

# P.T. BARNUM

STRUGGLES AND  
TRIUMPHS: OR,  
FORTY YEARS'  
RECOLLECTIONS  
OF P.T. BARNUM

Phineas Barnum

**Struggles and Triumphs: or, Forty  
Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum**

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## Содержание

CARD INTRODUCTORY	5
PREFACE	6
CHAPTER I.	8
CHAPTER II.	13
CHAPTER III.	17
CHAPTER IV.	23
CHAPTER V.	28
CHAPTER VI.	34
CHAPTER VII.	42
CHAPTER VIII.	47
CHAPTER IX.	54
CHAPTER X.	63
CHAPTER XI.	70
CHAPTER XII.	75
CHAPTER XIII.	84
CHAPTER XIV.	90
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	92

# Struggles and Triumphs: or, Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum

## CARD INTRODUCTORY

*To the Public:* – Although the large octavo edition of *Struggles and Triumphs*, upon fine paper, has enjoyed an unprecedented large sale at \$3.50 and upwards, according to styles of binding; yet determined to supply the popular demand for a cheaper edition, and thus in a measure render to the great American people, who have lavished upon me so many favors, a due recognition of their claims upon my gratitude and esteem, – I have purchased, of the original publishers, the electrotype plates of text and engravings together with the copyright of the work; and, now enabled to control the publication myself, I give the same precise text with the original, (together with an additional chapter bringing the biography down to April 2d, 1872,) at the low price of \$1.50.

Copies of the cheap edition can be had on application to the American News Company, New York, Warren, Johnson & Co., Buffalo, and elsewhere.

*Your obedient humble servant,*  
*PHINEAS T. BARNUM.*

No. 438 Fifth Avenue, New York City, April 2d, 1872.

## PREFACE

THIS book is my Recollections of Forty Busy Years. Few men in civil life have had a career more crowded with incident, enterprise, and various intercourse with the world than mine. With the alternations of success and defeat, extensive travel in this and foreign lands; a large acquaintance with the humble and honored; having held the preëminent place among all who have sought to furnish healthful entertainment to the American people, and, therefore, having had opportunities for garnering an ample storehouse of incident and anecdote, while, at the same time, needing a sagacity, energy, foresight and fortitude rarely required or exhibited in financial affairs, my struggles and experiences (it is not altogether vanity in me to think) can not be without interest to my fellow countrymen.

Various leading publishers have solicited me to place at their disposal my Recollections of what I have been, and seen, and done. These proposals, together with the partiality of friends and kindred, have constrained me, now that I have retired from all active participation in business, to put in a permanent form what, it seems to me, may be instructive, entertaining and profitable.

Fifteen years since, for the purpose, principally, of advancing my interests as proprietor of the American Museum, I gave to the press some personal reminiscences and sketches. Having an extensive sale, they were, however, very hastily, and, therefore, imperfectly, prepared. These are not only out of print, but the plates have been destroyed. Though including, necessarily, in common with them, some of the facts of my early life, in order to make this autobiography a complete and continuous narrative, yet, as the latter part of my life has been the more eventful, and my recollections so various and abundant, this book is new and independent of the former. It is the matured and leisurely review of almost half a century of work and struggle, and final success, in spite of fraud and fire – the story of which is blended with amusing anecdotes, funny passages, felicitous jokes, captivating narratives, novel experiences, and remarkable interviews – the sunny and sombre so intermingled as not only to entertain, but convey useful lessons to all classes of readers.

These Recollections are dedicated to those who are nearest and dearest to me, with the feeling that they are a record which I am willing to leave in their hands, as a legacy which they will value.

And above and beyond this personal satisfaction, I have thought that the review of a life, with the wide contrasts of humble origin and high and honorable success; of most formidable obstacles overcome by courage and constancy; of affluence that had been patiently won, suddenly wrenched away, and triumphantly regained – would be a help and incentive to the young man, struggling, it may be, with adverse fortune, or, at the start, looking into the future with doubt or despair.

All autobiographies are necessarily egotistical. If my pages are as plentifully sprinkled with “I’s” as was the chief ornament of Hood’s peacock, “who thought he had the eyes of Europe on his tail,” I can only say, that the “I’s” are essential to the story I have told. It has been my purpose to narrate, not the life of another, but that career in which I was the principal actor.

There is an almost universal, and not unworthy curiosity to learn the methods and measures, the ups and downs, the strifes and victories, the mental and moral *personnel* of those who have taken an active and prominent part in human affairs. But an autobiography has attractions and merits superior to those of a “Life” written by another, who, however intimate with its subject, cannot know all that helps to give interest and accuracy to the narrative, or completeness to the character. The story from the actor’s own lips has always a charm it can never have when told by another.

That my narrative is interspersed with amusing incidents, and even the recital of some very practical jokes, is simply because my natural disposition impels me to look upon the brighter side of life, and I hope my humorous experiences will entertain my readers as much as they were enjoyed by myself. And if this record of trials and triumphs, struggles and successes, shall stimulate any to the exercise of that energy, industry, and courage in their callings, which will surely lead to happiness

and prosperity, one main object I have in yielding to the solicitations of my friends and my publishers will have been accomplished.

*P. T. BARNUM.*

Waldemere, Bridgeport, }  
Connecticut, July 5, 1869. }

## CHAPTER I. EARLY LIFE

MY BIRTH – FIRST PROPERTY – FARMER-BOY LIFE – GOING TO SCHOOL – EARLY ACQUISITIVENESS – A HOLIDAY PEDDLER – FIRST VISIT TO NEW YORK – LEARNING TO “SWAP” – MISERIES FROM MOLASSES CANDY – “IVY ISLAND” – ENTERING UPON MY ESTATE – CLERKSHIP IN A COUNTRY STORE – TRADING MORALS – THE BETHEL MEETING-HOUSE – STOVE QUESTION – SUNDAY SCHOOL AND BIBLE CLASS – MY COMPOSITION – THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

I WAS born in the town of Bethel, in the State of Connecticut, July 5, 1810. My name, Phineas Taylor, is derived from my maternal grandfather, who was a great wag in his way, and who, as I was his first grandchild, gravely handed over to my mother at my christening a gift-deed, in my behalf, of five acres of land situated in that part of the parish of Bethel known as the “Plum Trees.” I was thus a real estate owner almost at my very birth; and of my property, “Ivy Island,” something shall be said anon.

My father, Philo Barnum, was the son of Ephraim Barnum, of Bethel, who was a captain in the revolutionary war. My father was a tailor, a farmer, and sometimes a tavern-keeper, and my advantages and disadvantages were such as fall to the general run of farmers' boys. I drove cows to and from the pasture, shelled corn, weeded the garden; as I grew larger, I rode horse for ploughing, turned and raked hay; in due time I handled the shovel and the hoe, and when I could do so I went to school.

I was six years old when I began to go to school, and the first date I remember inscribing upon my writing-book was 1818. The ferule, in those days, was the assistant school-master; but in spite of it, I was a willing, and, I think, a pretty apt scholar; at least, I was so considered by my teachers and schoolmates, and as the years went on there were never more than two or three in the school who were deemed my superiors. In arithmetic I was unusually ready and accurate, and I remember, at the age of twelve years, being called out of bed one night by my teacher who had wagered with a neighbor that I could calculate the correct number of feet in a load of wood in five minutes. The dimensions given, I figured out the result in less than two minutes, to the great delight of my teacher and to the equal astonishment of his neighbor.

My organ of “acquisitiveness” was manifest at an early age. Before I was five years of age, I began to accumulate pennies and “four-pences,” and when I was six years old my capital amounted to a sum sufficient to exchange for a silver dollar, the possession of which made me feel far richer and more independent than I have ever since felt in the world.

Nor did my dollar long remain alone. As I grew older I earned ten cents a day for riding the horse which led the ox team in ploughing, and on holidays and “training days,” instead of spending money, I earned it. I was a small peddler of molasses candy (of home make), ginger-bread, cookies and cherry rum, and I generally found myself a dollar or two richer at the end of a holiday than I was at the beginning. I was always ready for a trade, and by the time I was twelve years old, besides other property, I was the owner of a sheep and a calf, and should soon, no doubt, have become a small Croesus, had not my father kindly permitted me to purchase my own clothing, which somewhat reduced my little store.

When I was nearly twelve years old I made my first visit to the metropolis. It happened in this wise: Late one afternoon in January, 1822, Mr. Daniel Brown, of Southbury, Connecticut, arrived at my father's tavern, in Bethel, with some fat cattle he was driving to New York to sell. The cattle were put into our large barnyard, the horses were stabled, and Mr. Brown and his assistant were provided with a warm supper and lodging for the night. After supper I heard Mr. Brown say to my father that



he intended to buy more cattle, and that he would be glad to hire a boy to assist in driving the cattle. I immediately besought my father to secure the situation for me, and he did so. My mother's consent was also gained, and at daylight next morning, after a slight breakfast, I started on foot in the midst of a heavy snow storm to help drive the cattle. Before reaching Ridgefield, I was sent on horseback after a stray ox, and, in galloping, the horse fell and my ankle was sprained. I suffered severely, but did not complain lest my employer should send me back. But he considerably permitted me to ride behind him on his horse; and, indeed, did so most of the way to New York, where we arrived in three or four days.

We put up at the Bull's Head Tavern, where we were to stay a week while the drover was disposing of his cattle, and we were then to return home in a sleigh. It was an eventful week for me. Before I left home my mother had given me a dollar which I supposed would supply every want that heart could wish. My first outlay was for oranges which I was told were four pence apiece, and as "four-pence" in Connecticut was six cents, I offered ten cents for two oranges which was of course readily taken; and thus, instead of saving two cents, as I thought, I actually paid two cents more than the price demanded. I then bought two more oranges, reducing my capital to eighty cents. Thirty-one cents was the "charge" for a small gun which would "go off" and send a stick some little distance, and this gun I bought. Amusing myself with this toy in the bar-room of the Bull's Head, the arrow happened to hit the barkeeper, who forthwith came from behind the counter and shook me and soundly boxed my ears, telling me to put that gun out of the way or he would put it into the fire. I sneaked to my room, put my treasure under the pillow, and went out for another visit to the toy shop.

There I invested six cents in "torpedoes," with which I intended to astonish my schoolmates in Bethel. I could not refrain, however, from experimenting upon the guests of the hotel, which I did when they were going in to dinner. I threw two of the torpedoes against the wall of the hall through which the guests were passing, and the immediate results were as follows: two loud reports, – astonished guests, – irate landlord, – discovery of the culprit, and summary punishment – for the landlord immediately floored me with a single blow with his open hand, and said:

"There, you little greenhorn, see if that will teach you better than to explode your infernal fire crackers in my house again."

The lesson was sufficient if not entirely satisfactory. I deposited the balance of the torpedoes with my gun, and as a solace for my wounded feelings I again visited the toy shop, where I bought a watch, breastpin and top, leaving but eleven cents of my original dollar.

The following morning found me again at the fascinating toy shop, where I saw a beautiful knife with two blades, a gimlet, and a corkscrew, – a whole carpenter shop in miniature, and all for thirty-one cents. But, alas! I had only eleven cents. Have that knife I must, however, and so I proposed to the shop woman to take back the top and breastpin at a slight deduction, and with my eleven cents to let me have the knife. The kind creature consented, and this makes memorable my first "swap." Some fine and nearly white molasses candy then caught my eye, and I proposed to trade the watch for its equivalent in candy. The transaction was made and the candy was so delicious that before night my gun was absorbed in the same way. The next morning the torpedoes "went off" in the same direction, and before night even my beloved knife was similarly exchanged. My money and my goods all gone I traded two pocket handkerchiefs and an extra pair of stockings I was sure I should not want for nine more rolls of molasses candy, and then wandered about the city disconsolate, sighing because there was no more molasses candy to conquer.

I doubt not that in these first wanderings about the city I often passed the corner of Broadway and Ann Street – never dreaming of the stir I was destined at a future day to make in that locality as proprietor and manager of the American Museum.

After wandering, gazing and wondering, for a week, Mr. Brown took me in his sleigh and on the evening of the following day we arrived in Bethel. I had a thousand questions to answer, and then and for a long time afterwards I was quite a lion among my mates because I had seen the great metropolis.

My brothers and sisters, however, were much disappointed at my not bringing them something from my dollar, and when my mother examined my wardrobe and found two pocket handkerchiefs and one pair of stockings missing she whipped me and sent me to bed. Thus ingloriously terminated my first visit to New York.

Previous to my visit to New York, I think it was in 1820, when I was ten years of age, I made my first expedition to my landed property, "Ivy Island." This, it will be remembered, was the gift of my grandfather, from whom I derived my name. From the time when I was four years old I was continually hearing of this "property." My grandfather always spoke of me (in my presence) to the neighbors and to strangers as the richest child in town, since I owned the whole of "Ivy Island," one of the most valuable farms in the State. My father and mother frequently reminded me of my wealth and hoped I would do something for the family when I attained my majority. The neighbors professed to fear that I might refuse to play with their children because I had inherited so large a property.

