anna O’Queen, in the jungle,
Carryin’ water for the ellifants.”

He had hardly finished the words when the leader in the line of elephants turned small, beady eyes towards Jerry, lifted up its trunk and trumpeted aloud. Jerry was not frightened at all by that cry, but held out his arms toward the elephant, crying, “Up! Up! Sult Anna!” as though that were the most natural thing in the world to do and he had been doing it all his life.

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The elephant trumpeted again and lumbered heavily towards the tier of seats where Jerry stood, lowered its trunk and curled it about Jerry's body.

A great gasp went up from the people about Jerry and then some women and men cried out and a girl screamed.

"It's mad! It's run amuck!" some one cried, and in an instant there was an uproar of terror as the people left their seats and surged back to higher tiers where they hoped the elephant could not reach them.

"It's Jerry! It's Jerry!" came an agonized scream which Jerry, from his seat high in the air on the elephant's trunk, recognized as the voice of Chris.

"He'll be killed!" cried Danny's remorseful voice, high and shrill above the uproar. "And it's all my fault!"

"Up! Up! Sult Anna!" commanded Jerry, and laughed aloud and waved his arms. Why were all those people afraid? Sult Anna wasn't going to hurt him!

All the clowns had come running about the elephant.

"It's Jerry Elbow!" exclaimed Whiteface.

"It's Gary!" cried a woman's voice from the palanquin on the elephant's back. Jerry looked at her. She was a very pretty woman in a most wonderful sparkling dress, and she leaned forward, extending her arms towards him.

Jerry heard the strident voice of the elephant-tender commanding Sult Anna to lower him and the man started to jab the elephant in the trunk, but Whiteface shouted:

"Don't touch the elephant! She knows the boy!"

"He's not hurt at all!" cried an amazed voice in the crowd.

"Take your seats! There is no danger!" Whiteface called to the frightened and huddled mass at the top tiers of seats.

Then the band struck into a lively air and circus attendants and spectators ran up to the elephants. Among those who arrived early were Danny and Chris, frightened but curious, and Mr. Burrows. The performance was going on in other parts of the big tent and the spectators there seemed already to have forgotten the incident, but the unreserved seat section still seethed with interest, apprehension and curiosity.

“What’s all this fuss?” asked Mr. Burrows, puffing from the speed with which he had hurried to the scene. “We can’t have the performance held up this way and the people frightened.”

“As the elephants came along,” explained Whiteface, “a boy was singing some of the words of my elephant song, and Sultana, I believe, recognized him. She trumpeted twice, reached out her trunk and carried him high into the air. He kept crying, ‘Up! Up! Sultana!’ She has not hurt him at all.”

Mr. Burrows looked up at Jerry, still sitting on the elephant’s trunk.

“Why, bless my soul!” he exclaimed. “It’s the orphan boy who helped carry water for the elephants this morning!”

“Robert, it’s Gary!” again cried the beautiful lady in the palanquin on the elephant’s back.

Jerry looked up at her and found her weeping. He wondered why she was crying and who Gary might be.

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"The other elephants are getting restless," said Mr. Burrows. "Get the boy down, Bowe, and take him with you to the dressing rooms. The act must go on."

Whiteface went up to the elephant and began talking to her gently, patting her shoulder. Her keeper approached and ordered her to put Jerry down.

"Down, Sult Anna, down!" cried Jerry.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when Jerry was literally placed by the elephant in the arms of Whiteface.

"Who are you?" asked the clown of Jerry, looking long into his eyes.

"He's Jerry Elbow," said Danny who, with Chris, had edged in close to the little crowd surrounding the elephant. "He's a orfum and lives with us."

"When did his parents die?"

"He ain't got no parents," replied Danny. "Have you, Jerry?"

"No," said Jerry.

"Robert, help me down!" called the beautiful lady on the elephant.

Whiteface set Jerry down and with two of the elephant keepers went to Sultana's side and caught the woman as she half slid, half jumped from her high seat.

As soon as she touched the ground, the lady ran to Jerry and he found himself gathered convulsively in her arms.

"Oh, Gary, my son! Don't you know me? I am your mother!"

CHAPTER XI

A BOY NAMED GARY

Jerry looked long into the face of the lady. It was all pink and white and her lips were very red. Her hair was a golden brown and it was long and thick and hung down her back.

"Are you my mother?" asked Jerry wistfully. He would like very much to have a mother as beautiful as this.

"Oh, yes, I am! I am!" cried the lady and clasped Jerry close to her breast.

"Helen," said Whiteface, "you mustn't let your hopes get too high."

"He is an orphan," observed Mr. Burrows, "his brother here said so," and he pointed at Chris.

"He's not my brother," interposed Chris quickly. "Father found him before he died and brought him home."

"Then it is Gary! It is!" exclaimed the beautiful lady. "As if I wouldn't know him—his eyes, his hair and his lips! Or as if Sultana could be mistaken. What is your name, dear; do you remember that?"

"Jerry Elbow," replied Jerry.

"What is yours?" Whiteface asked Chris.

"Chris Mullarkey," he replied.

"How long has Jerry been with you?"

"Three years," put in Danny.

"He was only three and a half then," said the woman, "and probably couldn't say his name very plainly. He couldn't at the time he was stolen. Gary L. Bowe would sound very much like Jerry Elbow to any one who didn't know."

"You're right," said Whiteface. "I believe he is our boy."

Jerry looked up at the clown and such an expression of delight came over his face at the idea of the clown being his father that Whiteface's voice went all husky and he took Jerry in his arms.

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"Do you remember anything about your parents?" he asked.

"Seems as though there was a man with a white face," replied Jerry.

"That would be you, Robert," said the woman named Helen.

