

As if in answer to the trainer's half question, half entreaty, Rajah slipped his trunk about him and playfully lifted him a little way from the ground.

Grayson laughed as he was set down again.

'You understand some things more than most people!' he declared, starting down the semi-circular row of cages on a tour of inspection.

He came back after a moment turning up the collar of his coat and flattening the brim of his hat over his eyes. The tent was leaking badly now, and the storm beat against it in straining gusts.

A blue chest of clown paraphernalia stood on the soaked earth by a quarter-pole. Mechanically, Grayson lifted the cover and peered in. A big top, spun by a string, lay on the upper tray. He took it clumsily in his hands. Then he shut the lid with a bang, and skipped like a boy back to his old position facing Rajah.

He held up the toy, as if the seared old elephant's eyes were taking special cognisance of his actions.

'Know what I'm going to do, Rajah?' he demanded. 'I'm just goin' to spin this top an' see where we'll go to-morrow.'

He took a big pencil from his pocket, and on the cover of another chest standing just inside the ropes, laboriously printed the names of several towns. Then he made a big, black dot in the centre.

'I'll just start it on that middle dot, and whatever town she stops on, we'll put up there till I get a notion of what we can do,' he explained, as if to an audience.

The big top sprang with a low hum from the string. The elephant's trunk ceased its constant motion, as the animal caught the red, shining blur of the new object. Then, while Grayson sat watching the steel pin move steadily from dot to dot in a dizzy oval, Rajah, apparently attracted by what appeared to his

uncertain eyes to be a sort of beet or carrot, swept up the plaything suddenly with his trunk.

'Here! here!' cried Grayson, springing from his seat and reaching out a hand.

But the elephant, already filled with dismay at the ugly, whirling thing in his trunk, had flung the wooden toy to the far side of the tent.

Grayson stared at him dejectedly.

'You've ruined our luck, Rajah--yours and mine,' he declared. He stopped abruptly, amazed at his thought.

'Rajah,' he demanded, 'did you mean that for a sign? Maybe—' He stared again and then laughed. 'If you're meanin' you're a prophet, and that somethin' is goin' to happen that we won't have to quit—but—but—I guess,' he muttered soberly, 'I guess I've been just a little quger in my head. You ain't a prophet. You just thought that there top was good to eat, an' you was hungry, that's all!'

For a long time afterwards he remained almost motionless on the chest, his grey head sunk in his arms. And, finally, he slept.

An hour later an assertive hand aroused him a bit roughly. He stumbled to his feet, blinking at the keeper who had awakened him. The storm had cleared away, and a hot sun was beating blindingly down outside the canvas.

'It's a wonder that elephant didn't take a notion to step on you,' Grenville, the keeper, was growling. 'You were laying almost under him when I got here.'

The show-folk had returned. All was bustle and hurry about the canvases. The promise of fair weather for the evening had plunged the circus into sudden life.

'I must have gone to sleep,' muttered Grayson. 'You needn't have worried about Rajah steppin' on me,' he added simply. 'It's the last thing Rajah 'ud do, if I'd been layin' there all night!'

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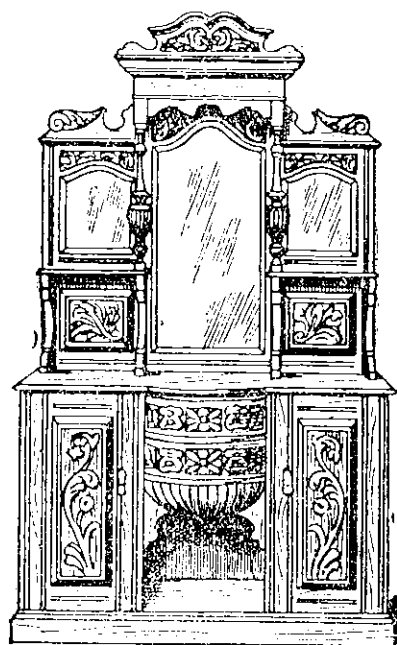
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