These constant allusions, for several years, to "Ivy Island" excited at once my pride and my curiosity and stimulated me to implore my father's permission to visit my property. At last, he promised I should do so in a few days, as we should be getting some hay near "Ivy Island." The wished for day at length arrived and my father told me that as we were to mow an adjoining meadow, I might visit my property in company with the hired man during the "nooning." My grandfather reminded me that it was to his bounty I was indebted for this wealth, and that had not my name been Phineas I might never have been proprietor of "Ivy Island." To this my mother added:

"Now, Taylor, don't become so excited when you see your property as to let your joy make you sick, for remember, rich as you are, that it will be eleven years before you can come into possession of your fortune."

She added much more good advice, to all of which I promised to be calm and reasonable and not to allow my pride to prevent me from speaking to my brothers and sisters when I returned home.

When we arrived at the meadow, which was in that part of the "Plum Trees" known as "East Swamp," I asked my father where "Ivy Island" was.

"Yonder, at the north end of this meadow, where you see those beautiful trees rising in the distance."

All the forenoon I turned grass as fast as two men could cut it, and after a hasty repast at noon, one of our hired men, a good natured Irishman, named Edmund, took an axe on his shoulder and announced that he was ready to accompany me to "Ivy Island." We started, and as we approached the north end of the meadow we found the ground swampy and wet and were soon obliged to leap from bog to bog on our route. A misstep brought me up to my middle in water. To add to the dilemma a swarm of hornets attacked me. Attaining the altitude of another bog I was cheered by the assurance that there was only a quarter of a mile of this kind of travel to the edge of my property. I waded on. In about fifteen minutes more, after floundering through the morass, I found myself half-drowned, hornet-stung, mud-covered, and out of breath, on comparatively dry land.

"Never mind, my boy," said Edmund, "we have only to cross this little creek, and ye'll be upon your own valuable property."

We were on the margin of a stream, the banks of which were thickly covered with alders. I now discovered the use of Edmund's axe, for he felled a small oak to form a temporary bridge to my "Island" property. Crossing over, I proceeded to the centre of my domain; I saw nothing but a few stunted ivies and straggling trees. The truth flashed upon me. I had been the laughing-stock of the family and neighborhood for years. My valuable "Ivy Island" was an almost inaccessible, worthless bit of barren land, and while I stood deploring my sudden downfall, a huge black snake (one of my tenants) approached me with upraised head. I gave one shriek and rushed for the bridge.

This was my first, and, I need not say, my last visit to "Ivy Island." My father asked me "how I liked my property?" and I responded that I would sell it pretty cheap. My grandfather congratulated me upon my visit to my property as seriously as if it had been indeed a valuable domain. My mother

hoped its richness had fully equalled my anticipations. The neighbors desired to know if I was not now glad I was named Phineas, and for five years forward I was frequently reminded of my wealth in "Ivy Island."

As I grew older, my settled aversion to manual labor, farm or other kind, was manifest in various ways, which were set down to the general score of laziness. In despair of doing better with me, my father concluded to make a merchant of me. He erected a building in Bethel, and with Mr. Hiram Weed as a partner, purchased a stock of dry goods, hardware, groceries, and general notions and installed me as clerk in this country store.

Of course I "felt my oats." It was condescension on my part to talk with boys who did out-door work. I stood behind the counter with a pen over my ear, was polite to the ladies, and was wonderfully active in waiting upon customers. We kept a cash, credit and barter store, and I drove some sharp bargains with women who brought butter, eggs, beeswax and feathers to exchange for dry goods, and with men who wanted to trade oats, corn, buckwheat, axe-helves, hats, and other commodities for tenpenny nails, molasses, or New England rum. But it was a drawback upon my dignity that I was obliged to take down the shutters, sweep the store, and make the fire. I received a small salary for my services and the perquisite of what profit I could derive from purchasing candies on my own account to sell to our younger customers, and, as usual, my father stipulated that I should clothe myself.

There is a great deal to be learned in a country store, and principally this – that sharp trades, tricks, dishonesty, and deception are by no means confined to the city. More than once, in cutting open bundles of rags, brought to be exchanged for goods, and warranted to be all linen and cotton, I have discovered in the interior worthless woolen trash and sometimes stones, gravel or ashes. Sometimes, too, when measuring loads of oats, corn or rye, declared to contain a specified number of bushels, say sixty, I have found them four or five bushels short. In such cases, some one else was always to blame, but these happenings were frequent enough to make us watchful of our customers. In the evenings and on wet days trade was always dull, and at such times the story-telling and joke-playing wits and wags of the village used to assemble in our store, and from them I derived considerable amusement, if not profit. After the store was closed at night, I frequently joined some of the village boys at the houses of their parents, where, with story-telling and play, a couple of hours would soon pass by, and then as late, perhaps, as eleven o'clock, I went home and slyly crept up stairs so as not to awaken my brother with whom I slept, and who would be sure to report my late hours. He made every attempt, and laid all sorts of plans to catch me on my return, but as sleep always overtook him, I managed easily to elude his efforts.

Like most people in Connecticut in those days, I was brought up to attend church regularly on Sunday, and long before I could read I was a prominent scholar in the Sunday school. My good mother taught me my lessons in the New Testament and the Catechism, and my every effort was directed to win one of those "Rewards of Merit," which promised to pay the bearer one mill, so that ten of these prizes amounted to one cent, and one hundred of them, which might be won by faithful assiduity every Sunday for two years, would buy a Sunday school book worth ten cents. Such were the magnificent rewards held out to the religious ambition of youth.

There was but one church or "meeting-house" in Bethel, which all attended, sinking all differences of creed in the Presbyterian faith. The old meeting-house had neither steeple nor bell and was a plain edifice, comfortable enough in summer, but my teeth chatter even now when I think of the dreary, cold, freezing hours we passed in that place in winter. A stove in a meeting-house in those days would have been a sacrilegious innovation. The sermons were from an hour and one half to two hours long, and through these the congregation would sit and shiver till they really merited the title the profane gave them of "blue skins." Some of the women carried a "foot-stove" consisting of a small square tin box in a wooden frame, the sides perforated, and in the interior there was a small square iron dish, which contained a few live coals covered with ashes. These stoves were usually replenished just before meeting time at some neighbor's near the meeting-house.

After many years of shivering and suffering, one of the brethren had the temerity to propose that the church should be warmed with a stove. His impious proposition was voted down by an overwhelming majority. Another year came around, and in November the stove question was again brought up. The excitement was immense. The subject was discussed in the village stores and in the juvenile debating club; it was prayed over in conference; and finally in general "society's meeting," in December, the stove was carried by a majority of one and was introduced into the meeting-house. On the first Sunday thereafter, two ancient maiden ladies were so oppressed by the dry and heated atmosphere occasioned by the wicked innovation, that they fainted away and were carried out into the cool air where they speedily returned to consciousness, especially when they were informed that owing to the lack of two lengths of pipe, no fire had yet been made in the stove. The next Sunday was a bitter cold day, and the stove, filled with well-seasoned hickory, was a great gratification to the many, and displeased only a few. After the benediction, an old deacon rose and requested the congregation to remain, and called upon them to witness that he had from the first raised his voice against the introduction of a stove into the house of the Lord; but the majority had been against him and he had submitted; now, if they *must* have a stove, he insisted upon having a large one, since the present one did not heat the whole house, but drove the cold to the back outside pews, making them three times as cold as they were before! In the course of the week, this deacon was made to comprehend that, unless on unusually severe days, the stove was sufficient to warm the house, and, at any rate, it did not drive all the cold in the house into one corner.

During the Rev. Mr. Lowe's ministrations at Bethel, he formed a Bible class, of which I was a member. We used to draw promiscuously from a hat a text of scripture and write a composition on the text, which compositions were read after service in the afternoon, to such of the congregation as remained to hear the exercises of the class. Once, I remember, I drew the text, Luke x. 42: "But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." *Question*, "What is the one thing needful?" My answer was nearly as follows:

"This question 'what is the one thing needful?' is capable of receiving various answers, depending much upon the persons to whom it is addressed. The merchant might answer that 'the one thing needful' is plenty of customers, who buy liberally, without beating down and pay cash for all their purchases.' The farmer might reply, that 'the one thing needful is large harvests and high prices.' The physician might answer that 'it is plenty of patients.' The lawyer might be of opinion that 'it is an unruly community, always engaged in bickerings and litigations.' The clergyman might reply, 'It is a fat salary with multitudes of sinners seeking salvation and paying large pew rents.' The bachelor might exclaim, 'It is a pretty wife who loves her husband, and who knows how to sew on buttons.' The maiden might answer, 'It is a good husband, who will love, cherish and protect me while life shall last.' But the most proper answer, and doubtless that which applied to the case of Mary, would be, 'The one thing needful is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, follow in his footsteps, love God and obey His commandments, love our fellow-man, and embrace every opportunity of administering to his necessities. In short, 'the one thing needful' is to live a life that we can always look back upon with satisfaction, and be enabled ever to contemplate its termination with trust in Him who has so kindly vouchsafed it to us, surrounding us with innumerable blessings, if we have but the heart and wisdom to receive them in a proper manner."

The reading of a portion of this answer occasioned some amusement in the congregation, in which the clergyman himself joined, and the name of "Taylor Barnum" was whispered in connection with the composition; but at the close of the reading I had the satisfaction of hearing Mr. Lowe say that it was a well written and truthful answer to the question, "What is the one thing needful?"

## CHAPTER II. INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES

DEATH OF MY GRANDMOTHER – MY FATHER – HIS CHARACTER  
– HIS DEATH – BEGINNING THE WORLD BAREFOOTED – GOING TO  
GRASSY PLAINS – THE TIN WARE AND GREEN BOTTLE LOTTERY  
– “CHAIRY” HALLETT – OUR FIRST MEETING – EVENING RIDE TO  
BETHEL – A NOVEL FUR TRADE – OLD “RUSHIA” AND YOUNG  
“RUSHIA” – THE BUYER SOLD – COUNTRY STORE EXPERIENCES –  
OLD “UNCLE BIBBINS” – A TERRIBLE DUEL BETWEEN BENTON AND  
BIBBINS – FALL OF BENTON – FLIGHT OF BIBBINS.

IN the month of August, 1825, my maternal grandmother met with an accident in stepping on the point of a rusty nail, and, though the matter was at first considered trivial, it resulted in her death. Alarming symptoms soon made her sensible that she was on her death-bed; and while she was in full possession of her faculties, the day before she died she sent for her grandchildren to take final leave of them. I shall never forget the sensations I experienced when she took me by the hand and besought me to lead a religious life, and especially to remember that I could in no way so effectually prove my love to God as by loving all my fellow-beings. The impressions of that death-bed scene have ever been among my most vivid recollections, and I trust they have proved in some degree salutary. A more exemplary woman, or a more sincere Christian than my grandmother, I have never known.

My father, for his time and locality, was a man of much enterprise. He could, and actually did, “keep a hotel”; he had a livery stable and ran, in a small way, what in our day would be called a Norwalk Express; and he also kept a country store. With greater opportunities and a larger field for his efforts and energies, he might have been a man of mark and means. Not that he was successful, for he never did a profitable business; but I, who saw him in his various pursuits, and acted as his clerk, caught something of his enterprising spirit, and, perhaps without egotism, I may say I inherited that characteristic. My business education was as good as the limited field afforded, and I soon put it to account and service.

On the 7th of September, 1825, my father, who had been sick since the month of March, died at the age of forty-eight years. My mother was left with five children, of whom I, at fifteen years of age, was the eldest, while the youngest was but seven. It was soon apparent that my father had provided nothing for the support of his family; his estate was insolvent, and it did not pay fifty cents on the dollar. My mother, by economy, industry, and perseverance, succeeded in a few years afterwards in redeeming the homestead and becoming its sole possessor; but, at the date of the death of my father, the world looked gloomy indeed; the few dollars I had accumulated and loaned to my father, holding his note therefor, were decided to be the property of a minor, belonging to the father and so to the estate, and my small claim was ruled out. I was obliged to get trusted for the pair of shoes I wore to my father’s funeral. I literally began the world with nothing, and was barefooted at that.

Leaving Mr. Weed, I went to Grassy Plain, a mile northwest of Bethel, and secured a situation as clerk in the store of James S. Keeler & Lewis Whitlock at six dollars a month and my board. I lived with Mrs. Jerusha Wheeler and her daughters, Jerusha and Mary, and found an excellent home. I chose my uncle, Alanson Taylor, as my guardian. I did my best to please my employers and soon gained their confidence and esteem and was regarded by them as an active clerk and a ‘cute trader. They afforded me many facilities for making money on my own account and I soon entered upon sundry speculations and succeeded in getting a small sum of money ahead.

I made a very remarkable trade at one time for my employers by purchasing, in their absence, a whole wagon load of green glass bottles of various sizes, for which I paid in unsalable goods at very

profitable prices. How to dispose of the bottles was then the problem, and as it was also desirable to get rid of a large quantity of tin ware which had been in the shop for years and was considerably "shop-worn," I conceived the idea of a lottery in which the highest prize should be twenty-five dollars, payable in any goods the winner desired, while there were to be fifty prizes of five dollars each, payable in goods, to be designated in the scheme. Then there were one hundred prizes of one dollar each, one hundred prizes of fifty cents each, and three hundred prizes of twenty-five cents each. It is unnecessary to state that the minor prizes consisted mainly of glass and tin ware; the tickets sold like wildfire, and the worn tin and glass bottles were speedily turned into cash.