"Are you my father?" Jerry asked, putting an arm timidly about the clown's shoulder.

"Of course he is!" cried Mr. Burrows, blowing his nose until it made a formidable sound.

"Bowe, you take your wife and child into the dressing tent, so the circus can go on. Sultana is getting restless."

Whiteface took Jerry up in his arms and his new-found mother clung to his hand as they started to leave the arena, tears still in her eyes. She stopped to call to Danny and Chris to follow them. Sultana lifted up her trunk and trumpeted. As they tramped along, the spectators craning their necks to get a better view, Jerry heard Mr. Burrows saying in a loud voice to the audience in the section where he had sat:

"Ladies and gentlemen, there is no occasion for alarm. The elephant, Sultana, recognized in the boy, Jerry Elbow, the son of our famous clown, Robert Ellison Bowe, who was stolen from the circus in a neighboring State three years ago by a disgruntled employee. The police of the country had been searching for him and Mr. Bowe had spent thousands of dollars in the effort to find him. What money and mind and trained detective intelligence failed to do, the retentive memory of the elephant, Sultana, has accomplished and, thanks to her, a grieving father and mother are reunited with their long-lost son. The performance will now continue and you will see what a great degree of intelligence is possessed by these pachyderms in the tricks which they will now perform for your gratification."

And how the people shouted and applauded at that!

"Bow to them. They are cheering for you," said Whiteface to Jerry. "They are glad you have been found."

Jerry waved his hands to them and bowed and a patter of hand-clapping ran along the audience as they passed until they reached the entrance.

Chris suddenly cried, "Danny! Look at them el'funts! They're standin' on their heads! Lookee!"

Jerry just had to see that and he squirmed around in Whiteface's arms.

"They're funny!" he laughed. "Which one is Sult Anna?"

“She’s the one at the table,” replied his mother, “ringing the bell for a waiter to bring her something to eat.”

“Can el’funts do that?” Jerry asked amazed.

“Much more than that, Gary,” she responded.

“I guess el’funts know more’n some people,” Danny remarked.

Jerry craned his neck to see the elephants.

“Are they going to jump the fence now?” he asked.

Whiteface burst into a joyous laugh.

“Helen, I told you my idea for a circus poster would fetch the children!” he said. “They don’t jump a fence,” he explained to Jerry.

“Oh, yes!” exclaimed Jerry. “The picture shows them doing it!”

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"They don't really, Gary," said his mother. "The picture was just drawn that way to fit the old nursery rhyme about the elephant's jumping up to the sky."

"Then it ain't so?" Jerry asked, terribly disappointed.

"No," replied Whiteface, "but they do other things more remarkable than that."

"What?" asked Jerry. "I want to see them."

"Of course you do," said his father. "You want to see all the circus and you shall to-night, and Mrs. Mullarkey and Celia Jane, too."

"All of it?" questioned Jerry. "The little man no bigger than a two-year-old baby and the sword-swallower and all?"

"And all," replied Whiteface. "The menagerie and the side show and the main performance."

"Will Nora and Kathleen see it all, too?"

"Who are Nora and Kathleen?" his mother asked.

"Why, they're Danny's sisters!" he replied. "Didn't you know that?"

"You hadn't mentioned them before," said Whiteface, "but they'll see it, too. Are there any more in the Mullarkey family?"

"No," answered Jerry, "just Danny and Chris and Nora and Celia Jane and Kathleen and Mother 'Larkey."

By that time they had reached a part of another tent which was all screened off into small rooms, into one of which Whiteface and the lady carried Jerry, followed by Danny and Chris, who, torn between their desire to see the elephants perform and their curiosity about Jerry's new-found father and mother and their desire to obey the beautiful lady, had kept close at their heels.

"Now," said Mrs. Bowe, seating herself on a bench and taking Jerry on her lap, addressing Danny as the oldest, "tell me all you can about Gary."

"Father found him one night along a country road, cryin' in a fence corner, and brought him home," said Danny, "an' he's lived with us ever since. That's all."

"How long ago was that?" she questioned.

"It was when I was five an' a half," replied Danny.

“How old are you now?” Whiteface asked.

“Eight and more’n a half.”

“Three years ago,” said Mrs. Bowe. “That was only a few months after he was stolen. How did he happen to be alone in a country road?”

“I don’t know,” replied Danny.

“Perhaps your mother knows,” suggested Whiteface.

“I don’t think so,” Danny replied. “Father always said it was a mystery. It was very late at night—almost midnight, I guess.”

“We must see her, Robert, and thank her for taking care of Gary.”

“Yes,” said Whiteface, “she kept him after her husband’s death—with five children of her own. She must have liked him very—”

“She does,” Chris interrupted eagerly.

“We all do,” Danny stated.

“How could you help it?” asked Mrs. Bowe. “Now, Gary, can you tell me anything about what happened to you? Think hard.”

“Yes,” said his father. “We left you in the dressing room with one of the girl acrobats while we were on and when we came back you were gone. The girl had been called out for a few minutes and got back just as we did. We hunted all over the circus for you and got the police to help us.”

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"Do you remember any one taking you away?" asked the beautiful lady who was now his mother.

"No'm," replied Jerry.

"Say, Mother, Gary," pleaded her low, beautiful voice close to his ear.

"No, Mother," Jerry repeated obediently.

"Try to think awfully hard," said Whiteface; "was there a man with a big mark across his forehead—"

"A red mark?" interrupted Jerry eagerly.

"Yes!" cried his mother. "Robert, it was John Rand! I knew it was that low creature."

"I feared it," said the clown.

"What did he do to you, Gary? Was he kind to you?" asked his mother.

Jerry seemed to see in a flash a man with a red mark across his forehead cuffing him over the head and twisting his arm till he cried out from the pain.

