

Christopher and the Fairy.

Centerpole Tom protested to know everything about all the distinguished people of the "profession" in all parts of Christendom, and likely he did know a great deal; for, in his humble capacity, he had served many of them in divers countries, and, though a boastful man, he had never been detected in an inability to give trustworthy information. So, when it was announced, with a great show of large type, that "Christopher and the Fairy" had just landed at San Francisco from an Australian steamer, under contract for the remainder of the season, there was much excitement and curiosity among the people of the circus, and Centerpole Tom was at once exploited for knowledge concerning them.

"Hain't you ever heard of Christopher and the Fairy?" he asked, pityingly; "well, that gits me. The Fairy's the purtiest little trick on wheels, an' the way she kin do the flying trapeze is something 'stonishing. No, I hain't never seen her, but I know all about her. A fellow worked for me last season that seen her at Melbourne, and he told me a whole string of stuff about her. Every man-jack under the canvas went dead gone on her, but she never took no notice of any of 'em, and didn't seem to care for nobody's society but the women's and that ornery, measly old Christopher."

"Is Christopher her husbun?" asked a long-legged young groom.

"No," thundered Tom, with so great vehemence that the young man quailed, and dared not ask any more questions.

"Brother?" inquired one of the ring "supers."

"No!" yelled the veteran master of the centerpole hoist; "he ain't her husbun, nor her brother, nor her uncle, nor her grandfader, nor her cousin."

The head hostler, as much a veteran as Centerpole Tom, and more modest and less theatrical than he, quietly said:

"No use making a fool of yourself and putting on airs before these boys. I don't know who Christopher is, an' I ain't ashamed to say so. Now, who is Christopher?"

This was the supreme moment for which Centerpole Tom had waited. He squared himself around, and, looking steadily at the head hostler, said impressively and with the utmost deliberation:

"Christopher is an elephant."

It was a small speech, but it was some time after this before the two men became good friends again.

There was a commotion all through the small army of circus people when Christopher and the Fairy arrived. They did not come to the tents for two or three days after landing, as it was rumored that Christopher had been seasick on the voyage across the Pacific and needed a little rest. When they did appear, however, they were cordially welcomed. The women of the circus found the Fairy (who, in private life, was known as Miss Camilla Armijo) to be a delightful girl, more substantial than a genuine fairy, to be sure, but hardly more so; for, although she was full-grown, she was so small and fragile that her professional name sat well upon her. There was a light touch of sadness in all her conduct, and Centerpole Tom explained this by saying that she had recently lost both her parents. How he discovered this nobody could ever learn. But it was clear at least, that she was a very sweet and gentle little body, very young, and with no friend in San Francisco except old Christopher.

I say "old Christopher" because it is impossible to associate anything but great age with his enormous proportions and overwhelming dignity. He was an East Indian elephant, of prodigious size. A more solemn and self-satisfied elephant it would have been impossible to find.

After the Fairy had been introduced to the people with whom she was to be associated the remainder of the season, and had chatted and quietly laughed with them a little, she turned to the menagerie man and said:

"Now we will show Christopher his quarters." And, by the dignified flapping of his great ears, Christopher seemed to add: "Yes; we are prepared now to see what you can do for old Christopher."

In fact, while they were about it, and all feeling a certain interest in the little stranger and her big companion, the whole company—the two clowns, the man who turned the double-back somersaults, the strong man, the woman who wore a yellow wig when she rode bareback, the two men who did the great act on the horizontal bar, and some others, including Centerpole Tom and the surly head-man of the hostlers—went to show how Christopher was going to be disposed of. That was a simple affair: the great pachyderm was conducted to his allotted place in the menagerie tent, where an iron pin was driven into the ground, and a chain, which was riveted to it, was locked around one of his legs. The pin and the chain were part of his belongings, and he was accustomed to be chained up thus and made no objection. Evidently he suffered no loss of dignity by this operation, for he appeared to say to himself: "This is perfectly proper, I am sure; for it is the rule of all circuses to keep the animals in some sort of confinement, and although it accomplishes no useful purpose in my case, I believe in discipline and cheerfully submit to the rules."