As my mother continued to keep the village tavern at Bethel, I usually went home on Saturday night and stayed till Monday morning, going to church with my mother on Sunday. This habit was the occasion of an experience of momentous consequence to me. One Saturday evening, during a violent thunder shower, Miss Mary Wheeler, a milliner, sent me word that there was a girl from Bethel at her house, who had come up on horseback to get a new bonnet; that she was afraid to go back alone; and if I was going to Bethel that evening she wished me to escort her customer. I assented, and went over to "Aunt Rushia's" where I was introduced to "Chairy" (Charity) Hallett, a fair, rosy-cheeked, buxom girl, with beautiful white teeth. I assisted her to her saddle, and mounting my own horse, we trotted towards Bethel.

My first impressions of this girl as I saw her at the house were exceedingly favorable. As soon as we started I began a conversation with her and finding her very affable I regretted that the distance to Bethel was not five miles instead of one. A flash of lightning gave me a distinct view of the face of my fair companion and then I wished the distance was twenty miles. During our ride I learned that she was a tailoress, working with Mr. Zerah Benedict, of Bethel. We soon arrived at our destination and I bid her good night and went home. The next day I saw her at church, and, indeed, many Sundays afterwards, but I had no opportunity to renew the acquaintance that season.

Mrs. Jerusha Wheeler, with whom I boarded, and her daughter Jerusha were familiarly known, the one as "Aunt Rushia," and the other as "Rushia." Many of our store customers were hatters, and among the many kinds of furs we sold for the nap of hats was one known to the trade as "Russia." One day a hatter, Walter Dibble, called to buy some furs. I sold him several kinds, including "beaver" and "cony," and he then asked for some "Russia." We had none, and, as I wanted to play a joke upon him, I told him that Mrs. Wheeler had several hundred pounds of "Russia."

"What on earth is a woman doing with 'Russia?'" said he.

I could not answer, but I assured him that there were one hundred and thirty pounds of old Rushia and one hundred and fifty pounds of young Rushia in Mrs. Wheeler's house, and under her charge, but whether or not it was for sale I could not say. Off he started to make the purchase and knocked at the door. Mrs. Wheeler, the elder, made her appearance.

"I want to get your Russia," said the hatter.

Mrs. Wheeler asked him to walk in and be seated. She, of course, supposed that he had come for her daughter "Rushia."

"What do you want of Rushia?" asked the old lady.

"To make hats," was the reply.

"To trim hats, I suppose you mean?" responded Mrs. Wheeler.

"No, for the outside of hats," replied the hatter.

"Well, I don't know much about hats," said the old lady, "but I will call my daughter."

Passing into another room where "Rushia" the younger was at work, she informed her that a man wanted her to make hats.

"Oh, he means sister Mary; probably. I suppose he wants some ladies' hats," replied Rushia, as she went into the parlor.

"This is my daughter," said the old lady.

"I want to get your Russia," said he, addressing the young lady.

"I suppose you wish to see my sister Mary; she is our milliner," said young Rushia.

"I wish to see whoever owns the property," said the hatter.

Sister Mary was sent for, and as she was introduced, the hatter informed her that he wished to buy her "Russia."

"Buy Rushia!" exclaimed Mary in surprise; "I don't understand you."

"Your name is Miss Wheeler, I believe," said the hatter, who was annoyed by the difficulty he met with in being understood.

"It is, sir."

"Ah! very well. Is there old and young Russia in the house?"

"I believe there is," said Mary, surprised at the familiar manner in which he spoke of her mother and sister, who were present.

"What is the price of old Russia per pound?" asked the hatter.

"I believe, sir, that old Rushia is not for sale," replied Mary indignantly.

"Well, what do you ask for young Russia?" pursued the hatter.

"Sir," said Miss Rushia the younger, springing to her feet, "do you come here to insult defenceless females? If you do, sir, we will soon call our brother, who is in the garden, and he will punish you as you deserve."

"Ladies!" exclaimed the hatter, in astonishment, "what on earth have I done to offend you? I came here on a business matter. I want to buy some Russia. I was told you had old and young Russia in the house. Indeed, this young lady just stated such to be the fact, but she says the old Russia is not for sale. Now, if I can buy the young Russia I want to do so – but if that can't be done, please to say so and I will trouble you no further."

"Mother, open the door and let this man go out; he is undoubtedly crazy," said Miss Mary.

"By thunder! I believe I shall be if I remain here long," exclaimed the hatter, considerably excited. "I wonder if folks never do business in these parts, that you think a man is crazy if he attempts such a thing?"

"Business! poor man!" said Mary soothingly, approaching the door.

"I am not a poor man, madam," replied the hatter. "My name is Walter Dibble; I carry on hatting extensively in Danbury; I came to Grassy Plains to buy fur, and have purchased some 'beaver' and 'cony,' and now it seems I am to be called 'crazy' and a 'poor man,' because I want to buy a little 'Russia' to make up my assortment."

The ladies began to open their eyes; they saw that Mr. Dibble was quite in earnest, and his explanation threw considerable light upon the subject.

"Who sent you here?" asked sister Mary.

"The clerk at the opposite store," was the reply.

"He is a wicked young fellow for making all this trouble," said the old lady; "he has been doing this for a joke."

"A joke!" exclaimed Dibble, in surprise. "Have you no Russia, then?"

"My name is Jerusha, and so is my daughter's," said Mrs. Wheeler, "and that, I suppose, is what he meant by telling you about old and young Rushia."

Mr. Dibble bolted through the door without another word and made directly for our store. "You young scamp!" said he as he entered; "what did you mean by sending me over there to buy Russia?"

"I did not send you to *buy* Rushia; I supposed you were either a bachelor or widower and wanted to *marry* Rushia," I replied, with a serious countenance.

"You lie, you young dog, and you know it; but never mind, I'll pay you off some day"; and taking his furs, he departed with less ill-humor than could have been expected under the circumstances.

Among our customers were three or four old Revolutionary pensioners, who traded out the amounts of their pensions before they were due, leaving their papers as security. One of these pensioners was old Bevans, commonly known as "Uncle Bibbins," a man who loved his glass and was

very prone to relate romantic Revolutionary anecdotes and adventures, in which he, of course, was conspicuous. At one time he was in our debt, and though we held his pension papers, it would be three months before the money could be drawn. It was desirable to get him away for that length of time, and we hinted to him that it would be pleasant to make a visit to Guilford, where he had relations, but he would not go. Finally, I hit upon a plan which “moved” him.

A journeyman hatter, named Benton, who was fond of a practical joke, was let into the secret, and was persuaded to call “Uncle Bibbins” a coward, to tell him that he had been wounded in the back, and thus to provoke a duel, which he did, and at my suggestion “Uncle Bibbins” challenged Benton to fight him with musket and ball at a distance of twenty yards. The challenge was accepted, I was chosen second by “Uncle Bibbins,” and the duel was to come off immediately. My principal, taking me aside, begged me to put nothing in the guns but blank cartridges. I assured him it should be so, and therefore that he might feel perfectly safe. This gave the old man extra courage; he declared that he had not been so long in bloody battles “for nothing,” and that he would put a bullet through Benton’s heart at the first shot.

The ground was measured in the lot at the rear of our store, and the principals and seconds took their places. At the word given both parties fired. “Uncle Bibbins,” of course, escaped unhurt, but Benton leaped several feet into the air, and fell upon the ground with a dreadful yell, as if he had been really shot. “Uncle Bibbins” was frightened. As his second, I ran to him, told him I had neglected to extract the bullet from his gun (which was literally true, as there was no bullet in it to extract), and he supposed, of course, he had killed his adversary. I then whispered to him to go immediately to Guilford, to keep quiet, and he should hear from me as soon as it would be safe to do so. He started up the street on a run, and immediately quit the town for Guilford, where he kept himself quiet until it was time for him to return and sign his papers. I then wrote him that “he could return in safety; that his adversary had recovered from his wound, and now forgave him all, as he felt himself much to blame for having insulted a man of his known courage.”

“Uncle Bibbins” returned, signed the papers, and we obtained the pension money. A few days thereafter he met Benton.

“My brave old friend,” said Benton, “I forgive you my terrible wound and long confinement on the brink of the grave, and I beg you to forgive me also. I insulted you without a cause.”

“I forgive you freely,” said “Uncle Bibbins”; “but,” he added, “you must be careful next time how you insult a dead shot.”

Benton promised to be more circumspect in future, and “Uncle Bibbins” supposed to the day of his death that the duel, wound, danger, and all, were matters of fact.



## CHAPTER III. IN BUSINESS FOR MYSELF

MY CLERKSHIP IN BROOKLYN – UNEASINESS AND DISSATISFACTION – THE SMALL POX – GOING HOME TO RECRUIT – “CHAIRY” HALLETT AGAIN – BACK TO BROOKLYN – OPENING A PORTER-HOUSE – SELLING OUT – MY CLERKSHIP IN NEW YORK – MY HABITS – OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY – IN BETHEL ONCE MORE – BEGINNING BUSINESS ON MY OWN ACCOUNT – OPENING DAY – LARGE SALES AND GREAT PROFITS – THE LOTTERY BUSINESS – VIEWS THEREON – ABOUT A POCKET-BOOK – WITS AND WAGS – SWEARING OUT A FINE – FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE BAR – SECURING “ARABIAN” – A MODEL LOVE-LETTER.

Mr. Oliver Taylor removed from Danbury to Brooklyn, Long Island, where he kept a grocery store and also had a large comb factory and a comb store in New York. In the fall of 1826 he offered me a situation as clerk in his Brooklyn store, and I accepted it. I soon became conversant with the routine of my employer's business and before long he entrusted to me the purchasing of all goods for his store. I bought for cash entirely, going into the lower part of New York City in search of the cheapest market for groceries, often attending auctions of teas, sugars, molasses, etc., watching the sales, noting prices and buyers, and frequently combining with other grocers to bid off large lots, which we subsequently divided, giving each of us the quantity wanted at a lower rate than if the goods had passed into other hands, compelling us to pay another profit.

Situated as I was, and well treated as I was by my employer, who manifested great interest in me, still I was dissatisfied. A salary was not sufficient for me. My disposition was of that speculative character which refused to be satisfied unless I was engaged in some business where my profits might be enhanced, or, at least, made to depend upon my energy, perseverance, attention to business, tact, and “calculation.” Accordingly, as I had no opportunity to speculate on my own account, I became uneasy, and, young as I was, I began to talk of setting up for myself; for, although I had no capital, several men of means had offered to furnish the money and join me in business. I was in that uneasy, transitory state between boyhood and manhood when I had unbounded confidence in my own abilities, and yet needed a discreet counsellor, adviser and friend.

In the following summer, 1827, I was taken down with the small-pox and was confined to the house for several months. This sickness made a sad inroad upon my means. When I was sufficiently recovered, I started for home to recruit, taking passage on board a sloop for Norwalk, but the remaining passengers were so frightened at the appearance of my face, which still bore the marks of the disease, that I was obliged to go ashore again, which I did, stopping at Holt's, in Fulton Street, going to Norwalk by steamboat next morning, and arriving at Bethel in the afternoon.

During my convalescence at my mother's house, I visited my old friends and neighbors and had the opportunity to slightly renew my acquaintance with the attractive tailoress, “Chairy” Hallett. A month afterwards, I returned to Brooklyn, where I gave Mr. Taylor notice of my desire to leave his employment; and I then opened a porter-house on my own account. In a few months I sold out to good advantage and accepted a favorable offer to engage as clerk in a similar establishment, kept by Mr. David Thorp, 29 Peck Slip, New York. It was a great resort for Danbury and Bethel comb makers and hatters and I thus had frequent opportunities of seeing and hearing from my fellow-townsmen. I lived in Mr. Thorp's family and was kindly treated. I was often permitted to visit the theatre with friends who came to New York, and, as I had considerable taste for the drama, I soon became, in my own opinion, a discriminating critic – nor did I fail to exhibit my powers to my Connecticut friends

who accompanied me to the play. Let me gratefully add that my habits were not bad. Though I sold liquors to others, I do not think I ever drank a pint of liquor, wine, or cordials before I was twenty-two years of age. I always had a Bible, which I frequently read, and I attended church regularly. These habits, so far as they go, are in the right direction, and I am thankful to-day that they characterized my early youth. However worthy or unworthy may have been my later years, I *know* that I owe much of the better part of my nature to my youthful regard for Sunday and its institutions – a regard, I trust, still strong in my character.

In February, 1828, I returned to Bethel and opened a retail fruit and confectionery store in a part of my grandfather's carriage-house, which was situated on the main street, and which was offered to me rent free if I would return to my native village and establish some sort of business. This beginning of business on my own account was an eventful era in my life. My total capital was one hundred and twenty dollars, fifty of which I had expended in fitting up the store, and the remaining seventy dollars purchased my stock in trade. I had arranged with fruit dealers whom I knew in New York, to receive my orders, and I decided to open my establishment on the first Monday in May – our “general training” day.