"I'll pull your arm right out if you ever tell any one you ain't my brat," a coarse, thick voice seemed to be saying in his ear, "or if you ever let on as how I ever hurt you in anyway at all."

Jerry cowered down in his mother's arms and hid his face against her breast. He did not answer her questions. His heart was galloping with fear. The man with the red scar might come back.

"Why don't you answer, Gary?" asked the clown gently. "Don't you remember?"

Jerry felt the lady who was his mother holding him tighter in her arms and then she gave a sudden start. He did not answer. He was afraid to.

"Robert!" she cried. "His heart is beating as though it would burst! The memory of that beast must frighten him terribly."

"He can never hurt you again, Gary," Whiteface assured him. "You will always be with us from now on and we won't let him ever come near you again. Did he ever hurt you?"

Jerry, remembering now vividly what the man had done to him, became more frightened than ever and, instead of answering, began to cry.

"We must not hurry him into confidence," said Whiteface.

"Oh, my boy!" wailed the elephant lady. "How terribly you must have suffered when my heart was aching so to know you were safe and to comfort and love you!"

She kissed him passionately and squeezed him so hard that his breath went entirely out of his body for a moment.

"Has Gary ever told you anything about the man who stole him?" asked Whiteface of Danny.

"No," he replied, "but Jerry ran away from him."

"How do you know that?"

"He said he had when he was going to run away from us."

"Why was he going to run away from you?"

Danny swallowed rapidly but didn't answer.

"Because Danny wouldn't let him be el'funt in our play circus," Chris explained for his brother.

Mr. Bowe took Chris' words up so quickly that Jerry thought his father was angry with Chris.

"Wouldn't let him be the elephant!" he exclaimed. "Why did Gary want especially to be the elephant?"

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"I don't know," Chris answered.

"Remember, if you can," urged Whiteface. "It will help me to prove to every one that Gary is our boy."

"I guess it was because he knew something about el'funts," Danny ventured. "He knew that el'funts' tails are small and round like a rope, but he didn't know how he knew."

"I see," said the clown. "That is an important fact. I'm glad you told me."

"An' he said 'O Queen' when he saw the picture of the el'funt jumping the fence!" cried Danny excitedly. "Just the same as he did at the circus when the band stopped playin' an' before the el'funt picked him up."

"He didn't know he said it," Chris added, "an' he couldn't tell Danny what he meant by it, could he, Danny?"

"No," Danny replied.

"That clinches it!" exclaimed Whiteface, and took Jerry from his mother's arms. "Don't you cry any more, Gary-boy. Nobody shall hurt you again. O'Queen was what you used to call Sultana, the elephant—'Sult Anna O'Queen,' as though that were her name. It was the way you said a part of one line in my elephant song: 'Great Sultana, Oh, Queen of the jungle!'"

"Carryin' water for the ellifants," said Jerry, through his tears.

"Do you remember any of the chorus?"

Jerry thought hard, but finally shook his head. Whiteface then started to repeat the chorus:

"Ho, ye drowsy drones! The Queen is a-thirst;
A penny for him who brings a pail first.
Hurry and scurry—"

Jerry suddenly found that he did remember what came next and interrupted his father:

"—an' go at a prance!"

"That's it!" cried Mrs. Bowe.

"Run to the spring," quoted Mr. Bowe and Jerry finished:

“—an’ back at a dance.
Bringing water for the ellifants!”

Jerry felt so proud of himself for having remembered so much that he forgot all about the man with the red scar and being afraid of him.

“I ’membered it, didn’t I, Whiteface?”

“Yes,” answered the clown, “you did, and it proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are my lost little son and you’ve got the right to call me father.”

“Father,” said Jerry experimentally, trying to see how it sounded. And then “Father!” he cried exultantly.

“And not mother, too?” asked the elephant-lady in a reproachful tone.

“And Mother!” cried Jerry, sliding out of his father’s arms and running to her. He climbed upon her lap and buried his face on her shoulder and gave her neck a very hard hug, just to show how much he was going to love her.

“Oh, you are my own darling, loving Gary!” she cried in a voice that was tearful, but very joyful through the tearfulness, while she almost squeezed the breath out of Jerry again. “And now we must go at once and thank kind, good Mrs. Mullarkey for caring for our boy.”

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"Yes," said her husband. "The circus is out and we will have time before the evening performance."

"Mother 'Larkey will be awful glad to see the circus," Jerry remarked. "She ain't seen none since just after she was married. An' so will Nora and Celia Jane."

CHAPTER XII

THE DIZZY SEAT OF GLORY

"You boys wait here while Helen and I get ready," said Whiteface, "and then we'll pay our respects to Mrs. Mullarkey and Nora and Celia Jane and Kathleen."

"You won't go out of the tent, will you, Gary?" asked the elephant-lady.

"No'm," Jerry promised, and then at the look of disappointment and longing on her face, cried, "No, Mother!" He ran and gave her a good-by hug. "I'll wait right here."

When Jerry and Danny and Chris were left alone, there was an abashed silence at first, broken after a minute by Chris' remarking:

"Gee, ain't it excitin', Jerry! Findin' your father and mother an' being lifted up in a el'funt's trunk an' your father a clown in the circus and all?"

"Yes," smiled Jerry with satisfaction. "He's the greatest clown ever lived."

"I guess that's so," Danny stated judicially and also apologetically, for he wished to make up with Jerry for getting his circus ticket away from him.

"It is so!" cried Jerry emphatically.

"That's what I meant, Jerry—I mean, Gary." A silence fell and then Danny continued: "I wish I'd never of asked Celia Jane to cry and get your ticket away from you."