It was very pretty to see how solicitous was the Fairy of her immense charge. She saw that he had a sufficient allowance of fresh, sweet hay, and, from a bag which she carried, she fed him some dainties which she had for that purpose and which he took in his little trunk with manifest tokens of gratitude. She patted his great jaws and said kind things to him, and he took it all as a matter of course, seeming to say: "I see nothing at all strange in the affection and solicitude which this beautiful little Fairy lavishes upon me; for am I not a very large and majestic elephant, and does she not know that I love her better than does any one else in all the world?" And it was pretty to see how gently she bade him good-bye until the evening performance, which would begin in two hours from that time.

There was a far greater crowd than usual at the performance that evening, for the flaming public announcements of Christopher and the Fairy had borne

profitable fruit. Not only were the seats packed all the way up to the eaves, but rows of extra seats had been provided on the level ground facing the ring. Several acts were done before the manager announced the new performers, which he did in the following graceful manner:

"Ladies and gentlemen,—I now have the pleasure to introduce to you the most celebrated performers of her majesty's Australian colonies—Christopher and the Fairy. You will see for yourselves that Christopher is the largest and most powerful elephant in captivity, and that the Fairy justly deserves her reputation for being the most graceful and daring flying trapeze performer in the world. The performances of these two renowned individuals will consist in ground acts in which they both take part, followed by the flying trapeze act done by the Fairy alone. Christopher meanwhile standing below and looking on, at the same time giving signals to the Fairy and otherwise encouraging her in her daring and perilous performance high in the air."

When he had finished, the elephant came slowly walking out, and thereupon rose a mighty shout of applause and a great clapping of hands. Sitting on the massive shoulders of the enormous brute was the Fairy, glittering with spangles. She was so small, so fragile, and dainty, and Christopher was so overwhelming and majestic and stern, that the strange picture caught the audience with sweeping force and the applause became deafening. Christopher calmly marched into the ring and proceeded immediately around it, the Fairy meanwhile guiding him with hand-pressure on one side of his neck or the other, while with the other hand she threw kisses at the audience. Her bare, dimpled arms and smiling, dimpled cheeks, her rosy mouth, her large black eyes and curling black hair in which diamonds shone, won every heart for her in that immense crowd; for so much sweetness and grace and daintiness they had never seen all at once in a circus-ringer before.

The circuit of the ring completed, the elephant stopped and listened gravely to the sorry jokes of the clown. He had heard them before and was not to be amused. The Fairy bounded to her feet on the great animal's back, and there found room for some entertaining tricks of agility. Then she gave him a tap with her slippers little foot, and, in response, he brought his long trunk around, caught her by the waist and set her gently on the ground. This made the audience applaud until the Fairy was almost deaf. Other things, some old and some new, were done by the two, such as his walking over her, stepping ever so carefully, as she lay on the ground; recovering her handkerchief from the clown, who had stolen it; hiding it in his blouse; throwing her high in the air and stepping forward in time to have her alight nimbly on his back; and things like that. Then came her act on the flying trapeze.

To prepare for this the clown fetched her a flag, which she gave to Christopher to hold in his trunk. Then the clown threw a tape over a trapeze hung high in the air, and, with a few parting caresses and whispered words to Christopher, she sprang to the tape and climbed it like a squirrel. She sat a moment on the trapeze bar and then glanced down at Christopher, who, sitting back on his haunches the better to look so high, was gravely watching her. The band had stopped playing. A clear, musical voice from above, dropping like pearls on the people below, called out:

"How was that, Christopher?"

The elephant waved the flag and gravely nodded his approval. Then came the real work of the act—all sorts of agile turnings and graceful leaps from the main bar to one hung higher still; and after every one of these feats, each more daring than its predecessor, she would call down in her musical, pearly voice:

"Was that all right, Christopher?"

And Christopher would wave the flag and solemnly nod his approval, as much as to say: "Of course it was all right; but we expect that from you, little Fairy!"

