

Glimpses of Circus Life.

"I'd seen the circus in Madison Square Garden," said a circus goer, "and shows big and little, in one place and another, under canvas, and circus parades, day and night, and all these things interested me immensely, but I never saw anything in the circus way that interested me more than the unloading of a big three-ring outfit from the cars it travelled on, and the getting up the tents and things ready for the show. I struck this outfit at the railroad station of a New England city at 2 o'clock in the morning. I had come from one direction and got off a train there just in time to see the circus trains come in from the town where the show had been the day before.

"There were two trains, with, I should guess without counting them, twenty cars apiece, a train of closed cars and a train of flats. But they were not just common box and platform cars; they were all made especially for the circus, the closed cars gorgeously painted, and the name of the circus on them in big letters. There was one curious-shaped car for the giraffe, higher than the rest and built with what they call a well, that is, the floor of the car in the middle dropped down as near the track as it could be with safety, to make more room for the giraffe there. Then they had passenger cars with bunks for the men to sleep in.

On the flat train they had the animal cages and the wagons of one sort and another, all red and gold, and there were cars with stuff aboard covered with tarpaulins.

"Rain? It poured; and it was darker than pitch. And with the rain I'd come on gone, it was siller than death! You could hear the rain, and the breathing of the engines, but that's all. There was nobody around the station at that hour of the night except the few railroad men that had to be there, some of them switchmen and some inspectors, toting around torches; and the two long red and gold trains stood there in the rain as still as everything else; everybody aboard of 'em, horses and men and all the wild animals, so far as anybody could see or hear, sound asleep.

"Pretty soon they yanked these trains off the main line into a big freight yard not far away, to get them where they could unload them. As far as I could judge, the city where I saw this show had ideal facilities for unloading a circus. This freight yard had a lot of parallel tracks that ran down to an end at a wide cross public street; and on the other side of that street there was the beginning of a long, wide wharf—this was a salt water town—where vessels came to unload coal and lumber and so on. Some of the tracks from the big freight yard ran across that intervening street down the wharf. They switched the box car train around till they had got it shoved down on the wharf, with one end of the train resting on that road. The open car train they left in the yard, this train also with one end on that road, but on the opposite side from the box cars.

"All this time the rain had been coming down, and the men and the horses, with all this switching and hauling about, had been keeping on sleeping just the same; they shoved the gold and red cars about without any signs of life on them except from the railroad men, but as soon as they had got the two trains settled down that way, abutting on opposite sides of the street, things began to wake up. It was then half past 3, or 4 o'clock, but still dark.

"The men that came swarming out now, I should think, were of all sorts of nationalities, and they had on the oddest, free and easiest, and most miscellaneous lot of rigs in the way of clothes you ever saw. They were a stalwart lot of hustlers, but in those clothes they didn't look much like knights in armour. The unloading was just the simplest thing you ever saw everything of course being arranged to make it so. In the cars that carried horses they had under the bottom of each car at the middle, carried there when not in use, crosswise of the car, a gangplank. When they wanted to unload the horses from a car they pulled out that gangplank same as they pull out a coal chute from under one of the modern style coal wagons. They first pulled it as far as it would come. On the end there were hooks by which it was hooked to the side of the car. They dropped the other end on the ground and there was the gangway in position and ready for use in half a minute or less. When they threw open the door of a car the horses would come out and walk down that just as a matter of course; and they'd pair off when

they get clear of the plank and walk away together they way they were driven. Apparently they were just as much used to travelling in this way as the men were, and they knew just what to do. One horse coming down one of the gangplanks fell off onto the wharf. It was dark still and I suppose he was tired and so he stumbled off; but it didn't hurt him a bit and he got up and went on with the rest.

"While the men were working away getting the stock out of the cars down the wharf, there was another gang hustling the wagons off the flat cars in the freight yard on the other side of the road. There was a little more detail in this operation, but it was just as sure and simple and easy as getting off the horses was. The wagons were all taken off at the rear end of the rear car, where it came against that cross street between the wharf and the freight yard. They had a couple of long channel irons, carried on the car, which for the vehicles served the purpose that the gangplanks carried under the box cars did for horses. The two channel irons had each hooks at one end, by which they were hooked onto the end of the car, the other end resting on the ground. Midway of their length these were placed under these irons, to brace and support them, a wooden horse standing on the ground.