Jerry said nothing, as he remembered how Danny had tricked him, and Danny, after shifting about uneasily, added as though in justification of his action:

"If I hadn't of, you'd probably never of met your father. He couldn't of spoken to you if he hadn't seen you before you got into the circus."

That impressed Jerry as a point of view that might be true and somehow he didn't feel angry at Danny and Celia Jane any more. He was too happy at having a clown for his father to hold resentment.

"Mebbe not," was all he said, but Danny took those words as meaning that Jerry wasn't going to stay mad.

"How'd you get in?" he asked eagerly.

"Whiteface thought of a way that didn't cost any money," replied Jerry.

"What kind of a way was that?" Danny was all eagerness for information of that sort.

"I don't know," said Jerry. "He thought of something an' told me to keep my eyes shut an' I didn't see what he done."

"Didn't you open 'em jest once?" demanded Danny. "I would of and then mebbe we could of got into other circuses that way."

"It might of mixed our thoughts, like when I said something when he told me not to," Jerry observed.

"What d'you mean, mixin' your thoughts?"

Jerry was saved by the entrance of Mr. Burrows from trying to explain just what he did mean by that, for he hadn't understood very well himself. The circus man was smiling all over as he approached Jerry and seemed just as pleased that Jerry had found his parents as Jerry was himself.

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"Well, well, well," he said, holding out a hand which Jerry accepted in the same amicable spirit in which it was offered, "so you're the son of Robert Bowe! We were good friends before you were stolen and I hope will be again when you get reacquainted with me. Maybe your father and mother will be satisfied to stay with the circus now that you have been found."

"Was they goin' to leave the circus?" asked Danny in an awed voice.

"So they said," answered Mr. Burrows, "but now I guess they'll stay."

"Go away an' not be a clown no more?" Jerry asked this new-old friend, as one man to another.

"Go away and not be a clown any more," Mr. Burrows asserted.

Just then a man and woman entered and came straight to Jerry. Why, it was Jerry's mother and a strange man!

Mrs. Bowe didn't look the same in an ordinary blue dress and without the paint on her cheeks and lips and yet Jerry had recognized her almost at once; perhaps it was her golden-brown hair, or, more likely, the joy which sparkled in her eyes and lighted up her face.

"I didn't go away once, Mother," he said.

She smiled at him and the strange man spoke.

"I knew you wouldn't," he said.

Jerry was dumfounded and so must Danny and Chris have been, for they gasped. The voice that issued from the lips of the strange man was the voice of Whiteface, the clown, the new-found father of Jerry!

Jerry's thoughts were paralyzed for a minute and he could only stare up at Robert Bowe, ordinary citizen, in stupefaction.

So that was what his father looked like when he didn't have the clown costume on, with his face all chalked and his lips rouged! Just a common, ordinary, everyday, plain man, like—like Dan Mullarkey was, or Tom Phillips or Darn Darnier's father. He was not very tall and not very big, and his face was rather long and there was quite a sprinkling of gray in his hair.

Jerry was so terribly disappointed in his father that, after that long stare, he gazed away and would not look up at him again. He winked his eyes to keep the tears from coming.

"What is it, Jerry?" asked Mrs. Bowe. "Tell mother."

Jerry tried to think of something to say that wouldn't hurt his father's feelings or his mother's, but couldn't, and he stood there in misery and disappointment, his lips quivering and twisting and the tears gathering on his eyelashes.

It was Danny who voiced the emotions that Jerry was experiencing.

"You look different," he said. "Only your voice sounds the same."

"Bless my soul!" cried Mr. Burrows, and laughed heartily. "The boy's disappointed that his father's just a man and not a clown."

"Is that it, Jerry?" asked his mother, falling to her knees and gathering him close to her breast.

"He ain't Whiteface," Jerry mourned softly in her ear.

Mr. Bowe laughed at that, and it was such a good-humored, infectious chuckle of mirth that Jerry at last looked up at his very disappointing father, and the twinkle in his father's eyes and the engaging, twisty smile that played about his lips comforted Jerry. This father of his wasn't so ordinary looking, after all! But a clown is so much more interesting than just an everyday father.

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"You'll see Whiteface often enough," he promised Jerry, "to satisfy even you."

"Nora won't," said Jerry, "nor Kathleen nor Celia Jane."

"The boy's right!" exclaimed Mr. Burrows. "Dress up as the clown to see the woman who's cared for Gary and I'll have Sultana got ready for you to ride on. The boy's a better press agent than the one I pay to advertise the circus. I announced that Sultana had found your stolen child and told the newspaper men all about it. You and your wife ride on Sultana through the town, and you'll be followed by all the children at the circus and those who are not here, and the circus will get such an advertising as it never had before. And it will make Gary happy, too."

"Will it, Gary?" asked his father.

"Yes!" cried Jerry, thrilled at the thought of riding through the town on an elephant, with his father and mother. "It'll be better 'n a circus."

"Robert Bowe, disappear!" commanded Robert Bowe.

That surprising father of Jerry's wagged his head solemnly with such a comical look that Jerry shrieked with delight as Mr. Bowe turned a handspring that carried him through the curtains into another part of the tent.

Mr. Burrows went out laughing, to have Sultana brought around, and Jerry waited impatiently for Whiteface to reappear. His most blissful dreams had been exceeded this wonderful day, and now the most wonderful part was still to come.

He was too excited to pay very close attention to what his mother said, and Danny and Chris seemed to have been struck dumb by this dazzling height of glory that was about to befall "Orfum" Jerry Elbow, who had suddenly been transformed into Gary L. Bowe, son of a clown and of an elephant-lady.

Suddenly there sounded the delightful clicking that Whiteface made with his mouth and Jerry's eyes almost popped out of his head in his eagerness for Whiteface to reappear. He watched the curtain where his everyday father had disappeared, without daring to wink his eyes for fear Whiteface would get in without his seeing him.