Finally came her greatest feat—it was to leap clear across the ring from one trapeze to another. She rested awhile before undertaking it, and Christopher, knowing what was coming, braced himself, all his massive muscles going on a tension, and always trying to give her strength and alertness for the dangerous task. The band played a spirited air while the girl sat still on the bar; then the music ceased, and a deep hush fell on the audience. The fairy caught the bar in her hands and swung underneath it, and her clear voice rang out again:

"Keep a sharp eye, old Christopher!"

The elephant nodded and waved his flag, but with less stateliness than before. The Fairy began to swing backward and forward in the direction of the distant trapeze, which she was to catch after her flight through the air. Further and further did she swing, higher and higher, back and forth, her glittering spangles looking like a shower of meteors. A ringing voice cried out:

"Now we go, Christopher!" and she loosed her hold and went flying away across the tent, higher and higher, to the apex of a graceful parabolic curve, then down toward the trapeze, still so far away, while the people held their breath, and many closed their eyes. Down sailed the small and graceful figure, coming quickly closer to the goal; two eager hands were outstretched to seize the bar; one hand touched it and clutched it desperately, but the other missed its aim. The momentum sent her flying far beyond, but she still held the bar with one hand, and the rope which held it creaked as the strain came upon them. A hold with one hand was not enough, and the Fairy had not the time to bring the other to bear when the bar found the end of its tether. The small hand slipped and the girl went flying towards the ground. A suppressed cry of horror rose from the audience as the frail, little body struck the ground at the entrance to the waiting room, falling with a heavy, cruel sound that went into every heart in that vast assemblage and that made

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the strongest men shudder and groan and cover their faces.

She fell near the feet of Centerpole Tom, who was standing behind the musicians, and he was the first to approach her. He straightened the body and looked in the blanched face and wide staring eyes, and silently prayed for even a moan from the silent, white lips. The audience rose in an uproar, and thousands pressed forward to see the poor, limp body on the ground. But instantly there was a commotion from another cause: Christopher had seen the catastrophe, and he claimed the first right of way and the privileges of a friend. He came toward the packed mass of humanity with a roar that sent terror abroad, hundreds flying from his path. Others could not escape so easily, and of these, some he flung right and left with his trunk, and others were packed closer on either side by the interposition of his enormous bulk. Soon he reached the side of the fairy, lying so white and still, and he dropped to his knees beside her and groaned and caressed her with his trunk.

Gentle hands were trying to find some life in the frail, crushed body when he came, but all fell back upon his terrible approach—all except Centerpole Tom, who feared not even the wrath of the giant Christopher. The elephant accepted his presence, seeing kindness in it. Centerpole's heart beat violently as he saw a faint movement of the chest, and he nearly choked with joy when he beheld the lips move and the eyes close and then open again. Some one brought water, with which he sprinkled her face. This did much good, for she gasped, and then sighed.

"She is coming to!" cried Centerpole Tom.

And surely she was; for, with returning life, came evidence of suffering, and deep lines of pain formed about her mouth and eyes. Christopher noticed it, for he fanned her more vigorously with his great ears. Consciousness came slowly back; and, when it had returned, the first thing the Fairy saw was her old friend Christopher kneeling beside her.

"Poor, old Christopher!" she said, very faintly; and then, with great difficulty, she raised her hand and gently caressed his rough old face. "Poor Christopher! It will break your old heart to see me die."

"You have loved me, Christopher. . . . But they'll be good to you." Tears trickled down her cheeks, the hard lines deepened, the poor face became more pinched and drawn, the beautiful eyes wandered vacantly and then closed, and the Fairy passed into unconsciousness again.

A physician now came and knelt beside her, and, after he had examined her as well as he could, he said:

"She is desperately hurt, but she is young and still alive. You must take her at once to a house, where I may care for her properly."

They gently picked her up, and, as they did so, a moan escaped her. This roused the elephant, already dazed by what had happened. He began clumsily rising to his feet, watching them as they bore her away, and was evidently determined to follow. Seeing this, Centerpole Tom, who held the light body in his arms, hurried away, and almost ran to a small hotel not far distant. He took the Fairy within and laid her on a bed which they showed him in a rear room on the ground floor.

