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THE MODERN CIRCUS.

Vast and Dazzling, it is Really a Very Simple Affair.

While the performance of the big modern circus is truly dazzling and confusing to the average visitor, an analysis will show it to be a very simple affair.

The performance proper consists of four parts—namely, aerial, ground, equestrian and hippodrome. Everything else is incidental or adjunctive. The menagerie, freaks, curiosities, etc., make up the remainder of what we call "the show."

If one will examine the programme of the circus performance carefully, it will be seen that the ground acts alternate with, say, a jockey act, an aerial act, an equestrian act, another ground act, another aerial act, and so on for the entire performance.

The performers are mostly foreigners, Japan furnishing the most of any particular country. France, Italy and Germany give us the most of the athletic artists, while England and America produce the equestrians. But the Japanese furnish fully three-eighths of the whole entertainment.

The natives of Nippon have never been equaled by those of any other country for tricks of the feet and hands. The Japanese, however, are never found on the programme as equestrians, trapeze artists or clowns. With these parts eliminated they may be said to give the greater part of the performance. Out the equestrian and trapeze acts and the Japanese will be found in almost every number.

A single Japanese troupe of five or six members, costing from \$150 to \$400 a week, will thus furnish the most of the entertainment. As every circus goes, the Japanese are especially skillful in every feature of juggling, balancing by hands or feet, manipulating of objects, wire walking, etc., which they have carried to such a degree of perfection that their acts are unapproachable by the people of any other nationality.

The first Japanese performer in this country was a small boy who came with the first Japanese embassy to the United States.

His performance created a perfect furore of enthusiasm, and he attracted more attention than the novel embassy itself. Little "All Right" will be remembered, through the embassy and its important mission has long been forgotten.

The name was acquired from the circumstances that the words "all right" were the only English words the child knew at the time, and he used to sing them out in his shrill treble as he finished what was deemed a remarkable feat, to the intense delight of the audience.

So popular was the little chap that his advent was followed by several other little "All Rights" from the same curious country beyond the Pacific until the Japanese performers here became an old story.

The chief reason for the overwhelming preponderance of foreign talent in the American circus lies in the practical exclusion of children from the stage and ring in the United States. So many of the states have laws forbidding the public appearance of children under sixteen that theatrical managers hesitate to produce any play with a child in the cast. As acrobatic feats require early and severe training, the American is practically cut off from this way of earning a living.

In present conditions when Little Eva in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has become old enough to marry little, "All Right" would be an impossibility, for not only do these laws prevent the training of American children for the stage and ring, but they prevent the appearance in this country of some of the most famous family troupes of Europe.

A broad show career offers a better means of advancement than

the trades, and poor parents frequently apprentice their children to those who train them for the stage or ring. In this country we generously send them to the cotton mills or the mines.

The American circus performer has gradually become restricted to the equestrian act, and in the act of riding he or she is not excelled, even by the English, though the latter nation has produced some fine equestrians, hauts ecoles and daring bareback riders.

Mme. Dockrill, wife of R. H. Dockrill, himself one of the best high school riders of this time, was a famous American rider in 1874. She used to ride four bareback horses abreast, her feet resting on the two outside horses in Roman fashion. She also did the Mazeppa act and other thrilling bareback feats. Her pretty daughter Rose was trained in the same act and afterward became a star rider.

Emma Lake, who died quite recently at an advanced age, was another famous American equestrienne. She always won salves of applause as her horse, with noble head high in the air, rose almost to a perpendicular on his hind feet at the word of command, while his skilled mistress retained a firm place in the saddle.

Riders at one time were the chief attraction of the circus and were billed as we now bill our "death defying deeds." In the old one ring days the whole performance was practically divided between the rider and the clown. When the rider was not riding, the clown had the ring all to himself, even the band ceased playing until the clown sang or got off his jokes, after which the rider resumed the performance.

All riders in those days were "champions" in the show printing. The press agent invariably wreathed these champions in laurels wrested from other champions, and on the dead walls their breasts were adorned with rich medals of superlative merit.

There were such champions as Charles W. Fish, Martine Lowande, William Demott, William Showles, Robert Stickney, William Ducrow, Jim Robinson, Jim Melville, his son, Frank Melville, and many others.

Among the clowns of renown in the earlier days were Jim Cooke, the Shakespearean clown; Johnny Patterson, the Irish clown; Joe Pentland, Dan Rice, Billy Burke, etc. Their pay was nearly as high as that of the riders. Clowns and riders were the only real expensive attractions of the circus up to the year 1870.

A year or two later P. T. Barnum and his associates, W. C. Coup and Dan Costello, introduced a hippodrome and that feature became a fixture in the circus performance and necessitated the big tent. The hippodrome separated the audience so widely from the performers that the old singing and talking clown soon vanished.

His place was taken by the silent funmakers of today. From being a chief feature the clown became a mere pantomimist, relegated to the waits. The hippodrome multiplied riders and cheapened them, so they too, lost individuality. The distance and multiplicity of features enabled the showmen to run in mediocre riding acts instead of the first class ones formerly necessary. The sharp rivalry characteristic of the one ring days was dead.

The hippodrome, which furnishes half an hour's entertainment, is itself relatively the cheapest part of the performance today.

When Maude Oswald was a hippodrome rider, the races were hotly contested. So great was this rivalry at times that the management had to interfere, not because of the danger to the contestants, but for fear that they might injure the horses or other property. The riders owned their individual necks and could be replaced at any time without expense to the show.

Nowadays the hippodrome personnel is made up of the odds and ends and costs little or nothing extra. A clown will become a "Roman" rider; his wife will ride a chariot. Half a dozen women some of them sewing girls in the wardrobe department, make up the ladies' flat races. An equal number of stable grooms will do the crack jockey races.

A few dogs run around the track once, and it is called the "whippet dog race;" half a dozen terror-stricken monkeys are strapped to pony saddles, and their frantic fear sends the audience into convulsions of laughter.

The only really meritorious feature of the hippodrome is that of the fine jumping horses introduced in modern days. Then come the chariot races, the cheapest kind of affairs, but furnishing perhaps the most thrilling excitement to the average country crowd. There used to be elephant and camel races, but the brutal manner in which it was necessary to goad and prod these unfortunates in order to get them to run at all was so repulsive to the gentle hearted in the audience that

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