As he watched, he felt himself being lifted in a pair of strong arms and twisted his head around to see who it might be.

It was Whiteface! He had got back without Jerry's seeing him! Yet Jerry was sure he hadn't winked his eyes, not even once.

"Away we go to the Mullarkey house! Away we go to the Mullarkey house!" chanted Whiteface, whirling around and around, as he carried Jerry on his shoulder out of the

tent to where Sultana and an elephant keeper were awaiting them. Jerry's mother followed close, smiling at his delight. From the corner of his eye, Jerry saw Danny and Chris walking slowly behind her.

The keeper put up a little ladder against the elephant's side and Whiteface ran lightly up it and deposited Jerry on a cushioned seat that ran around the little house on Sultana's back that he called a howdah. Then he helped Mrs. Bowe up and sat down by her. The keeper had taken the ladder away when Jerry again saw Danny and Chris looking up at him in envy. There was plenty of room in the little house for them. He turned to his father.

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"Is Great Sult Anna O'Queen's back strong enough for her to carry Danny and Chris, too?"

The most surprised look spread over Whiteface's features and the beautiful lady remarked:

"Gary has your kind, thoughtful nature."

"I think Great Sult Anna O'Queen's Irish back is strong enough to carry Danny and Chris. I'll ask her. First though, we'd better find out how much they weigh?"

"How much do you weigh, Danny?" Jerry called down.

"I don't know," replied Danny.

"If you don't weigh too much, mebbe you and Chris can ride, too."

"Us ride on a el'funt!" exclaimed Danny. "Why, why, I don't weigh much, do I, Chris?"

"No," replied Chris eagerly. "You're not big enough to weigh much and I'm littler than you are."

"I think I can tell near enough," said Whiteface; "Danny weighs about sixty pounds and Chris about forty. That makes one hundred pounds and I weigh one hundred and sixty-five. Helen, how much do you weigh?"

"A hundred and twenty pounds," she answered.

"I never can remember that. That makes two hundred and sixty-five and one hundred and twenty is three hundred and eighty-five pounds and there's Gary. He must weigh thirty pounds—say four hundred and fifteen pounds altogether."

Whiteface jumped from the little house on Sultana's back to her head, sat down on top of that, leaned over and whispered something in the elephant's ear.

Jerry stood up so he could see better, and as he did so the elephant's ear, which Whiteface had lifted up, wiggled and flopped out of the clown's hand.

"She says four hundred and fifteen pounds is not too much on this occasion," Whiteface announced and directed the keeper to help Danny and Chris up to Sultana's back. But Danny and Chris didn't need any help in running up the ladder.

Then Mr. Burrows approached and tossed a bit of paper up to Mrs. Bowe.

"That's a pass for a box at the circus to-night for Mrs. Mullarkey and all her family," he said.

"Is one pass good for all of them?" asked Jerry, as Danny caught the precious bit of paper and handed it to Mrs. Bowe.

"Yes," laughed Mr. Burrows, "it is when it's got the name of Edward J. Burrows on it. Just tell her to show that to the ticket seller and he'll give her the seats."

Then Whiteface, still sitting on top of the elephant's head, told the keeper he was ready and Sultana started. It took Jerry and Danny and Chris quite a while to become accustomed to the manner in which the palanquin joggled about on Sultana's back, but they were getting used to it when the elephant reached the street close to the entrance of the main tent where the people were streaming out from the performance.

There was a shout from the small boys in the crowd who immediately swarmed about Sultana and tagged on in the rear as she ambled patiently down the street. They looked enviously at Jerry and Danny and Chris and raised such a hubbub that every child they passed and many of the grown persons, too, fell in line. The story of how the elephant had recognized the lost boy and picked him right up out of the audience passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, with the result that no one left the ever lengthening procession that followed the elephant.

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Jerry took turns with Danny and Chris in directing the elephant keeper how to get to Mrs. Mullarkey's. Jerry would not have missed one joggle or sway of that ride for worlds. He saw Darn Darner in the crowd following them, and he was glad that such a stuck-up boy should see what a high place in the world Jerry Elbow had reached and be envious of him. He even waved to Darn to make sure that Darn knew that he saw him.

"Hello, Jerry!" cried Darn in a loud voice, so that everybody would know he knew Jerry, and swaggered up close to the elephant. "How does it seem to be ridin' on an el'funt?"

"Fine!" Jerry exclaimed ecstatically.

"Don't you wish you was up here?" Danny asked in a voice that was not nearly so friendly as Jerry's had been.

"Anybody would, I guess," was Darn's reply.

"Well, you ain't," said Danny. "You're down there breathing the dust we make."

"There's the house!" cried Jerry.

"Which one?" asked Whiteface from his seat on the elephant's head.

"The one with the paint all wore off," Danny explained.

"There's Nora and Celia Jane!" cried Chris.

"I see them!" Jerry exclaimed and called his mother's attention to them. They were standing by the gate, watching the strange procession approach.

"Hello, Celia Jane! I'm ridin' on a el'funt!" Jerry cried shrilly to make her hear.

Celia Jane both heard and saw and she seemed glued to the gate-post with surprise. Her mouth opened as though she were going to speak and remained open, without a word coming out. Nora turned and fled into the house crying:

"Mother! Mother! Jerry's ridin' by on a el'funt from the circus!"

A moment later the keeper halted Sultana in front of the gate, and that fact unglued Celia Jane from the gate-post and caused words at last to flow from her opened mouth.

"Mother! They're stoppin' here!" she cried, in turn running to the house. She kept her eyes turned back on the elephant and ran into Nora, who was pulling Mrs. Mullarkey, with Kathleen in her arms, out through the door.