"Down these channel irons cages and one thing and another on wheels were rolled off to the ground. They had a pair of horses hooked up to haul the wagons off, with a short towing line attached at one end to the double tree of the horse's harness, while

the hook in the other end of the line was put into the ring on the end of the pole of the wagon to be hauled. Then they started up the team and rolled the wagon along on the platform of the car till they got the forward wheels to the beginning of the channel irons. At the other end of the car was set up a stout snubbing post. They had a rope made fast to the rear axle of the wagon, with the free end carried back to the snubbing post, where they took two or three turns with it, and when they started the wagon down the irons from the car to the ground the man at the snubbing post held on to it and eased it down gently. When the wagon was on the level they would cast off the rope and the horses would tow it out of the way and they'd hook up its own team to it. They had short channel irons that they placed between the flat cars, and the several vehicles as they were taken of the cars were rolled along from one car to the other until they came to the end car, from whose end they were rolled off to the ground; so that the last wagon, the one nearest the other end of this section as it had been backed down traversed the whole length of the train on its way off.

"But long before the outfit was unloaded a party of men had staved for the circus ground where the tents were to be set up. A little way up this cross street, that the circus men were filling with horses and wagons and things, on an interesting street, there was a trolley line, and about 5 o'clock there halted there a chartered trolley car to take the first circus party to the ground. When the party got out to this place, an open field of several acres at some little distance from the business part of the city, the man in charge stood and looked the ground over to get the lay of the land and see how it could be laid out to the greatest advantage, and in a brief survey from right where he stood he made up his mind just what to do, and the next minute with a man to hold the end down, he was walk-

ing off dragging a steel tape behind him. At every point he indicated as he walked along a man came and struck into the ground a steel skewer with a ring at the top, in which there was tied a little colored rag. Every skewer marked where a tent peg was to go, and the man with the steel tape kept going without the slightest doubt or hesitancy until he had covered the whole field and had got the position of every tent peg that was to support the great canvas house so to go up there plainly marked.

"Before he had got through with this, however, all sorts of teams and things had begun to come up from where they were unloading the cars. Of course, they had loaded the cars in the reverse order of the way in which they wanted to get the things off. About the last thing loaded, and so about the first thing off and up to the ground was the cook tent; that was up and the cooks were at it getting breakfast early. Just as the peg plan was finished a man in authority in the show drove up in a buggy with a very good horse and halted and cast an eye over the field and apparently found everything right and trim, for not a thing was changed, it stood as the man with the tape had laid it out. Among the wagons that had come up before this there were some with loads of tent pegs and poles and these drove round dropping things off where they were wanted. When the marks were all down, wagons couldn't always drive around among them without danger of driving over and up setting some of them, and here's where the small boy came in, of which there was some 17,000, more or less, at this time on the ground, it being now about 7 or 8 o'clock. Pins and poles like those going around the wall of the big tent, might have to be laid down outside of where they were to be used and the circus men would commission the willing small boy to carry them to their appointed spots, and thus would be seen an eager youngster bearing a stake two or

three times as long as himself and glowing in the enjoyment.

"Things had been getting pretty thick now for some time. Besides the coming of more wagons with equipage and supplies and one thing and another there had been at work men following the wagons that were distributing the tent pins around, driving these pins down into the ground. These pins were six or eight feet long, but the men that drove them, half dozen of them all striding on the same pin one after another, only had to strike about one blow a piece around to sink the pin down where they wanted it to go. It was something astonishing to see those men drive tent pins. The first centre pole they got on end they hoisted up into position with a team of four horses, by means of a block and tackle so rigged that they could hitch the team to the fall and after they had got the pole up, by making use of that one they got the other three poles, which were permanently connected with one another at the top, and had first been suitably disposed on the ground, all at once by the same power.

"The canvas for the great tent had been coming all this time in wagons that were driven around the outskirts of the tent site, the man on the box driving a six horse team, the man in the wagon rolling out at the stern a roll of canvas about the size and shape of a great big bass drum, done up in a canvas cover for its protection. The great tent was of course in sections and each of these great rolls contained a section. The several sections were laced together, with protecting flaps over lapping the joining places. They opened out these bundles and spread the canvas out where it belonged, around the several poles and laced the parts together, and laced each great section of the tent to a ring around the centre pole that it surrounded; by those rings the roof of the great canvas was to be hoisted up into place. There

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STARTING ON A TOUR.