

Grenville laughed in a puzzled way. 'You must think a deal of that beast, Grayson,' he ventured. 'How long'd you had him before you come here?'

'It's nine years, altogether,' Grayson answered.

He leaned on the ropes with a far-away look in his eyes.

'When a man's got nothin' else, Grenville, he's bound to open up his heart to what's been his bread and butter, even if it ain't nothin' more'n an animal. Rajah stood by me faithful 'til he was hurt!'

The other shifted his position uneasily. 'We—we heard down at the cars that you'd—that the old man had sacked you,' he said.

Grayson nodded.

'I don't know—we kinder figured it might come—Rajah's gettin' laid up an' all that. We didn't see how we could get in a mess ourselves howlin' about it, with all our salaries owing. But the boys decided to-day we'd get some satisfaction for you from Killeen. He was in a nasty mood—sent us all flyin' for inter-ferin'. Said you'd have to clear out to-morrow.

Grenville cleared his throat, and hurried on:

'We was disgusted at havin' stirred him up then, but the next best thing we could do was to help toward your expenses 'till you can find a place. We ain't made up much—we didn't have it—but the boys want you to take it. You've been one of us a good while.'

He stopped, almost embarrassedly, and pulled a handful of coins from his pocket, holding it out to Grayson.

'I can't take it, Grenville,' Grayson said slowly. 'You thank 'em, but—I can't use their money. Rajah an' I'll get along somehow. It ain't all Killeen's fault. It's circumstances. He's had to keep the show together.'

'But he had no right to sack you without a dollar!' protested the man angrily. 'He wasn't payin' you anything, and what you costin' him wouldn't hurt

anybody. You take that money, Grayson, else the boys 'll blame me. You've stayed here all day for us without a bite.'

Grayson hesitated, irresolute. Then he slowly took the coins, and put them carefully away in his coat.

'Tell them I'm much obliged,' he said, seeming scarcely to hear his own words.

Killeen's alert, magnetic figure was striding by the entrance, and the spark of a dying fire burned for an instant in the trainer's heavy eyes.

'They goin' to give a performance to-night?'

He spoke as if, already, he were no longer a part of the circus in which the last four years of his life had been spent.

'Goin' to try to,' assented Grenville.

His eyes had moved towards the entrance. Now, as he turned to go, the clear, full treble of a child's laughter drew his attention to the elephant, and he clutched Grayson's arm with a low exclamation.

'Grayson, she'll be hurt! Can't you get her away?'

Mary, the little daughter of the manager, had slipped past them unawares, and was fearlessly feeding the big elephant from a bag in her hands.

'Wait,' urged the trainer quietly. 'No harm won't come to her.'

Rajah was continuing gravely to stow away the bread she lavished upon him with girlish gurgles of laughter. When she had emptied the bag, and had blown up and exploded it after the manner of youngsters, she made a motion as if to throw the paper at him. But the big elephant playfully caught her in his trunk, and swung her, still laughing, slowly to and fro, setting her down again carefully.

Grenville stared, as if the impossible had taken place before his eyes.

(To be concluded.)



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