Whiteface now commanded Sultana to help him down, and she raised her trunk, wrapped it around his body and lowered him to the ground. The crowd of boys and girls who had pushed up as close as they could made way for him, while Jerry and his mother climbed down the ladder the elephant trainer placed for them, followed by Danny and Chris.

“Mother!” called Celia Jane. “There’s Danny on the el’funt and Chris too!”

“For land sakes!” cried Mrs. Mullarkey. “Nothing has happened to any of the children, has there?”

“We’re all right, Mother ’Larkey!” Jerry assured her.

“Nothing at all, madam,” said Whiteface approaching her, “except that Jerry Elbow has found his parents.”

Mrs. Mullarkey stared at Whiteface, too astounded to speak.

“An’ his name ain’t Jerry Elbow,” cried Danny. “It’s Gary L. Bowe.”

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"An' the el'funt knew him in a whole crowd of people," Chris added, "an' picked him up with its trunk."

"The people thought the elephant was mad at first," said Darn Darner, who had approached as close as he could get to the clown.

"The el'funt picked him up in its trunk?" gasped Celia Jane, her eyes growing bigger and bigger.

"An' we're all goin' to the circus to-night!" Danny informed them.

"All of us!" Celia Jane got breath enough to utter.

"Me, too?" Nora asked.

"Yes, all of you!" laughed Jerry. "And Kathleen, too."

"I wanta see serka," cried the baby.

"And so you shall," said Whiteface, so close that Kathleen drew whimpering away from his white, chalky features. "It's all true, Mrs. Mullarkey."

"Don't be afraid of Whiteface, Kathleen," called Jerry. "He's father."

At last Mrs. Mullarkey found her voice, but at the queer, choking sound she made, Jerry looked up and saw tears running down her face.

"I can't tell you how *glad* I am that you have found your father and mother, Jerry," she said. "Mr. Darner is here now and, after all, he was going to take you away—this very day. And Celia Jane—" She couldn't finish, but put Kathleen down and covered her face with her apron, rocking her body back and forth.

Jerry looked towards the house and saw at the living-room window the face of a man, —a large, heavy face that seemed to scowl out at the crowd.

CHAPTER XIII

"—AND ELEPHANTS TO RIDE UPON"

Jerry's new-found mother went quickly to Mother 'Larkey and placed a comforting arm about her shoulder.

"I am Mrs. Bowe, Gary's mother," she said, "and oh, how can I ever thank you for loving him and giving him a home? I never can repay you."

"That we can't, Mrs. Mullarkey," Whiteface interposed. "But what is this about taking Gary away? And Celia Jane?"

"Let's go into the house first," suggested Mrs. Bowe. "We have too big an audience here."

She led the way, her arm still about Mrs. Mullarkey's shoulder. Jerry and his father followed, though Jerry turned at the door to have another look at Sultana and the admiring throng of children gathered about her.

Nora and Celia Jane, who had lapsed into tongue-tiedness after learning that they were all going to see the circus that night, now started slowly into the house, Kathleen clinging to Nora's hand to keep from falling. But their eyes were turned back towards Sultana until they passed through the door.

Danny and Chris were also of two minds whether to follow the great clown or remain outside with the elephant, but their mother's statement that Mr. Darner had come to take Jerry away and was even then in the house finally drew them as a magnet, their eyes also directed towards Sultana until they stumbled through the door.

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Jerry saw Darn Darner's father sitting by the living-room window and came to a stop. Mr. Darner was a dour, heavy-set man with a coarse, bristling gray beard. He glared at Whiteface through thick glasses.

"What does all this hullabaloo mean?" he asked Mrs. Mullarkey, in a gruff voice.

"It means," said Whiteface, answering for her and advancing towards Mr. Darner, Jerry's hand held tightly in his, "that Jerry Elbow has found his parents and the people have followed us here to show how glad they are."

"You his father? A clown in a circus?" asked Mr. Darner.

"Yes, I am his father and I am a clown in a circus," replied Whiteface.

"Mr. Darner is the County Overseer of the Poor," Mrs. Mullarkey explained. "He's been at me to give Jerry up and let him take him to the poor farm ever since my Dan died."

"It's for your own good and your children's—and Jerry's, too, if you weren't too blind to see it," the Overseer stated.

"After Dan's insurance money was all gone—and a good part of it went to finish paying for this house," Mrs. Mullarkey continued, "I couldn't make enough to keep the children decently. Mr. Darner's kept telling me that if I didn't let him take Jerry to the poor farm, I'd break down sooner or later and have to send my own children there or let them be adopted out. Mr. Phillips thought he could help—"

"Phillips is always butting into things that are none of his business," growled Mr. Darner.

"But this afternoon Mr. Darner came to take Jerry and I just couldn't hold out any longer—I haven't the money or the strength. And he wants Danny to go to a place in the country to work for his board and wants me to let Celia Jane be adopted by a family in Hampton who are looking for a girl. He thinks I ought to see if Celia Jane won't suit them."

"Mother! Take me away from home!" wailed Celia Jane aghast.

"I'm at the end of my string," Mrs. Mullarkey's discouraged voice continued. "I've never been able to make both ends meet since Dan died."

"She couldn't make them meet so's to give us money to buy tickets to the circus," Jerry explained corroboratively to his father.

"You'll have to come to it eventually, Mrs. Mullarkey," warned the County Overseer.

"This is a good chance for Celia Jane. The Thompsons are well fixed; they'll give her a fine home and a good education."

Celia Jane at that sat down on the floor and let her body relax into a limp bundle.

“I won’t go!” she sobbed. “I won’t leave mother! What would I do without mother?”