It was a “red letter” day for me. The village was crowded with people from the surrounding region and the novelty of my little shop attracted attention. Long before noon I was obliged to call in one of my old schoolmates to assist in waiting upon my numerous customers and when I closed at night I had the satisfaction of reckoning up sixty-three dollars as my day's receipts. Nor, although I had received the entire cost of my goods, less seven dollars, did the stock seem seriously diminished; showing that my profits had been large. I need not say how much gratified I was with the result of this first day's experiment. The store was a fixed fact. I went to New York and expended all my money in a stock of fancy goods, such as pocket-books, combs, beads, rings, pocket-knives, and a few toys. These, with fruit, nuts, etc., made the business good through the summer, and in the fall I added stewed oysters to the inducements.

My grandfather, who was much interested in my success, advised me to take an agency for the sale of lottery tickets, on commission. In those days, the lottery was not deemed objectionable on the score of morality. Very worthy people invested in such schemes without a thought of evil, and then, as now, churches even got up lotteries, with this difference – that then they were called lotteries, and now they go under some other name. While I am very glad that an improved public sentiment denounces the lottery in general as an illegitimate means of getting money, and while I do not see how any one, especially in or near a New England State, can engage in a lottery without feeling a reproach which no pecuniary return can compensate; yet I cannot now accuse myself for having been lured into a business which was then sanctioned by good Christian people, who now join with me in reprobating enterprises they once encouraged. But as public sentiment was forty years ago, I obtained an agency to sell lottery tickets on a commission of ten per cent, and this business, in connection with my little store, made my profits quite satisfactory.

I used to have some curious customers. On one occasion a young man called on me and selected a pocket-book which pleased him, asking me to give him credit for a few weeks. I told him that if he wanted any article of necessity in my line, I should not object to trust him for a short time, but it struck me that a pocket-book was a decided superfluity for a man who had no money; I therefore declined to trust him as I did not see the necessity for his possessing such an article till he had something to put into it. Later in life I have been credited with the utterance of some sagacious remarks, but this with regard to the pocket-book, trivial as the matter is in itself, seems to me quite as deserving of note as any of my ideas which have created more sensation.

My store had much to do in giving shape to my future character as well as career, in that it became a favorite resort; the theatre of village talk, and the scene of many practical jokes. For any excess of the jocose element in my character, part of the blame must attach to my early surroundings as a village clerk and merchant. In that true resort of village wits and wags, the country store, fun,

pure and simple, will be sure to find the surface. My Bethel store was the scene of many most amusing incidents, in some of which I was an immediate participant, though in many, of course, I was only a listener or spectator.

The following scene makes a chapter in the history of Connecticut, as the State was when “blue-laws” were something more than a dead letter. To swear in those days was according to custom, but contrary to law. A person from New York State, whom I will call Crofut, who was a frequent visitor at my store, was a man of property, and equally noted for his self-will and his really terrible profanity. One day he was in my little establishment engaged in conversation, when Nathan Seelye, Esq., one of our village justices of the peace, and a man of strict religious principles, came in, and hearing Crofut’s profane language he told him he considered it his duty to fine him one dollar for swearing.

Crofut responded immediately with an oath, that he did not care a d – n for the Connecticut blue-laws.

“That will make two dollars,” said Mr. Seelye.

This brought forth another oath.

“Three dollars,” said the sturdy justice.

Nothing but oaths were given in reply, until Esquire Seelye declared the damage to the Connecticut laws to amount to fifteen dollars.

Crofut took out a twenty-dollar bill, and handed it to the justice of the peace, with an oath.

“Sixteen dollars,” said Mr. Seelye, counting out four dollars to hand to Mr. Crofut, as his change.

“Oh, keep it, keep it,” said Crofut, “I don’t want any change, I’ll d – d soon swear out the balance.” He did so, after which he was more circumspect in his conversation, remarking that twenty dollars a day for swearing was about as much as he could stand.

On another occasion, a man arrested for assault and battery was to be tried before my grandfather; who was a justice of the peace. A young medical student named Newton, volunteered to defend the prisoner, and Mr. Couch, the grand-juryman, came to me and said that as the prisoner had engaged a pettifogger, the State ought to have some one to represent its interests and he would give me a dollar to present the case. I accepted the fee and proposition. The fame of the “eminent counsel” on both sides drew quite a crowd to hear the case. As for the case itself, it was useless to argue it, for the guilt of the prisoner was established by evidence of half a dozen witnesses. However, Newton was bound to display himself, and so, rising with much dignity, he addressed my grandfather with, “May it please the honorable court,” etc., proceeding with a mixture of poetry and invective against Couch, the grand-juryman whom he assumed to be the vindictive plaintiff in this case. After alluding to him as such for the twentieth time, my grandfather stopped Newton in the midst of his splendid peroration and informed him that Mr. Couch was not the plaintiff in the case.

“Not the plaintiff! Then may it please your honor I should like to know who is the plaintiff?” inquired Newton.

He was quietly informed that the State of Connecticut was the plaintiff, whereupon Newton dropped into his seat as if he had been shot. Thereupon, I rose with great confidence, and speaking from my notes, proceeded to show the guilt of the prisoner from the evidence; that there was no discrepancy in the testimony; that none of the witnesses had been impeached; that no defence had been offered; that I was astonished at the audacity of both counsel and prisoner in not pleading guilty at once; and then, soaring aloft on general principles, I began to look about for a safe place to alight, when my grandfather interrupted me with —

“Young man, will you have the kindness to inform the court which side you are pleading for – the plaintiff or the defendant?”

It was my turn to drop, which I did amid a shout of laughter from every corner of the courtroom. Newton, who had been very downcast, looked up with a broad grin and the two “eminent

counsel” sneaked out of the room in company, while the prisoner was bound over to the next County Court for trial.

While my business in Bethel continued to increase beyond my expectations, I was also happy in believing that my suit with the fair tailoress, Charity Hallett, was duly progressing. Of all the young people with whom I associated in our parties, picnics, and sleigh-rides, she stood highest in my estimation and continued to improve upon acquaintance.

How I managed at one of our sleigh rides is worth narrating. My grandfather would, at any time, let me have a horse and sleigh, always excepting his new sleigh, the finest in the village, and a favorite horse called “Arabian.” I especially coveted this turnout for one of our parties, knowing that I could eclipse all my comrades, and so I asked grandfather if I could have “Arabian” and the new sleigh.

“Yes, if you have twenty dollars in your pocket,” was the reply.

I immediately showed the money, and, putting it back in my pocket, said with a laugh: “you see I have the money. I am much obliged to you; I suppose I can have ‘Arab’ and the new sleigh?”

Of course, he meant to deny me by making what he thought to be an impossible condition, to wit: that I should hire the team, at a good round price, if I had it at all, but I had caught him so suddenly that he was compelled to consent, and “Chairy” and I had the crack team of the party.

There was a young apprentice to the tailoring trade in Bethel, whom I will call John Mallett, whose education had been much neglected, and who had been paying his addresses to a certain “Lucretia” for some six months, with a strong probability of being jilted at last. On a Sunday evening she had declined to take his arm, accepting instead the arm of the next man who offered, and Mallett determined to demand an explanation. He accordingly came to me the Saturday evening following, asking me, when I had closed my store, to write a strong and remonstratory “love-letter” for him. I asked Bill Shepard, who was present, to remain and assist, and, in due time, the joint efforts of Shepard, Mallett, and myself resulted in the following production. I give the letter as an illustrative chapter in real life. In novels such correspondence is usually presented in elaborate rhetoric, with studied elegance of phrase. But the true language of the heart is always nearly the same in all time and in all tongues, and when the blood is up the writer is far more intent upon the matter than the manner, and aims to be forcible rather than elegant. The subjoined letter is certainly not after the manner of Chesterfield, but it is such a letter as a disappointed lover, spurred by

The green-eyed monster, which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on,

frequently indites. With a demand from Mallett that we should begin in strong terms, and Shepard acting as scribe, we concocted the following:

*Bethel, —, 18 —.*

Miss Lucretia, — I write this to ask an explanation of your conduct in giving me the mitten on Sunday night last. If you think, madam, that you can trifle with my affections, and turn me off for every little whipper-snapper that you can pick up, you will find yourself considerably mistaken. [We read thus far to Mallett, and it met his approval. He said he liked the idea of calling her “madam,” for he thought it sounded so “distant,” it would hurt her feelings very much. The term “little whipper-snapper” also delighted him. He said he guessed that would make her feel cheap. Shepard and myself were not quite so sure of its aptitude, since the chap who succeeded in capturing Lucretia, on the occasion alluded to, was a head and shoulders taller than Mallett. However, we did not intimate our thoughts to Mallett, and he desired us to “go ahead and give her another dose.”] You don’t know me, madam, if you think you can snap me up in this way. I wish you to understand that I can have the company of girls as much above you as the sun is above the earth, and I won’t stand any of your impudent nonsense no how. [This was duly read and approved. “Now,” said Mallett, “try to touch her

feelings. Remind her of the pleasant hours we have spent together”; and we continued as follows: ] My dear Lucretia, when I think of the many pleasant hours we have spent together – of the delightful walks which we have had on moonlight evenings to Fenner’s Rocks, Chestnut Ridge, Grassy Plains, Wildcat, and Puppy-town – of the strolls which we have taken upon Shelter Rocks, Cedar Hill – the visits we have made to Old Lane, Wolfpits, Toad-hole and Plum-trees<sup>1</sup> – when all these things come rushing on my mind, and when, my dear girl, I remember how often you have told me that you loved me better than anybody else, and I assured you my feelings were the same as yours, it almost breaks my heart to think of last Sunday night. [“Can’t you stick in some affecting poetry here?” said Mallett. Shepard could not recollect any to the point, nor could I, but as the exigency of the case seemed to require it, we concluded to manufacture a verse or two, which we did as follows:]

Lucretia, dear, what have I done,  
That you should use me thus and so,  
To take the arm of Tom Beers’ son,  
And let your dearest true-love go?

Miserable fate, to lose you now,  
And tear this bleeding heart asunder!  
Will you forget your tender vow?  
I can’t believe it – no, by thunder!

[Mallett did not like the word “thunder,” but being informed that no other word could be substituted without destroying both rhyme and reason, he consented that it should remain, provided we added two more stanzas of a *softer* nature; something, he said, that would make the tears come, if possible. We then ground out the following:]

Lucretia, dear, do write to Jack,  
And say with Beers you are not smitten;  
And thus to me in love come back,  
And give all other boys the mitten.

Do this, Lucretia, and till death  
I’ll love you to intense distraction;  
I’ll spend for you my every breath,  
And we will live in satisfaction.

[“That will do very well,” said Mallett. “Now I guess you had better blow her up a little more.” We obeyed orders as follows: ] It makes me mad to think what a fool I was to give you that finger-ring and bosom-pin, and spend so much time in your company, just to be flirted and bamboozled as I was on Sunday night last. If you continue this course of conduct, we part for ever, and I will thank you to send back that jewelry. I would sooner see it crushed under my feet than worn by a person who abused me as you have done. I shall despise you for ever if you don’t change your conduct towards me, and send me a letter of apology on Monday next. I shall not go to meeting to-morrow, for I would scorn to sit in the same meeting-house with you until I have an explanation of your conduct. If you allow any young man to go home with you to-morrow night, I shall know it, for you will be watched. [“There,” said Mallett, “that is pretty strong. Now I guess you had better touch her feelings once more, and wind up the letter.” We proceeded as follows: ] My sweet girl, if you only knew the sleepless

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<sup>1</sup> These were the euphonious names of localities in the vicinity of Bethel.

nights which I have spent during the present week, the torments and sufferings which I endure on your account; if you could but realize that I regard the world as less than nothing without you, I am certain you would pity me. A homely cot and a crust of bread with my adorable Lucretia would be a paradise, where a palace without you would be a hades. [“What in thunder is hades?” inquired Jack. We explained. He considered the figure rather bold, and requested us to close as soon as possible.] Now, dearest, in bidding you adieu, I implore you to reflect on our past enjoyments, look forward with pleasure to our future happy meetings, and rely upon your affectionate Jack in storm or calm, in sickness, distress, or want, for all these will be powerless to change my love. I hope to hear from you on Monday next, and, if favorable, I shall be happy to call on you the same evening, when in ecstatic joy we will laugh at the past, hope for the future, and draw consolation from the fact that “the course of true love never did run smooth.” This from your disconsolate but still hoping lover and admirer,

*Jack Mallett,*

P. S. – On reflection I have concluded to go to meeting to-morrow. If all is well, hold your pocket-handkerchief in your left hand as you stand up to sing with the choir – in which case I shall expect the pleasure of giving you my arm to-morrow night.

*J. M.*

The effect of this letter upon Lucretia, I regret to say, was not as favorable as could have been desired or expected. She declined to remove her handkerchief from her right hand and she returned the “ring and bosom-pin” to her disconsolate admirer, while, not many months after, Mallett’s rival led Lucretia to the altar. As for Mallett’s agreement to pay Shepard and myself five pounds of carpet rags and twelve yards of broadcloth “lists,” for our services, owing to his ill success, we compromised for one-half the amount.