But Christopher had not lost sight of him in spite of the crowd; and those without, seeing Christopher's intention of keeping close to his friend, and knowing it was impossible, sought to stay him. They shouted to him and tried to drive him back, but he noticed them not at all. They threw boxes and chairs in his way, but he tossed them aside. A carriage, which stood in his way was crushed. Christopher seemed to think that, as his friend was among strangers, she was among enemies and needed his protection. He would not give her up.

The situation was desperate. Men counseled shooting him, but how could a pistol bullet find a vital spot in his enormous body? Besides, he was already maddened by the opposition he had encountered and further tormenting might lead to dire results. Before anything could be done, before any plan could be matured, he had reached the house. The door was closed and locked before him and furniture was piled behind it; but, with his massive head lowered, he went straight against it, and everything was crushed before his advance. Once in the house, he stopped and listened for the sound of her voice. He heard faint moans, and mistook the direction whence they came, for he started straight for the wide staircase leading to the upper floor. Up the stairs he began a laborious ascent, the helpless crowd standing in motionless dismay. Up he toiled, roaring terribly at intervals. The wooden stairs creaked and groaned under his tremendous weight. The plastering near them began to fall, timbers were sprung and wrenched from their fastenings, and the whole house quivered.

The catastrophe came at last. Just before Christopher reached the top, the whole staircase came down with a frightful crash, and the gigantic animal fell headlong to the floor which he crushed and splintered. A mighty groan escaped him for the fall had done him desperate hurt. He struggled and floundered in the mass of wrecked timbers, and finally, after a supreme attempt, he staggered to his feet. With a stupendous effort he steadied himself on his tottering legs, and, dazed and shattered, began anew his search for the Fairy. But he did not have to go further; Centerpole Tom, followed by the physician, came forward, bearing a small, dainty burden in his arms, which he laid gently on a table close to Christopher; and the tears which trickled down Centerpole's grizzled beard told anew the old, old story, as old as human suffering and humanity.

"It will quiet him," exclaimed Centerpole Tom to the people who had ventured near, "and nothing can hurt her now."

Christopher eagerly regarded his companion, lying so white and quiet and beautiful, and then he caressed her cold face and hands. Perhaps he understood that it was all over with her, and that with her had gone all that the world held of brightness for him; and besides that his fall had grievously hurt him. He gazed at her and his head sank lower and lower. The fury had all left him, and, crushed both in spirit and body, he stood a towering, tottering wreck. Not a sound escaped him. His great body heaved painfully with his slow breathing, and he swayed from side to side. A little later he sank to his knees, and then he lay down, and with a groan he died.

On the western slope of Laurel Hill cemetery, facing the grand Pacific and the glories of the setting sun, and standing watch over the Golden Gate, through which the great white ships sail to the kingdom far over the sea, stands a granite monument, marking a very large grave and a small one; and it bears only this simple line:

"CHRISTOPHER AND THE FAIRY."

TRUE STORIES OF THE PRESENT.

Adventures More Remarkable Than Those Found in Story Books.

Farmer Dwight W. Dean, of Ovington Township, Pa., stopped by the roadside watering trough in the Lamberton woods a few days ago to let his horses slake their thirst. His wagon box was full of unhusked ears of sweet corn, and just as he had checked up the horses and was stepping toward the left front wheel a coon dropped from an overhanging limb to the load, grabbed an ear of corn in his mouth, and jumped out of the hind end of the wagon. Mr. Dean seized his whip in a hurry and made a dash for the bold corn thief, lashing it over the head as tight as he could draw before it had a chance to skip into the bushes.

The cuts of the whip infuriated the coon and made it squeal fiercely. Instead of seeking shelter in the undergrowth it dropped the corn, sprang at Mr. Dean, and fought him with the ferocity of a wild-cat. It bit him on the left hand till the blood ran, and its attack was so sudden and unexpected that Mr. Dean was unprepared for it. The coon was no near him that he couldn't use his lash, so he hit it with the butt of the whip and drove it back. Again the animal sprang at him and tore his right hand with its teeth, causing him to drop the whip.