Jerry was very much distressed at Celia Jane’s misery and he looked pleadingly up at his clown-father; that extraordinary man knew without a word having been spoken that Jerry expected him to fix things so that Celia Jane could stay with her mother. Whiteface spoke at once.

“Don’t cry, Celia Jane. Nobody is going to take you away. Both ends are going to meet now. You’re all going to stay here with your mother.”

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"You talk big," grumbled Mr. Darner. "Now to come down to brass tacks. Who's—"

"As long as I have any money, Mr. County Overseer," said Whiteface, "or as long as I have the power to make any, the Mullarkey household will not be broken up."

"Of course it won't, Robert," chimed in Jerry's mother in a crisp voice, as she raised Celia Jane from the floor and comforted her. "You always know just what to do."

Jerry's father continued:

"We are going to take Gary with us now, but we are going to try to repay Mrs. Mullarkey a little for all she has done and suffered for our boy. I have some money saved up and make a good salary. I want you to go to Mr. Burrows, one of the proprietors of the circus, and satisfy yourself on that point and that I am a man of my word. While you are doing that we can arrange with Mrs. Mullarkey. We want to be alone with her. I'll see you again before to-night's performance."

Mr. Darner stood up.

"I do not doubt your desire or ability in the matter," he said, "and, as you wish it, I will consult Mr. Burrows. Nobody can be gladder than I am that things have turned out this way. I don't like breaking up families and taking children out to the farm, though some people say that I do. I have to do a lot of things that go against the grain. I've wanted to do what was best for you, Mrs. Mullarkey."

"We are sure you meant things for the best, Mr. Darner," said Jerry's mother. "Good-by."

Mrs. Mullarkey was looking so hard at Jerry's parents that she did not return Mr. Darner's "Good afternoon" as he left the house or seem even to have heard it.

"It can't be true, what you just said," she at length articulated in a choked voice. "Such things don't happen to us."

"It is true," Jerry's mother assured her.

"We shall not forget what you have done for Gary," said Whiteface. "I calculate that I owe you at the least one thousand dollars for taking care of him—"

"A thousand dollars!" gasped Danny. "Why, that's as much as father's insurance! I didn't know anybody could get that much money unless they died!"

Mrs. Mullarkey said nothing; her lips were trying to smile though the tears still stood in her eyes.

“Besides which,” continued the clown, “Helen and I will help you look out for the children and we want you to call on us any time that you may be in trouble.”

“We do, indeed,” said Jerry’s mother. “You cannot work so hard and take care of your children the way you want to. If you only lived near us—”

“Helen,” interrupted Jerry’s father, “I’ve been thinking, now that we are going to settle down in business, it would be a wise thing for Mrs. Mullarkey to sell her place here and move to Carroll with us. Then we’ll know how they are getting on and can look after the children some. I’ll help her dispose of the place here and buy one in Carroll, if she would like such an arrangement.”

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"Would you, Mrs. Mullarkey?" asked Jerry's mother.

It took her such a long time to answer that Jerry looked up and saw her lips were twisting. She was crying inside so that you couldn't hear her. Jerry knew how that hurt—to cry when you didn't dare cry out loud. He had often done it in the night, before he ran away, so the man with the big red scar wouldn't hear him. He left his mother and Kathleen, climbed up on Mother 'Larkey's lap, put one arm about her neck and with his other hand patted her wet cheek.

"An' then Kathleen won't cry for me," he coaxed, "'cause I'll be right there an' can run over any time, couldn't I, Mother?"

"Yes, of course you could, dear."

"There, you see," he continued.

"I should love to," Mrs. Mullarkey replied at last to Mr. and Mrs. Bowe. "It would be such a relief to have some one I could go to for advice about the children. It's not that they're wayward or bad, but Danny is hot-headed like his father and thoughtless. I'm sure, he didn't mean to steal Jerry's ticket to the circus—"

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Danny. "I didn't steal it! He gave it to Celia Jane of his own free will and she gave it to me, didn't you, Celia Jane?"

"Yet it was stealing," replied his mother, "for you put Celia Jane up to it. Nora told me all about it and Nora never tells what is not true."

"You gave your ticket to Celia Jane, didn't you, Jerry—I mean, Gary?" appealed Danny.

"Yes," Jerry replied hesitantly.

"There, you see, Mother, I didn't steal it," Danny defended himself.

"Because you put Celia Jane up to getting Jerry's ticket for you," continued his mother, "you must stay home to-night and—"

"Not go to the circus!" exclaimed Danny. "When it don't cost nothin'!"

"And Celia Jane can keep you company. I've told you again and again that you couldn't impose upon Jerry just because he's not a Mullarkey."

"Stay home from the circus!" wailed Celia Jane, appalled, and then she burst into a flood of tears. Jerry was sure they were not crocodile ones this time, for her body shook with the sobs of anguished disappointment. He wanted Celia Jane to see the circus and Danny, too, and he knew Danny was sorry.

“Mebbe I wouldn’t never have seen Whiteface—Father,” he said to Mother ‘Larkey, “if Danny hadn’t gone into the circus.”

“That is true,” Whiteface corroborated. “I found him crying outside the tent and told him he could speak to me inside if he recognized me. He did recognize me and that was undoubtedly one of the things that led to the discovery of his identity.”

“Danny likes me,” Jerry added. “He fought Darn Darner when he said they was goin’ to take me to the poor farm.”

“So do I I-I-like you, J—J—Jerry,” sobbed Celia Jane. “—I—I’m sorry I—” A fresh outburst of sobbing prevented further speech.

Jerry’s heart was touched at her grief and his own lips began to twist.

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"I want Danny and Celia Jane to see the circus, too, Mother 'Larkey," Jerry protested. "I ain't mad at them any more."