## CHAPTER IV. STRUGGLES FOR A LIVELIHOOD

PLEASURE VISIT TO PHILADELPHIA – LIVING IN GRAND STYLE – THE BOTTOM OF THE PILE – BORROWING MONEY – MY MARRIAGE – RETURN TO BETHEL – EARLY MARRIAGES – MORE PRACTICAL JOKING – SECOND APPEARANCE AS COUNSEL – GOING TO HOUSEKEEPING – SELLING BOOKS AT AUCTION – THE “YELLOW STORE” – A NEW FIELD – “THE HERALD OF FREEDOM” – MY EDITORIAL CAREER – LIBEL SUITS – FINED AND IMPRISONED – LIFE IN THE DANBURY JAIL – CELEBRATION OF MY LIBERATION – POOR BUSINESS AND BAD DEBTS – REMOVAL TO NEW YORK – SEEKING MY FORTUNE – “WANTS”, IN THE “SUN” – WM. NIBLO – KEEPING A BOARDING-HOUSE – A WHOLE SHIRT ON MY BACK.

DURING this season I made arrangements with Mr. Samuel Sherwood, of Bridgeport, to go on an exploring expedition to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where we understood there was a fine opening for a lottery office and where we meant to try our fortunes, provided the prospects should equal our expectations. We went to New York where I had an interview with Mr. Dudley S. Gregory, the principal business man of Messrs. Yates and McIntyre, who dissuaded me from going to Pittsburg, and offered me the entire lottery agency for the State of Tennessee, if I would go to Nashville and open an office. The offer was tempting, but the distance was too far from a certain tailoress in Bethel.

As the Pittsburg trip was given up, Sherwood and I went to Philadelphia for a pleasure excursion and put up at Congress Hall in Chestnut Street where we lived in much grander style than we had been accustomed to. The array of waiters and display of dishes were far ahead of our former experiences and for a week we lived in clover. At the end of that time, however, when we concluded to start for home, the amount of our hotel bill astounded us. After paying it and securing tickets for New York, our combined purses showed a balance of but twenty-seven cents.

Twenty-five cents of this sum went to the boot-black, and as our breakfast was included in our bill we secured from the table a few biscuits for our dinner on the way to New York.

Arriving in New York we carried our own baggage to Holt's Hotel. The next morning Sherwood obtained a couple of dollars from a friend, and went to Newark and borrowed fifty dollars from his cousin, Dr. Sherwood, loaning me one-half the sum. After a few days' sojourn in the city we returned home.

During our stay in New York, I derived considerable information from the city managers with regard to the lottery business, and thereafter I bought my tickets directly from the Connecticut lottery managers at what was termed “the scheme price,” and also established agencies throughout the country, selling considerable quantities of tickets at handsome profits. My uncle, Alanson Taylor, joined me in the business, and, as we sold several prizes, my office came to be considered “lucky,” and I received orders from all parts of the country.

During this time I kept a close eye upon the attractive tailoress, Charity Hallett, and in the summer of 1829 I asked her hand in marriage. My suit was accepted, and the wedding day was appointed; I, meanwhile, applying myself closely to business, and no one but the parties immediately interested suspecting that the event was so near at hand. Miss Hallett went to New York in October, ostensibly to visit her uncle, Nathan Beers, who resided at No. 3 Allen Street. I followed in November, pressed by the necessity of purchasing goods for my store; and the evening after my arrival, November 8, 1829, the Rev. Dr. McAuley married us in the presence of sundry friends and relatives of my wife, and I became the husband of one of the best women in the world. In the course of the week

we went back to Bethel and took board in the family where Charity Barnum as “Chairy” Hallett had previously resided.

I do not approve or recommend early marriages. The minds of men and women taking so important a step in life should be somewhat matured, and hasty marriages, especially marriages of boys and girls, have been the cause of untold misery in many instances. But although I was only little more than nineteen years old when I was married, I have always felt assured that if I had waited twenty years longer I could not have found another woman so well suited to my disposition and so admirable and valuable in every character as a wife, a mother, and a friend.

My business occupations amply employed nearly all my time, yet so strong was my love of fun that when the opportunity for a practical joke presented itself, I could not resist the temptation. On one occasion I engaged in the character of counsel to conduct a case for an Irish peddler whose complaint was that one of our neighbors had turned him out of his house and had otherwise abused him.

The court was just as “real” as the attorney, – no more, – and consisted of three judges, one a mason, the second a butcher, and the third an old gentleman of leisure who was an ex-justice of the peace. The constable was of my own appointment, and my “writ” arrested the culprit who had turned my client out of house and home. The court was convened, but as the culprit did not appear, and as it seemed necessary that my client should get testimonials as to his personal character; the court adjourned nominally for one week, the client consenting to “stand treat” to cover immediate expenses.

I supposed that this was the end of it. But at the time named for the re-assembling of the “court,” a *real* lawyer from Newtown put in an appearance. He had been engaged by the Irishman to assist me in conducting the case! I saw at once that the joke was likely to prove a sorry one, and immediately notified the members of the “court,” who were quite as much alarmed as I was at the serious turn the thing had taken. I need not say that while the danger threatened we all took precious good care to keep out of the way. However, the affair was explained to Mr. Belden, the lawyer, who in turn set forth the matter to the client, but not in such a manner as to soothe the anger so natural under the circumstances – in fact, he advised the Irishman to get out of the place as soon as possible. The Irishman threatened me and my “court” with prosecution – a threat I really feared he would carry into execution, but which, to the great peace of mind of myself and my companions, he concluded not to follow up. Considering the vexation and annoyance of this Irishman, it was a mitigation to know that he was the party in the wrong and that he really deserved a severer punishment than my practical joke had put upon him.

In the winter of 1829-30, my lottery business had so extended that I had branch offices in Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford and Middletown, as well as agencies in the small villages for thirty miles around Bethel. I had also purchased from my grandfather three acres of land on which I built a house and went to housekeeping. My lottery business, which was with a few large customers, was so arranged that I could safely entrust it to an agent, making it necessary for me to find some other field for my individual enterprise.

So I tried my hand as an auctioneer in the book trade. I bought books at the auctions and from dealers and publishers in New York, and took them into the country, selling them at auction and doing tolerably well; only at Litchfield, Connecticut, where there was then a law school. At Newburgh, New York, several of my best books were stolen, and I quit the business in disgust.

In July, 1831, my uncle, Alanson Taylor, and myself opened a country store, in a building, which I had put up in Bethel in the previous spring, and we stocked the “yellow store,” as it was called, with a full assortment of groceries, hardware, crockery, and “notions”; but we were not successful in the enterprise, and in October following, I bought out my uncle’s interest and we dissolved partnership.

About this time, circumstances partly religious and partly political in their character led me into still another field of enterprise which honorably opened to me that notoriety of which in later life I surely have had a surfeit. Considering my youth, this new enterprise reflected credit upon my ability, as well as energy, and so I may be excused if I now recur to it with something like pride.



In a period of strong political excitement, I wrote several communications for the Danbury weekly paper, setting forth what I conceived to be the dangers of a sectarian interference which was then apparent in political affairs. The publication of these communications was refused and I accordingly purchased a press and types, and October 19, 1831, I issued the first number of my own paper, *The Herald of Freedom*.

I entered upon the editorship of this journal with all the vigor and vehemence of youth. The boldness with which the paper was conducted soon excited wide-spread attention and commanded a circulation which extended beyond the immediate locality into nearly every State in the Union. But lacking that experience which induces caution, and without the dread of consequences, I frequently laid myself open to the charge of libel and three times in three years I was prosecuted. A Danbury butcher, a zealous politician, brought a civil suit against me for accusing him of being a spy in a Democratic caucus. On the first trial the jury did not agree, but after a second trial I was fined several hundred dollars. Another libel suit against me was withdrawn and need not be mentioned further. The third was sufficiently important to warrant the following detail:

A criminal prosecution was brought against me for stating in my paper that a man in Bethel, prominent in the church, had "been guilty of taking *usury* of an orphan boy," and for severely commenting on the fact in my editorial columns. When the case came to trial the truth of my statement was substantially proved by

several witnesses and even by the prosecuting party. But "the greater the truth, the greater the libel," and then I had used the term "*usury*," instead of extortion, or note-shaving, or some other expression which might have softened the verdict. The result was that I was sentenced to pay a fine of one hundred dollars and to be imprisoned in the common jail for sixty days.

The most comfortable provision was made for me in Danbury jail. My room was papered and carpeted; I lived well; I was overwhelmed with the constant visits of my friends; I edited my paper as usual and received large accessions to my subscription list; and at the end of my sixty days' term the event was celebrated by a large concourse of people from the surrounding country. The court room in which I was convicted was the scene of the celebration. An ode, written for the occasion, was sung; an eloquent oration on the freedom of the press was delivered; and several hundred gentlemen afterwards partook of a sumptuous dinner followed by appropriate toasts and speeches. Then came the triumphant part of the ceremonial, which was reported in my paper of December 12, 1832, as follows:

"P. T. Barnum and the band of music took their seats in a coach drawn by six horses, which had been prepared for the occasion. The coach was preceded by forty horsemen, and a marshal, bearing the national standard. Immediately in the rear of the coach was the carriage of the Orator and the President of the day, followed by the Committee of Arrangements and sixty carriages of citizens, which joined in escorting the editor to his home in Bethel.

"When the procession commenced its march amidst the roar of cannon, three cheers were given by several hundred citizens who did not join in the procession. The band of music continued to play a variety of national airs until their arrival in Bethel, (a distance of three miles,) when they struck up the beautiful and appropriate tune of 'Home, Sweet Home!' After giving three hearty cheers, the procession returned to Danbury. The utmost harmony and unanimity of feeling prevailed throughout the day, and we are happy to add that no accident occurred to mar the festivities of the occasion."

My editorial career was one of continual contest. I however published the 160th number of *The Herald of Freedom* in Danbury, November 5, 1834, after which my brother-in-law, John W. Amerman, issued the paper for me at Norwalk till the following year, when the *Herald* was sold to Mr. George Taylor.

Meanwhile, I had taken Horace Fairchild into partnership in my mercantile business, in 1831, and I had sold out to him and to a Mr. Toucey, in 1833, they forming a partnership under the firm of Fairchild & Co. So far as I was concerned my store was not a success. Ordinary trade was too slow

for me. I bought largely and in order to sell I was compelled to give extensive credits. Hence I had an accumulation of bad debts; and my old ledger presents a long series of accounts balanced by “death,” by “running away,” by “failing,” and by other similarly remunerative returns. I had expended money as freely as I had gained it, for I had already learned that I could make money rapidly and in large sums, when I set about it with a will, and hence I did not realize the worth of what I seemed to gain so readily. I looked forward to a future of saving when I should see the need of accumulation.

There was nothing more for me to do in Bethel; and in the winter of 1834-5, I removed my family to New York, where I hired a house in Hudson Street. I had no pecuniary resources, excepting such as might be derived from debts left for collection with my agent at Bethel, and I went to the metropolis literally to seek my fortune. I hoped to secure a situation in some mercantile house, not at a fixed salary, but so as to derive such portion of the profits as might be due to my individual tact, energy, and perseverance in the interests of the business. But I could find no such position; my resources began to fail; my family were in ill health; I must do something for a living; and so I acted as “drummer” to several concerns which allowed me a small commission on sales to customers of my introduction.

Every morning I used to look at the “wants” in the *Sun* for something that would suit me; and I had many a wildgoose chase in following up those “wants.” In some instances success depended upon my advancing from three hundred to five hundred dollars; in other cases a new patent life-pill, or a self-acting mouse trap was to make my fortune. An advertisement announcing “An immense speculation on a small capital! \$10,000 easily made in one year!” turned out to be an offer of Professor Somebody at Scudder’s American Museum to sell a hydro-oxygen microscope, offered to me at two thousand dollars – one thousand in cash and the balance in sixty and ninety days, on good security, – and warranted to secure an independence after a short public exhibition through the country. If I had the desire to undertake this exhibition and experiment, I had not the capital. Other and many similar temptations were extended, but none of them seemed to open the door of fortune to me.

The advertisement in the *Sun*, of Mr. William Niblo, of Niblo’s Garden, for a barkeeper first brought me in contact with that gentlemanly and justly-popular proprietor. He wanted a well-recommended, well-behaved, trustworthy man to fill a vacant situation, but as he wished him to bind himself to remain three years, I, who was only seeking the means of temporary support, was precluded from accepting the position.

Nor did all my efforts secure a situation for me during the whole winter; but, in the spring, I received several hundred dollars from my agent in Bethel, and finding no better business, May 1, 1835, I opened a small private boarding-house at No. 52 Frankfort Street. We soon had a very good run of custom from our Connecticut acquaintances who had occasion to visit New York, and as this business did not sufficiently occupy my time, I bought an interest with Mr. John Moody in a grocery store, No. 156 South Street.

Although the years of manhood brought cares, anxieties, and struggles for a livelihood, they did not change my nature and the jocose element was still an essential ingredient of my being. I loved fun, practical fun, for itself and for the enjoyment which it brought. During the year, I occasionally visited Bridgeport where I almost always found at the hotel a noted joker, named Darrow, who spared neither friend nor foe in his tricks. He was the life of the bar-room and would always try to entrap some stranger in a bet and so win a treat for the company. He made several ineffectual attempts upon me, and at last, one evening, Darrow, who stuttered, made a final trial as follows: “Come, Barnum, I’ll make you another proposition; I’ll bet you hain’t got a whole shirt on your back.” The catch consists in the fact that generally only one-half of that convenient garment is on the back; but I had anticipated the proposition – in fact I had induced a friend, Mr. Hough, to put Darrow up to the trick, – and had folded a shirt nicely upon my back, securing it there with my suspenders. The bar-room was crowded with customers who thought that if I made the bet I should be nicely caught, and I made pretence of playing off and at the same time stimulated Darrow to press the bet by saying:

“That is a foolish bet to make; I am sure my shirt is whole because it is nearly new; but I don’t like to bet on such a subject.”

