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**THE CIRCUS.**

This is the circus, so noisy and gay.

That went through the village one bright summer day.

With elephants, camels and ponies so small.

Band wagons, and horses, and riders, and all.

Now up street, now down street, all over the town.

Paraded the circus and tumbled the clown.

And this is the schoolboy who viewed with delight

The circus-man's posters, attractive and bright;

Who read all the bills in a wonder-struck way.

And dreamt of the circus by night and by day.

Who begged of his father: "Oh! let me go!

I must see this wonderful, wonderful show!"

And this is the father, to business inclined:

In truth he is sorely perplexed in his mind:

For Jake has "talked circus," till Johnny and Jim,

And Milly and Molly are teasing with him.

Of course for a circus the father don't care—

He would like to see the trained animals there.

The acrobat's feats, and the pranks of the clown.

And he may have that morning some business in town.

And this is the mother, she goes to the show

Because "I would be lonely at home," as we know:

She says there is in it "more labor than fun;"

But since to get ready they all have begun—

She will not now stop them, although it's plain

The whole of the trip is "more trouble than gain."

And here are the family in the front row,

All having great fun at this very big show;

And Jakey is laughing—and Johnny, and Jim;

And as for the father—why! just look at him!

The girls and their mother, all laugh till the shake—

And this comes from going to please little Jake

—Sarah E. Howard, in Good Housekeeping.

**A WESTERN WOOLING.**

BY KATE M. CLEARY.

People had become rather tired of the romance.

Perhaps in part because it had ceased to be romantic.

When first Andalusia Stebbins had come out from Illinois

to live with her mother and stepfather on the Nebraska prairie

it was considered by the neighboring farmer folk quite proper,

probable and desirable that Ira Harris, whose half-section

joined that of her relatives, should fall in love with her—which he promptly did.

Ira was thirty, stout, stolid, loutish, medical.

He was a successful man. This is hardly to be explained of a person

with the characteristics mentioned unless one includes selfishness.

To be successful selfish is so frequently to be successful.

At the time of their meeting Andalusia was twenty-seven.

There are women of twenty-seven and women of twenty-seven.

She was one of the latter. With her square figure,

her unqueer complexion, her dull brown hair,

and her calculating eyes she looked her years.

One would never excuse her mistakes on the ground of immaturity.

One could never condone them on that of impulse. Indeed, to attribute to her certain errors would be subtle flattery.

She was not the kind of a woman who is ordinarily subjected to temptation.

Harris, however, accepted her propinquity and her affection much as he accepted the drought or the price of hogs.

He was willing she should decline the company of other men on his account.

He reasoned that if her stepfather, old man Solvinsky, were to clear off the mortgage on his place and die,

and if the two sickly young Solvinskys died also, she would be wealthy in her own right,

as wealth is estimated in the Philistine west. Consequently it might prove a prudent proceeding to wait for Andalusia.

So he waited.

A year after their acquaintance began he gave her an inkling of his sentiments.

Her concurrence with his views was almost pathetic. It was alert, reciprocal, conclusive.

Matrimony at some indefinite date they might look forward to. Such an indiscretion at the present time would be a tremendous mistake.

"Of course, Ira," she said, "land's land. And if my stepfather and your mother—who is mighty feeble, I notice—and the twins don't die there won't be any land for us worth mentioning, much less a marry-in' on."

Nevertheless she felt as the years, two, three, four passed, that her acceptance of his suggestion had been a trifle overemphatic and unconsidered.

Fate, she could not in justice rail against. One of the twins succumbed to ivy poisoning. The other, a few months later, was run down by the train.

Andalusia's stepfather went the way of the apple pie, and Ira's mother, with utter disregard for the sensation she might have caused, slipped from life in the most meek, genteel and unimpressive manner imaginable.

Then there was only Ira on one farm, and Andalusia and her mother on the other. No apparent obstacle intervened. Still Ira did not speak, and it was seven years since Andalusia had come from Illinois.

He frequently visited her, helped her, and deferred to her. He carried her butter and eggs into town and "traded" them; when the circus was in the county seat, he drove her there; he took her into the side show where the fat woman was on exhibition; he bought her pink lemonade, and peanuts, and hot candy made on the grounds. He escorted her to the merry-go-round at Mahaska and rode side by side with her on the spotted ponies. He drove her into town twice a week. They attended prayer meeting together. They both professed religion at the revival. He bought eleven tickets for her crazy quilt raffle. He was in all things her constant and dependable cavalier, but

he never once mentioned marriage—never once.

In this manner eight more years passed. She was forty-two. He was forty-five. He was stouter, more stolid. She had some wrinkles, gold fillings in her teeth, a reputation for irascibility—also a comfortable bank account.