"Please let them come," urged Jerry's mother. "I am so happy that I can't bear to think of them being so terribly disappointed. And Gary's pleasure would be spoiled knowing they were here at home while the rest of you were at the circus."

"It does seem hard-hearted," Mrs. Mullarkey relented, "but Danny knows he can't pick on Jerry and not suffer for it. They can go to the circus, but I'll leave it to them what they shall do as a reminder that they mustn't pick on Jerry again. Danny, what will you do?"

Danny hesitated a moment and then said without a tremor:

"Jerry can have all my marbles and I'll feed his white rabbit for him all summer."

"Not *all* your marbles?" queried Jerry, knowing what a pang it must have cost Danny voluntarily to decide to part with all his agates and glassies and pee-wees and commies and steelies.

"Yes," said Mrs. Mullarkey, "every last one. Now, Celia Jane, stop your crying and tell us what you will do."

"I'll sweep the kitchen every day and do dishes without grumbling," Celia Jane sniffled, while Danny was off upstairs at a run.

"That will remind you to be more careful," said Mrs. Mullarkey, "and remember you are to work willingly, without any grumbling."

"I will, Mother," sobbed the girl.

"And now," Jerry heard his father saying, "it is time for us to be going back to the circus and of course Helen wants Gary with her now. We'll keep him with us for three weeks and then, when we play Hampton, I'll bring him back here for the rest of the summer. When our season closes we'll come for him and take him to Carroll."

"And we hope you will decide to move there, too, Mrs. Mullarkey," said Mrs. Bowe.

"I will if Mr. Bowe thinks it will be best for the children," she replied.

"I do think it so," said Whiteface. "To-morrow I'll mail you a check for one hundred dollars and the rest of the thousand I'll send to you as you want it. We'll arrange that when I bring Gary back. I have nothing with me now, as I haven't any pocket in these clothes."

"I have," said Mrs. Bowe and took several bills from her bag and pressed them into Mrs. Mullarkey's hands.

"I can't thank you," said Mother 'Larkey. "I don't know how."

"You've loved Gary, Mrs. Mullarkey. He wouldn't love you so much if you hadn't. That is more thanks than I want. We owe more than thanks to you. Tell them good-by, Gary. We must start."

Jerry was awfully glad that he had found his parents and that he was going with them and was much excited at the thought of traveling with the circus for three whole weeks and getting real well acquainted with Great Sult Anna O'Queen, but his throat grew all lumpy at the thought of leaving kindly Mother 'Larkey, loving Kathleen and gentle Nora and Chris and—yes, and Danny and Celia Jane, too.

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Mrs. Mullarkey gathered him up in her arms and kissed him.

“Good-by, Jerry. You’ve brought good fortune to this family and put food into the mouths of my children and clothes on their backs when I couldn’t see where they were to come from. You must love your mother hard for all the time she has been without you—and your father, too.”

“I will,” Jerry promised and squeezed her neck very hard and kissed her. Just then Danny came tumbling breathlessly downstairs and thrust a little cloth sack, which was very heavy, into Jerry’s hand.

“Here are my marbles,” he said. “All thirty-two of them.”

“I don’t want them,” said Jerry.

“Take them with you, Jerry,” Mother ‘Larkey urged him. “It will help Danny to remember some things which he mustn’t forget.”

Jerry consulted his mother’s eyes. She nodded her head and he took the marbles. Then he shook hands with Danny and Chris and Nora and kissed and hugged Kathleen, leaving Celia Jane till the last, because she was still sobbing.

Celia Jane did not feel entirely forgiven because Jerry seemed to avoid her and she abased herself before him.

“I—I’m s-s-sorry, Jerry. I’ll n-n-never do it again. You ain’t mad at m-m-me any m-m-more, are you, Jerry?”

“No, I ain’t mad at you,” Jerry assured her.

“Then will you m-m-marry me when we are g-g-grown up, Jerry?”

Jerry flushed uncomfortably at that and felt that Celia Jane was taking an unfair advantage of him, so he did not answer.

“W-w-will you, J-J-Jerry?” Celia Jane besought him.

“No,” said Jerry at length.

“Why w-w-won’t you?”

Jerry felt himself flushing still more hotly from head to foot, partly at the smile he saw his father and mother exchange and partly at Celia Jane’s importunity.

“Because,” he said.



"I'll g-g-give you my silver ring if you will, Jerry."

"No," said Jerry more firmly.

"Why won't you, J-J-Jerry?"

"Yes, Gary," interposed his father with a dancing, twinkling light in his eyes, "why can't you promise it to oblige the lady?"

"Cause," Jerry informed him gravely, "when I grow up I'm goin' to marry Kathleen."

Jerry was somewhat dumfounded at the burst of laughter which followed his announcement. They did not know, he thought, that Kathleen had given him her old, adored rag dog of her own free will.

"The darling!" cried Mother 'Larkey, after she had stopped laughing. "But there is plenty of time to change your mind yet."

"Then you must be very kind to Kathleen, always," said Jerry's mother.

"He has been," said Mrs. Mullarkey.

Kathleen looked up at Jerry and gurgled.

"Never mind, Celia Jane," consoled Nora. "He'll be in the family, anyway."

Celia Jane was greatly cheered by that consolation and brightened visibly, much to Jerry's relief. She kissed him good-by, throwing both arms tightly about his neck in her impetuous fashion.

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It was with a sad and yet singing heart that Jerry followed his father and mother out to Sultana,—sad at leaving behind all that had made his life and his world the past three years, and singing at the thought of the new world and the new life he was about to enter into, with a father and mother of his very own, a circus twice a day, every day in the week but Sunday, and elephants to ride upon.

[Illustration]

[Transcriber's Note: All punctuation normalized.]