“A good reason why,” said Darrow, in great glee; “it’s ragged. Come, I’ll bet you a treat for the whole company you hain’t got a whole shirt on your b-b-b-back!”

“I’ll bet my shirt is cleaner than yours,” I replied.

“That’s nothing to do w-w-with the case; it’s ragged, and y-y-you know it.”

“I know it is not,” I replied, with pretended anger, which caused the crowd to laugh heartily.

“You poor ragged f-f-fellow, come down here from D-D-Danbury, I’m sorry for you,” said Darrow tantalizingly.

“You would not pay if you lost,” I remarked.

“Here’s f-f-five dollars I’ll put in Captain Hinman’s (the landlord’s) hands. Now b-b-bet if you dare, you ragged c-c-creature, you.”

I put five dollars in Captain Hinman’s hands, and told him to treat the company from it if I lost the bet.

“Remember,” said Darrow, “I b-b-bet you hain’t got a whole shirt on your b-b-back!”

“All right,” said I, taking off my coat and commencing to unbutton my vest. The whole company, feeling sure that I was caught, began to laugh heartily. Old Darrow fairly danced with delight, and as I laid my coat on a chair he came running up in front of me, and slapping his hands together, exclaimed:

“You needn’t t-t-take off any more c-c-c-clothes, for if it ain’t all on your b-b-back, you’ve lost it.”

“If it is, I suppose you have!” I replied, pulling the whole shirt from off my back!

Such a shriek of laughter as burst forth from the crowd I scarcely ever heard, and certainly such a blank countenance as old Darrow exhibited it would be hard to conceive. Seeing that he was most incontinently “done for,” and perceiving that his neighbor Hough had helped to do it, he ran up to him in great anger, and shaking his fist in his face, exclaimed:

“H-H-Hough, you infernal r-r-rascal, to go against your own n-n-neighbor in favor of a D-D-Danbury man. I’ll pay you for that some time, you see if I d-d-don’t.”

All hands went up to the bar and drank with a hearty good will, for it was seldom that Darrow got taken in, and he was such an inveterate joker they liked to see him paid in his own coin. Never till the day of his death did he hear the last of the “whole shirt.”

## CHAPTER V. MY START AS A SHOWMAN

THE AMUSEMENT BUSINESS – DIFFERENT GRADES – CATERING FOR THE PUBLIC – MY CLAIMS, AIMS AND EFFORTS – JOICE HETH – APPARENT GENUINENESS OF HER VOUCHERS – BEGINNING LIFE AS A SHOWMAN – SUCCESS OF MY FIRST EXHIBITION – SECOND STEP IN THE SHOW LINE – SIGNOR VIVALLA – MY FIRST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE – AT WASHINGTON – ANNE ROYALL – STIMULATING THE PUBLIC – CONTESTS BETWEEN VIVALLA AND ROBERTS – EXCITEMENT AT FEVER HEAT – CONNECTING MYSELF WITH A CIRCUS – BREAD AND BUTTER DINNER FOR THE WHOLE COMPANY – NARROW ESCAPE FROM SUFFOCATION – LECTURING AN ABUSIVE CLERGYMAN – AARON TURNER – A TERRIBLE PRACTICAL JOKE – I AM REPRESENTED TO BE A MURDERER – RAILS AND LYNCH LAW – NOVEL MEANS FOR SECURING NOTORIETY.

BY this time it was clear to my mind that my proper position in this busy world was not yet reached. I had displayed the faculty of getting money, as well as getting rid of it; but the business for which I was destined, and, I believe, made, had not yet come to me; or rather, I had not found that I was to cater for that insatiate want of human nature – the love of amusement; that I was to make a sensation on two continents; and that fame and fortune awaited me so soon as I should appear before the public in the character of a showman. These things I had not foreseen. I did not seek the position or the character. The business finally came in my way; I fell into the occupation, and far beyond any of my predecessors on this continent, I have succeeded.

The show business has all phases and grades of dignity, from the exhibition of a monkey to the exposition of that highest art in music or the drama, which entrances empires and secures for the gifted artist a world-wide fame which princes well might envy. Such art is merchantable, and so with the whole range of amusements, from the highest to the lowest. The old word “trade” as it applies to buying cheap and selling at a profit, is as manifest here as it is in the dealings at a street-corner stand or in Stewart’s store covering a whole square. This is a trading world, and men, women and children, who cannot live on gravity alone, need something to satisfy their gayer, lighter moods and hours, and he who ministers to this want is in a business established by the Author of our nature. If he worthily fulfils his mission, and amuses without corrupting, he need never feel that he has lived in vain.

Whether I may claim a pre-eminence of grandeur in my career as a dispenser of entertainment for mankind, I may not say. I have sometimes been weak enough to think so, but let others judge; and whether I may assume that on the whole, I have sought to make amusement harmless, and have succeeded to a very great degree, in eliminating from public entertainments certain corruptions which have made so many theatrical “sensations” positively shameful, may safely be left, I think, to the thousands upon thousands who have known me and the character of my amusement so long and so well.

But I shall by no means claim entire faultlessness in my history as a showman. I confess that I have not always been strong enough to rise out of the exceptional ways which characterize the art of amusing – not more, however, than any other art of trade. When, in beginning business under my own name in Bethel, in 1831, I advertised that I would sell goods “25 per cent cheaper” than any of my neighbors, I was guilty of a trick of trade, but so common a trick, that very few who saw my promise were struck with a sense of any particular enormity therein, while, doubtless, a good many,

who claim to be specially exemplary, thought they were reading one of their own advertisements. And in the show business I was never guilty of a greater sin than this against truthfulness and fair dealing.

The least deserving of all my efforts in the show line was the one which introduced me to the business; a scheme in no sense of my own devising; one which had been sometime before the public and which had so many vouchers for its genuineness that at the time of taking possession of it I honestly believed it to be genuine; something, too, which, as I have said, I did not seek, but which by accident came in my way and seemed almost to compel my agency – such was the “Joice Heth” exhibition which first brought me forward as a showman.

In the summer of 1835, Mr. Coley Bartram, of Reading, Connecticut, informed me that he had owned an interest in a remarkable negro woman whom he believed to be one hundred and sixty-one years old, and whom he also believed to have been the nurse of General Washington. He then showed me a copy of the following advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, of July 15, 1835:

Curiosity. – The citizens of Philadelphia and its vicinity have an opportunity of witnessing at the Masonic Hall, one of the greatest natural curiosities ever witnessed, viz: Joice Heth, a negress, aged 161 years, who formerly belonged to the father of General Washington. She has been a member of the Baptist Church one hundred and sixteen years, and can rehearse many hymns, and sing them according to former custom. She was born near the old Potomac River in Virginia, and has for ninety or one hundred years lived in Paris, Kentucky, with the Bowling family.

All who have seen this extraordinary woman are satisfied of the truth of the account of her age. The evidence of the Bowling family, which is respectable, is strong, but the original bill of sale of Augustine Washington, in his own handwriting, and other evidences which the proprietor has in his possession, will satisfy even the most incredulous.

A lady will attend at the hall during the afternoon and evening for the accommodation of those ladies who may call.

Mr. Bartram further stated that he had sold out his interest to his partner, R. W. Lindsay, of Jefferson County, Kentucky, who was then exhibiting Joice Heth in Philadelphia, but was anxious to sell out and go home – the alleged reason being that he had very little tact as a showman. As the New York papers had also contained some account of Joice Heth, I went on to Philadelphia to see Mr. Lindsay and his exhibition.

Joice Heth was certainly a remarkable curiosity, and she looked as if she might have been far older than her age as advertised. She was apparently in good health and spirits, but from age or disease, or both, was unable to change her position; she could move one arm at will, but her lower limbs could not be straightened; her left arm lay across her breast and she could not remove it; the fingers of her left hand were drawn down so as nearly to close it, and were fixed; the nails on that hand were almost four inches long and extended above her wrist; the nails on her large toes had grown to the thickness of a quarter of an inch; her head was covered with a thick bush of grey hair; but she was toothless and totally blind and her eyes had sunk so deeply in the sockets as to have disappeared altogether.

Nevertheless she was pert and sociable, and would talk as long as people would converse with her. She was quite garrulous about her *protege* “dear little George,” at whose birth she declared she was present, having been at the time a slave of Elizabeth Atwood, a half-sister of Augustine Washington, the father of George Washington. As nurse she put the first clothes on the infant and she claimed to have “raised him.” She professed to be a member of the Baptist church, talking much in her way on religious subjects, and she sang a variety of ancient hymns.

In proof of her extraordinary age and pretensions, Mr. Lindsay exhibited a bill of sale, dated February 5, 1727, from Augustine Washington, County of Westmoreland, Virginia, to Elizabeth Atwood, a half-sister and neighbor of Mr. Washington, conveying “one negro woman, named Joice Heth, aged fifty-four years, for and in consideration of the sum of thirty-three pounds lawful money of Virginia.” It was further claimed that as she had long been a nurse in the Washington family she was called in at the birth of George and clothed the new-born infant. The evidence seemed authentic

and in answer to the inquiry why so remarkable a discovery had not been made before, a satisfactory explanation was given in the statement that she had been carried from Virginia to Kentucky, had been on the plantation of John S. Bowling so long that no one knew or cared how old she was, and only recently the accidental discovery by Mr. Bowling's son of the old bill of sale in the Record Office in Virginia had led to the identification of this negro woman as "the nurse of Washington."

Everything seemed so straightforward that I was anxious to become proprietor of this novel exhibition, which was offered to me at one thousand dollars, though the price first demanded was three thousand. I had five hundred dollars, borrowed five hundred dollars more, sold out my interest in the grocery business to my partner, and began life as a showman. At the outset of my career I saw that everything depended upon getting people to think, and talk, and become curious and excited over and about the "rare spectacle." Accordingly, posters, transparencies, advertisements, newspaper paragraphs – all calculated to extort attention – were employed, regardless of expense. My exhibition rooms in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Albany and in other large and small cities, were continually thronged and much money was made. In the following February, Joice Heth died, literally of old age, and her remains received a respectable burial in the town of Bethel.

At a post-mortem examination of Joice Heth by Dr. David L. Rogers, in the presence of some medical students, it was thought that the absence of ossification indicated considerably less age than had been assumed for her; but the doctors disagreed, and this "dark subject" will probably always continue to be shrouded in mystery.

I had at last found my true vocation. Indeed, soon after I began to exhibit Joice Heth, I had entrusted her to an agent and had entered upon my second step in the show line. The next venture, whatever it may have been in other respects, had the merit of being, in every essential, unmistakably genuine. I engaged from the Albany Museum an Italian who called himself "Signor Antonio" and who performed certain remarkable feats of balancing, stilt-walking, plate-spinning, etc. He had gone from England to Canada, and thence to Albany, and had performed in other American cities. I made terms with him for one year to exhibit anywhere in the United States at twelve dollars a week and expenses, and induced him to change his stage name to "Signor Vivalla." I then wrote a notice of his wonderful qualities and performances, printed it in one of the Albany papers as news, sent copies to the theatrical managers in New York and in other cities, and went with Vivalla to the metropolis.

Manager William Dinneford, of the Franklin Theatre, had seen so many performances of the kind that he declined to engage my "eminent Italian artist"; but I persuaded him to try Vivalla one night for nothing and by the potent aid of printer's ink the house was crammed. I appeared as a supernumerary to assist Vivalla in arranging his plates and other "properties"; and to hand him his gun to fire while he was hopping on one stilt ten feet high. This was "my first appearance on any stage." The applause which followed Vivalla's feats was tremendous, and Manager Dinneford was so delighted that he engaged him for the remainder of the week at fifty dollars. At the close of the performance, in response to a call from the house, I made a speech for Vivalla, thanking the audience for their appreciation and announcing a repetition of the exhibition every evening during the week.

Vivalla remained a second week at the Franklin Theatre, for which I received \$150. I realized the same sum for a week in Boston. We then went to Washington to fulfil an engagement which was far from successful, since my remuneration depended upon the receipts, and it snowed continually during the week. I was a loser to such an extent that I had not funds enough to return to Philadelphia. I pawned my watch and chain for thirty-five dollars, when fortunately Manager Wemyss arrived on Saturday morning and loaned me the money to redeem my property.

As this was my first visit to Washington I was much interested in visiting the capitol and other public buildings. I also satisfied my curiosity in seeing Clay, Calhoun, Benton, John Quincy Adams, Richard M. Johnson, Polk, and other leading statesmen of the time. I was also greatly gratified in calling upon Anne Royall, author of the Black Book, publisher of a little paper called "Paul Pry," and quite a celebrated personage in her day. I had exchanged *The Herald of Freedom* with her journal

and she strongly sympathized with me in my persecutions. She was delighted to see me and although she was the most garrulous old woman I ever saw, I passed a very amusing and pleasant time with her. Before leaving her, I manifested my showman propensity by trying to hire her to give a dozen or more lectures on "Government," in the Atlantic cities, but I could not engage her at any price, although I am sure the speculation would have been a very profitable one. I never saw this eccentric woman again; she died at a very advanced age, October 1, 1854, at her residence in Washington.