The two continued to drive across the majestic prairies in all kinds of marvelous nights and days. But the prose of life had so eaten into their hearts they saw nothing of the beauty surrounding them, heard none of nature's music. For them there was no charm in the blossoming miracle of dawn, the yellow sweep of the ripe corn, the translucence of the moonlight, the blue infinity of space, the meadowlark's gay vest, the fugitive radiance on the bluffs, the restless shiver of the cottonwoods, the ocean shadows of the wheat, the swiftness of the gopher, the snow of wild plum blooms by the creek, the rank and file of goldenrod flanking the dusty roads.

And they never heard the pattering flight of the quail, nor the swallow's swerving wing, nor the scurry of the rabbit, nor the murmur of the maples, nor the rustle of the sunflowers, nor the first crackle of the frost, nor the breaking of the ice, nor the gossip of the wild grass, never—never.

Theirs were the years the majority of prairie people know. Always vague, unrestful, apprehensive, material. Never gay, never educational. If hopeful, elated; if despairing, sullen; if contented, bovine. It is rather hard to be philosophical in a country the conditions of which one day promise prosperity and leisure, and after the next hail or windstorm express starvation.

One day Ira brought Andalusia a letter. It was from her mother's brother who lived in Iowa. He was dying. He wished to see her. She handed Ira the letter.

"Shall I go?" she asked.

Harris deliberated. "Has he money?" he questioned.

"Yes."

"Then go."

He saw her off the next day. She wore a new dress that didn't fit in the back. The skirt was too short at the sides. Her shoes were dusty. The heat had taken the curl out of her bangs. She had forgotten to bring the piece of chamois skin with the powder on it, which she was in the habit of using surreptitiously. Her nose shone as if polished. She wore kid gloves which were too large.

The train was late. As they walked up and down the platform she talked to Ira steadily and monotonously. She warned him about the brindle cow, and advised him concerning a piece of his fence which needed repairing.

He heard her, but all the time he was watching a girl who played with the agent's children in a green patch near the station. She was a little blonde sprite who had come from Omaha to visit the agent's wife.

"Of course," he said.

"And you won't forget about the chopped feed?"

He gave her an intense glance. "How could I?"

"You'll see that Star gets well watered?"

"I'll attend to it."

"You'll have Alvy Markham pull parsley for the young pigs?"

"I will."

"And—O, yes! If mother seems to feel another fit coming on you'll get her a bottle of Indian relief cure at the drug store."

He assured her he would. And all the time he was thinking what a wonderful way her hair curled about her temples—not Andalusia's. And how slim her waist was—not Andalusia's. And how pretty were the twinkling feet in the tan slippers—not Andalusia's. How fluffy and blue her gown was—and how deliciously merry her laugh rang out. And neither gown nor laugh was Andalusia's.

The train steamed in. Andalusia went away. Ira did not kiss her. She was relieved—and disappointed. The conductor and the train boy might have cared enough to risk that.

When the train had pulled out and was well around the bend, Harris, who had lingered on the platform, asked the agent to introduce him to his visitor. The agent did so.

Harris joined in the games of the children. He made himself clumsily delightful. Soda water was unknown in that particular small town, but Ira did the next best thing. He bought bananas and chocolate drops with a reckless liberality which would have made the absent Andalusia doubt his sanity could she but have been aware of his behavior.

He came to the depot the next day, the next and the next. The little visitor with the fax-flower eyes and yellow hair smiled divinely.

"The children," she confided to the agent's wife, "are having such a good time. It is all great fun."

She even thought it was great fun when she went buggy riding with Mr. Harris.

"Take me past your farm," she commanded.

He grew red with ecstasy at the request. He explained apologetically many conditions of his property as they drove by.

"When I'm married," he announced, with much determination, "I intend to live in town."

"I have heard," she ventured, innocently, "that there is no house vacant in town."

"I shall build one," he declared.

Three weeks passed—four. Harris had several letters from Iowa. The contents of the letters were chiefly relative to hogs, and pasturage, and baled hay, and discounts. Ira did not actually dread Andalusia's return, but he would have preferred to postpone it indefinitely. To be sure, they had considered the possibility of an engagement once, but he had never been really engaged to her. He never could be now. It was only right she should understand that. She was a sensible woman. She would understand that in such a matter a man had a right to please himself.

As for Alvy, was there ever such an eye, such a hand, such a voice, such a foot, such a smile. To be sure he had once met Alvy walking home from church with the lumberman. But then the lumberman was only young and good looking. It was well known he was conducting the yard for an English firm on a salary. To compare Alvy to him—Harris—who was so "well fixed!" There could be no comparison.

One evening in late summer, when Ira was jogging into town, he settled mentally all minor matters to his satisfaction. He decided to whom he would rent his farm, the kind of house he would build in town, the direction his wedding journey would take, the brotherly letter he would leave for Andalusia, and the invitation he would send the lumberman to be present at his wedding.

"Poor devil!" he concluded, commiseratingly, "it will be tough, but he will have to stand it