Mr. Dean then realized that he had got his hands full, and he kicked at the coon, but missed hitting it. It bit his left leg this time. The farmer threw the vicious little beast over on its back, but it was on its feet in a second, and once more it jumped at him. Mr. Dean caught the savage brute by the throat and flung it into the trough. The splash of the water scared the horses. They dashed forward, and Mr. Dean ran to their heads and grabbed the near one by the bit.

While he was yanking his team to a standstill the coon leaped on his back and set its teeth in his shoulders. The horses reared and snorted at sight of the strange animal and Mr. Dean tore the coon loose with his left hand while he tried to manage the team with his right. He shook the pugnacious animal off three times only to find it clinging to his back and tearing at his shoulder a moment later. The last time he flung it loose it landed among the feet of the prancing horses. One of them stepped on the coon's head and that settled it.

By the time that Mr. Dean had his horses quieted down the coon lay dead behind the wagon. Both of Mr. Dean's hands and one of his shoulders were badly bitten, and there was a slight wound on the back of his neck. The coon weighed 22 pounds.

Miss Callie McGee, a school teacher of America, Kentucky, had an experience that she will not forget, and in which she showed rare courage and presence of mind in the face of the greatest danger. America is a small hamlet situated in Lee county, in the wilds of eastern Kentucky, and consists of two dwelling houses, a country store, and a post office. In going to and returning from school each week Miss McGee is obliged to pass over Bear Wallow Mountain—so called by the early settlers on account of the great number of bears that formerly made it a resting place in their migrations from the Chimney Mountains to the Cumberland. For several years, however, no bears had been seen, and the inhabitants had long ceased to apprehend any danger from these animals. One day Miss Callie started for her home for the purpose of passing the Sabbath with her mother. She was accompanied by her little niece, who is only three years old. The road between Bear Creek Valley and America is lonely, even for a mountain road, and from the base of the mountain on the one side to the foot on the other, a distance of three miles, there are no signs of human habitation. While slowly climbing the mountain, on the further side from this place, the child trampled upon a sharp thorn, and screamed in agony.

While Miss Callie was trying to pacify her she was suddenly startled by a rustling of the bushes at one side of the road, and upon looking around discovered a large bear stepping slowly and cautiously into the road about forty yards in her rear.

For a moment Miss McGee stood gazing at the bear, too terrified to seek safety. Then, catching up the child in her arms, she fled rapidly up the steep mountain side. Casting a terrified glance backward over her shoulder, she was appalled to see the bear break into a lumbering gallop and start in pursuit. The child, frightened at the unusual actions of her aunt, was screaming at the top of its voice, and the bear apparently redoubled his efforts to catch them. Panting and gasping for breath, she at last reached the top of the mountain almost exhausted, and upon looking back discovered the bear still in pursuit and rapidly decreasing the distance between them, being now scarcely twenty yards behind her. Occasionally the bear gave an angry snort, as if enraged at being balked of his intended prey. His heavy, labored breathing was now distinctly audible to her ear, and she realized that her strength was failing and that it was impossible for her to continue her present pace much longer. Clinging the child more closely to her bosom, she made one more desperate effort to outfoot her pursuer. While continuing her flight the child's hat, with its gay ribbons and flowers, became accidentally disarranged and fell to the ground. After running one hundred yards or more Miss McGee ventured to look back once more, and her relief may be imagined when she saw the bear biting and tearing at the hat lying on the road.

Miss McGee, at sight of this, instantly

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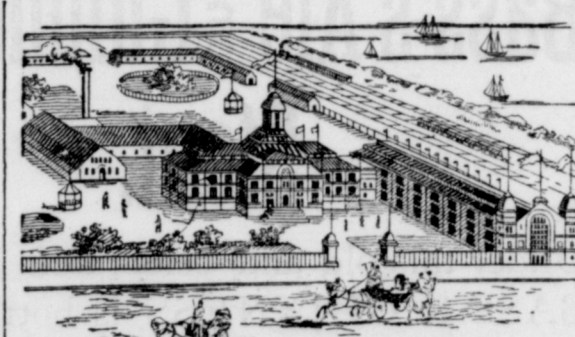


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