I went with Vivalla to Philadelphia and opened at the Walnut Street Theatre. Though his performances were very meritorious and were well received, theatricals were dull and houses were slim. It was evident that something must be done to stimulate the public.

And now that instinct – I think it must be – which can arouse a community and make it patronize, provided the article offered is worthy of patronage – an instinct which served me strangely in later years, astonishing the public and surprising me, came to my relief, and the help, curiously enough, appeared in the shape of an emphatic hiss from the pit!

This hiss, I discovered, came from one Roberts, a circus performer, and I had an interview with him. He was a professional balancer and juggler, who boasted that he could do all Vivalla had done and something more. I at once published a card in Vivalla's name, offering \$1000 to any one who would publicly perform Vivalla's feats at such place as should be designated, and Roberts issued a counter card, accepting the offer. I then contracted with Mr. Warren, treasurer of the Walnut St. Theatre, for one-third of the proceeds, if I should bring the receipts up to \$400 a night – an agreement he could well afford to make as his receipts the night before had been but seventy-five dollars. From him I went to Roberts, who seemed disposed to "back down," but I told him I should not insist upon the terms of his published card, and asked him if he was under any engagement? Learning that he was not, I offered him thirty dollars to perform under my direction one night at the Walnut, and he accepted. A great trial of skill between Roberts and Vivalla was duly announced by posters and through the press. Meanwhile, they rehearsed privately to see what tricks each could perform, and the "business" was completely arranged.

Public excitement was at fever heat, and on the night of the trial the pit and upper boxes were crowded to the full; indeed sales of tickets to these localities were soon stopped, for there were no seats to sell. The "contest" between the performers, was eager and each had his party in the house. So far as I could learn, no one complained that he did not get all he paid for on that occasion. I engaged Roberts for a month and his subsequent "contests" with Vivalla amused the public and put money in my purse.

Vivalla continued to perform for me in various places, including Peale's Museum, in New York, and I took him to different towns in Connecticut and in New Jersey, with poor success sometimes, as frequently the expenses exceeded the receipts.

In April, 1836, I connected myself with Aaron Turner's travelling circus company as ticket-seller, secretary and treasurer, at thirty dollars a month and one-fifth of the entire profits, while Vivalla was to receive a salary of fifty dollars. As I was already paying him eighty dollars a month, our joint salaries reimbursed me and left me the chance of twenty per cent of the net receipts. We started from Danbury for West Springfield, Massachusetts, April 26th, and on the first day, instead of halting to dine, as I expected, Mr. Turner regaled the whole company with three loaves of rye bread and a pound of butter, bought at a farm house at a cost of fifty cents, and, after watering the horses, we went on our way.

We began our performances at West Springfield, April 28th, and as our expected band of music had not arrived from Providence, I made a prefatory speech announcing our disappointment, and our intention to please our patrons, nevertheless. The two Turner boys, sons of the proprietor, rode finely. Joe Pentland, one of the wittiest, best, and most original of clowns, with Vivalla's tricks and other performances in the ring, more than made up for the lack of music. In a day or two our band arrived and our "houses" improved. My diary is full of incidents of our summer tour

through numerous villages, towns, and cities in New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, and North Carolina.

While we were at Cabotville, Massachusetts, on going to bed one night one of my room-mates threw a lighted stump of a cigar into a spit-box filled with sawdust and the result was that about one o'clock T. V. Turner, who slept in the room, awoke in the midst of a dense smoke and barely managed to crawl to the window to open it, and to awaken us in time to save us from suffocation.

At Lenox, Massachusetts, one Sunday I attended church as usual, and the preacher denounced our circus and all connected with it as immoral, and was very abusive; whereupon when he had read the closing hymn I walked up the pulpit stairs and handed him a written request, signed "P. T. Barnum, connected with the circus, June 5, 1836," to be permitted to reply to him. He declined to notice it, and after the benediction I lectured him for not giving me an opportunity to vindicate myself and those with whom I was connected. The affair created considerable excitement and some of the members of the church apologized to me for their clergyman's ill-behavior. A similar affair happened afterwards at Port Deposit, on the lower Susquehanna, and in this instance I addressed the audience for half an hour, defending the circus company against the attacks of the clergyman, and the people listened, though their pastor repeatedly implored them to go home. Often have I collected our company on Sunday and read to them the Bible or a printed sermon, and one or more of the men frequently accompanied me to church. We made no pretence of religion, but we were not the worst people in the world, and we thought ourselves entitled to at least decent treatment when we went to hear the preaching of the gospel.

The proprietor of the circus, Aaron Turner, was a self-made man, who had acquired a large fortune by his industry. He believed that any man with health and common sense could become rich if he only resolved to be so, and he was very proud of the fact that he began the world with no advantages, no education, and without a shilling. Withal, he was a practical joker, as I more than once discovered to my cost. While we were at Annapolis, Maryland, he played a trick upon me which was fun to him, but was very nearly death to me.

We arrived on Saturday night and as I felt quite "flush" I bought a fine suit of black clothes. On Sunday morning I dressed myself in my new suit and started out for a stroll. While passing through the bar-room Turner called the attention of the company present to me and said:

"I think it very singular you permit that rascal to march your streets in open day. It wouldn't be allowed in Rhode Island, and I suppose that is the reason the black-coated scoundrel has come down this way."

"Why, who is he?" asked half a dozen at once.

"Don't you know? Why that is the Rev. E. K. Avery, the murderer of Miss Cornell!"

"Is it possible!" they exclaimed, all starting for the door, eager to get a look at me, and swearing vengeance.

It was only recently that the Rev. Ephraim K. Avery had been tried in Rhode Island for the murder of Miss Cornell, whose body was discovered in a stack-yard, and though Avery was acquitted in court, the general sentiment of the country condemned him. It was this Avery whom Turner made me represent. I had not walked far in my fine clothes, before I was overtaken by a mob of a dozen, which rapidly increased to at least a hundred, and my ears were suddenly saluted with such observations as, "the lecherous old hypocrite," "the sanctified murderer," "the black-coated villain," "lynch the scoundrel," "let's tar and feather him," and like remarks which I had no idea applied to me till one man seized me by the collar, while five or six more appeared on the scene with a rail.

"Come," said the man who collared me, "old chap, you can't walk any further; we know you, and as we always make gentlemen ride in these parts, you may just prepare to straddle that rail!"

My surprise may be imagined. "Good heavens!" I exclaimed, as they all pressed around me, "gentlemen, what have I done?"



“Oh, we know you,” exclaimed half a dozen voices; “you needn’t roll your sanctimonious eyes; that game don’t take in this country. Come, straddle the rail, and *remember the stack-yard!*”

I grew more and more bewildered; I could not imagine what possible offence I was to suffer for, and I continued to exclaim, “Gentlemen, what have I done? Don’t kill me, gentlemen, but tell me what I have done.”

“Come, make him straddle the rail; well show him how to hang poor factory girls,” shouted a man in the crowd.

The man who had me by the collar then remarked, “Come, *Mr. Avery*, it’s no use, you see, we know you, and we’ll give you a touch of Lynch law, and start you for home again.”

“My name is *not* Avery, gentlemen; you are mistaken in your man,” I exclaimed.

“Come, come, none of your gammon; straddle the rail, Ephraim.”

The rail was brought and I was about to be placed on it, when the truth flashed upon me.

“Gentlemen,” I exclaimed, “I am not Avery; I despise that villain as much as you can; my name is Barnum; I belong to the circus which arrived here last night, and I am sure Old Turner, my partner, has hoaxed you with this ridiculous story.”

“If he has we’ll lynch him,” said one of the mob.

“Well, he has, I’ll assure you, and if you will walk to the hotel with me, I’ll convince you of the fact.”

This they reluctantly assented to, keeping, however, a close hand upon me. As we walked up the main street, the mob received a re-enforcement of some fifty or sixty, and I was marched like a malefactor up to the hotel. Old Turner stood on the piazza ready to explode with laughter. I appealed to him for heaven’s sake to explain this matter, that I might be liberated. He continued to laugh, but finally told them “he believed there was some mistake about it. The fact is,” said he, “my friend Barnum has a new suit of black clothes on and he looks so much like a priest that I thought he must be Avery.”

The crowd saw the joke and seemed satisfied. My new coat had been half torn from my back and I had been very roughly handled. But some of the crowd apologized for the outrage, declaring that Turner ought to be served in the same way, while others advised me to “get even with him.” I was very much offended, and when the mob dispersed I asked Turner what could have induced him to play such a trick upon me.

“My dear Mr. Barnum,” he replied, “it was all for our good. Remember, all we need to insure success is notoriety. You will see that this will be noised all about town as a trick played by one of the circus managers upon the other, and our pavilion will be crammed to-morrow night.”

It was even so; the trick was told all over town and every one came to see the circus managers who were in a habit of playing practical jokes upon each other. We had fine audiences while we remained at Annapolis, but it was a long time before I forgave Turner for his rascally “joke.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### MY FIRST TRAVELLING COMPANY

THREE MEALS AND LODGING IN ONE HOUR – TURNING THE TABLES ON TURNER – A SON AS OLD AS HIS FATHER – LEAVING THE CIRCUS WITH TWELVE HUNDRED DOLLARS – MY FIRST TRAVELLING COMPANY – PREACHING TO THE PEOPLE – APPEARING AS A NEGRO MINSTREL – THREATENED WITH ASSASSINATION – ESCAPES FROM DANGER – TEMPERANCE – REPORT OF MY ARREST FOR MURDER – RE-ENFORCING MY COMPANY – “BARNUM’S GRAND SCIENTIFIC AND MUSICAL THEATRE” – OUTWITTING A SHERIFF – “LADY HAYES’S” MANSION AND PLANTATION – A BRILLIANT AUDIENCE – BASS DRUM SOLO – CROSSING THE INDIAN NATION – JOE PENTLAND AS A SAVAGE – TERROR AND FLIGHT OF VIVALLA – A NONPLUSSED LEGERDEMAIN PERFORMER – A MALE EGG-LAYER – DISBANDING MY COMPANY – A NEW PARTNERSHIP – PUBLIC LECTURING – DIFFICULTY WITH A DROVER – THE STEAMBOAT “CERES” – SUDDEN MARRIAGE ON BOARD – MOBBED IN LOUISIANA – ARRIVAL AT NEW ORLEANS.

An amusing incident occurred when we were at Hanover Court House, in Virginia. It rained so heavily that we could not perform there and Turner decided to start for Richmond immediately after dinner, when he was informed by the landlord that as our agent had engaged three meals and lodging for the whole company, the entire bill must be paid whether we went then, or next morning. No compromise could be effected with the stubborn landlord and so Turner proceeded to get the worth of his money as follows:

He ordered dinner at twelve o’clock, which was duly prepared and eaten. The table was cleared and re-set for supper at half-past twelve. At one o’clock we all went to bed, every man carrying a lighted candle to his room. There were thirty-six of us and we all undressed and tumbled into bed as if we were going to stay all night. In half an hour we rose and went down to the hot breakfast which Turner had demanded and which we found smoking on the table. Turner was very grave, the landlord was exceedingly angry, and the rest of us were convulsed with laughter at the absurdity of the whole proceeding. We disposed of our breakfast as if we had eaten nothing for ten hours and then started for Richmond with the satisfaction that we fairly settled with our unreasonable landlord.

At Richmond, after performances were over one night, I managed to partially pay Turner for his Avery trick. A dozen or more of us were enjoying ourselves in the sitting room of the hotel, telling stories and singing songs, when some of the company proposed sundry amusing arithmetical questions, followed by one from Turner, which was readily solved. Hoping to catch Turner I then proposed the following problem:

“Suppose a man is thirty years of age and he has a child one year of age; he is thirty times older than his child. When the child is thirty years old, the father, being sixty, is only twice as old as his child. When the child is sixty the father is ninety, and therefore only one-third older than the child. When the child is ninety the father is one hundred and twenty, and therefore only one-fourth older than the child. Thus you see, the child is gradually but surely gaining on the parent, and as he certainly continues to come nearer and nearer, in time he must overtake him. The question therefore is, suppose it was possible for them to live long enough, how old would the father be when the child overtook him and became of the same age?”

The company generally saw the catch; but Turner was very much interested in the problem, and although he admitted he knew nothing about arithmetic he was convinced that as the son was gradually gaining on the father he must reach him if there was time enough – say, a thousand years, or so – for the race. But an old gentleman gravely remarked that the idea of a son becoming as old as his father while both were living was simply nonsense, and he offered to bet a dozen of champagne that the thing was impossible, even “in figures.” Turner, who was a betting man, and who thought the problem might be proved, accepted the wager; but he was soon convinced that however much the boy might relatively gain upon his father, there would always be thirty years difference in their ages. The champagne cost him \$25, and he failed to see the fun of my arithmetic, though at last he acknowledged that it was a fair offset to the Avery trick.

We went from Richmond to Petersburg, and from that place to Warrenton, North Carolina, where, October 30th, my engagement expired with a profit to myself of \$1,200. I now separated from the circus company, taking Vivalla, James Sanford, (a negro singer and dancer,) several musicians, horses, wagons, and a small canvas tent with which I intended to begin a travelling exhibition of my own. My company started and Turner took me on the way in his own carriage some twenty miles. We parted reluctantly and my friend wished me every success in my new venture.

On Saturday, November 12, 1836, we halted at Rocky Mount Falls, North Carolina, and on my way to the Baptist Church, Sunday morning, I noticed a stand and benches in a grove near by, and determined to speak to the people if I was permitted. The landlord who was with me said that the congregation, coming from a distance to attend a single service, would be very glad to hear a stranger and I accordingly asked the venerable clergyman to announce that after service I would speak for half an hour in the grove. Learning that I was not a clergyman, he declined to give the notice, but said that he had no objection to my making the announcement, which I did, and the congregation, numbering about three hundred, promptly came to hear me.

I told them I was not a preacher and had very little experience in public speaking; but I felt a deep interest in matters of morality and religion, and would attempt, in a plain way, to set before them the duties and privileges of man. I appealed to every man's experience, observation and reason, to confirm the Bible doctrine of wretchedness in vice and happiness in virtue. We cannot violate the laws of God with impunity, and he will not keep back the wages of well-doing. The outside show of things is of very small account. We must look to realities and not to appearances. “Diamonds may glitter on a vicious breast,” but “the soul's calm sunshine and the heart-felt joy is virtue's prize.” The rogue, the passionate man, the drunkard, are not to be envied even at the best, and a conscience hardened by sin is the most sorrowful possession we can think of. I went on in this way, with some scriptural quotations and familiar illustrations, for three-quarters of an hour. At the close of my address several persons took me by the hand, expressing themselves as greatly pleased and desiring to know my name; and I went away with the feeling that possibly I might have done some good in the beautiful grove on that charming Sunday morning.

When we were at Camden, South Carolina, Sanford suddenly left me, and as I had advertised negro songs and none of my company was competent to fill Sanford's place, not to disappoint my audience, I blacked myself and sung the advertised songs, “Zip Coon,” etc., and to my surprise was much applauded, while two of the songs were encored. One evening after singing my songs I heard a disturbance outside the tent and going to the spot found a person disputing with my men. I took part on the side of the men, when the person who was quarrelling with them drew a pistol and exclaiming, “you black scoundrel! how dare you use such language to a white man,” he proceeded to cock it. I saw that he thought I was a negro and meant to blow my brains out. Quick as thought I rolled my sleeve up, showed my skin, and said, “I am as white as you are, sir.” He dropped his pistol in positive fright and begged my pardon. My presence of mind saved me.

On four different occasions in my life I have had a loaded pistol pointed at my head and each time I have escaped death by what seemed a miracle. I have also often been in deadly peril by

accidents, and when I think of these things I realize my indebtedness to an all-protecting Providence. Reviewing my career, too, and considering the kind of company I kept for years and the associations with which I was surrounded and connected, I am surprised as well as grateful that I was not ruined. I honestly believe that I owe my preservation from the degradation of living and dying a loafer and a vagabond, to the single fact that I was never addicted to strong drink. To be sure, I have in times past drank liquor, but I have generally wholly abstained from intoxicating beverages, and for more than twenty years past, I am glad to say, I have been a strict "teetotaller."

At Camden I lost one of my musicians, a Scotchman named Cochran, who was arrested for advising the negro barber who was shaving him to run away to the Free States or to Canada. I made every effort to effect Cochran's release, but he was imprisoned more than six months.

While I was away from home I generally wrote twice a week to my family and received letters nearly as often from my wife. One of her letters, which I received in Columbia, South Carolina, informed me it was currently reported in Connecticut that I was under sentence of death in Canada for murder! The story grew out of a rumor about a difficulty in Canada between some rowdies and a circus company – not Turner's, – for we met his troupe at Columbia, December 5, 1836. That company was then to be disbanded and I bought four horses and two wagons and hired Joe Pentland and Robert White to join my company. White, as a negro-singer, would relieve me from that roll, and Pentland, besides being a capital clown, was celebrated as a ventriloquist, comic singer, balancer, and legerdemain performer. My re-enforced exhibition was called "Barnum's Grand Scientific and Musical Theatre."

Some time previously, in Raleigh, North Carolina, I had sold one-half of my establishment to a man, whom I will call Henry, who now acted as treasurer and ticket-taker. At Augusta, Georgia, the sheriff served a writ upon this Henry for a debt of \$500. As Henry had \$600 of the company's money in his possession, I immediately procured a bill of sale of all his property in the exhibition and returned to the theatre where Henry's creditor and the creditor's lawyer were waiting for me. They demanded the keys of the stable so as to levy on the horses and wagons. I begged delay till I could see Henry, and they consented. Henry was anxious to cheat his creditor and he at once signed the bill of sale. I returned and informed the creditor that Henry refused to pay or compromise the claim. The sheriff then demanded the keys of the stable door to attach Henry's interest in the property. "Not yet," said I, showing a bill of sale, "you see I am in full possession of the property as entire owner. You confess that you have not yet levied on it, and if you touch my property, you do it at your peril."

They were very much taken aback and the sheriff immediately conveyed Henry to prison. The next day I learned that Henry owed his creditors thirteen hundred dollars and that he had agreed when the Saturday evening performance was ended to hand over five hundred dollars (company money) and a bill of sale of his interest, in consideration of which one of the horses was to be ready for him to run away with, leaving me in the lurch! Learning this, I had very little sympathy for Henry and my next step was to secure the five hundred dollars he had secreted. Vivalla had obtained it from him to keep it from the sheriff; I received it from Vivalla, on Henry's order, as a supposed means of procuring bail for him on Monday morning. I then paid the creditor the full amount obtained from Henry as the price of his half interest in the exhibition and received in return an assignment of five hundred dollars of the creditor's claims and a guaranty that I should not be troubled by my late partner on that score. Thus, promptness of action and good luck relieved me from one of the most unpleasant positions in which I had ever been placed.

While travelling with our teams and show through a desolate part of Georgia, our advertiser, who was in advance of the party, finding the route, on one occasion, too long for us to reach a town at night, arranged with a poor widow woman named Hayes to furnish us with meals and let us lodge in her hut and out-houses. It was a beggarly place, belonging to one of the poorest of "poor whites." Our horses were to stand out all night, and a farmer, six miles distant, was to bring a load of provender on the day of our arrival. Bills were then posted announcing a performance under a canvas tent near

Widow Hayes's, for, as a show was a rarity in that region, it was conjectured that a hundred or more small farmers and "poor whites" might be assembled and that the receipts would cover the expenses.

Meanwhile, our advertiser, who was quite a wag, wrote back informing us of the difficulties of reaching a town on that part of our route and stating that he had made arrangements for us to stay over night on the plantation of "Lady Hayes," and that although the country was sparsely settled, we could doubtless give a profitable performance to a fair audience.

Anticipating a fine time on this noble "plantation," we started at four o'clock in the morning so as to arrive at one o'clock, thus avoiding the heat of the afternoon. Towards noon we came to a small river where some men, whom we afterwards discovered to be down-east Yankees, from Maine, were repairing a bridge. Every flooring plank had been taken up and it was impossible for our teams to cross. "Could the bridge be fixed so that we could go over?" I inquired; "No; it would take half a day, and meantime if we must cross, there was a place about sixteen miles down the river where we could get over." "But we can't go so far as that; we are under engagement to perform on Lady Hayes's place to-night and we must cross here. Fix the bridge and we will pay you handsomely."

They wanted no money, but if we would give them some tickets to our show they thought they might do something for us. I gladly consented and in fifteen minutes we crossed that bridge. The cunning rascals had seen our posters and knew we were coming; so they had taken up the planks of the bridge and had hidden them till they had levied upon us for tickets, when the floor was re-laid in a quarter of an hour. We laughed heartily at the trick and were very glad to cross so cheaply.

Towards dinner time, we began to look out for the grand mansion of "Lady Hayes," and seeing nothing but little huts we quietly pursued our journey. At one o'clock – the time when we should have arrived at our destination – I became impatient and riding up to a poverty-stricken hovel and seeing a ragged, barefooted old woman, with her sleeves rolled up to her shoulders, who was washing clothes in front of the door, I inquired —

"Hallo! can you tell me where Lady Hayes lives?"

The old woman raised her head, which was covered with tangled locks and matted hair, and exclaimed —

"Hey?"

"No, Hayes, Lady Hayes; where is her plantation?"

"This is the place," she answered; "I'm Widder Hayes and you are all to stay here to-night."

We could not believe our ears or eyes; but after putting the dirty old woman through a severe cross-examination she finally produced a contract, signed by our advertiser, agreeing for board and lodging for the company and we found ourselves booked for the night. It appeared that our advertiser could find no better quarters in that forlorn section and he had indulged in a joke at our expense by exciting our appetites and imaginations in anticipation of the luxuries we should find in the magnificent mansion of "Lady Hayes."

Joe Pentland grumbled, Bob White indulged in some very strong language, and Signor Vivalla laughed. He had travelled with his monkey and organ in Italy and could put up with any fare that offered. I took the disappointment philosophically, simply remarking that we must make the best of it and compensate ourselves when we reached a town next day.

When the old woman called us to dinner we crept into her hut and found that she had improvised benches at her table by placing boards upon the only four chairs in her possession, and at that, some of us were obliged to stand. The dinner consisted of a piece of boiled smoked bacon, a large dish of "greens," and corn bread. Three plates, two knives, and three forks made up the entire table furniture and compelled a resort to our jack-knives. "A short horse is soon curried," and dinner was speedily despatched. It did not seem possible for an audience to assemble in that forsaken quarter, and we concluded not to take the canvas tent out of the wagon.

By three o'clock, however, at least fifty persons had arrived on the ground to attend the night show and they reported "more a coming." Accordingly we put up the tent and arranged our small

stage and curtains, preparing seats for two hundred people. Those who had already arrived were mostly women, many of them from sixteen to twenty years old – poor, thin, sallow-faced creatures, wretchedly clad, some of them engaged in smoking pipes, while the rest were chewing snuff. This latter process was new to me; each chewer was provided with a short stick, softened at one end, by chewing it, and this stick was occasionally dipped into a snuff box and then stuck into the mouth, from whence it protruded like a cigar. The technical term for the proceeding is “snuff-dipping.”

Before night, stragglers had brought the number of people on Lady Hayes’ plantation up to one hundred, and soon after dark, we opened our exhibition to an audience of about two hundred. The men were a pale, haggard set of uncombed, uncouth creatures, whose constantly-moving jaws and the streams of colored saliva exuding from the corners of their mouths indicated that they were confirmed tobacco chewers. I never saw a more stupid and brutish assemblage of human beings. The performance delighted them; Pentland’s sleight-of-hand tricks astonished them and led them to declare that he must be in league with the evil one; Signor Vivalla’s ball-tossing and plate spinning elicited their loudest applause; and Bob White’s negro songs and break-downs made them fairly scream with laughter.

At last, the performance terminated and Pentland stepped forward and delivered the closing address, which he had repeated, word for word, a hundred times, and which was precisely as follows:

“Ladies and Gentlemen: The entertainments of the evening have now come to a conclusion, and, we hope, to your general satisfaction.”

But now came a dilemma; the meaning of this announcement was quite above the comprehension of the audience; they had not the remotest idea that the performance was finished, and they sat like statues.

With a hearty laugh at Pentland I told him that his language was not understood in this locality and that he must try again. He was chagrined, and declared that he would not say another word. Little Vivalla laughed, danced around like a monkey, and said, in his broken English:

“Ah, ha! Signor Pentland; you no speak good Eenglish, hah! These educated peoples no understand you, eh? By gar what d – d fools. Ah, Signor Barnum, let me speaks to them; I will make them jump double queek.”

I quite enjoyed the fun and said, “Well, Signor, go ahead.”

The little Italian jumped upon the stage and with a broad grimace and tremendous gesture exclaimed —

“Eet is feenish!”

He then retired behind the curtain, but, of course, the audience did not understand that he had told them the performance was finished. No one would have understood him. Hence, the spectators sat still, wondering what would come next. “By gar,” said Vivalla, losing his temper, “I will give them a hint,” and he loosened the cord and down fell the curtain on one side of the stage.

“Good, good,” cried out an enthusiastic “poor white,” giving his quid a fresh roll to the other side of his mouth, “now we are going to have something new.”

“I reckon they’s totin’ that plunder off to get ready for a dance,” said a delicate “dipper,” making a lunge into her box for another mouthful of the dust.

Things were becoming serious, and I saw that in order to get rid of these people they must be addressed in plain language; so, walking upon the stage, I simply said, making at the same time a motion for them to go, —

“It is all over; no more performance; the show is out.”

This was understood, but they still stood upon the order of their going and were loth to leave, especially as the, to them, extraordinary announcements of Pentland and Vivalla had prepared them for something fresh. Several days before, our band of musicians had left us, reducing our orchestra to an organ and pipes, ground and blown by an Italian whom we had picked up on the road. We had, in addition, a large bass drum, with no one to beat it, and this drum was espied by some of the audience

in going out. Very soon I was waited upon by a masculine committee of three, who informed me that “the young ladies were very anxious to hear a tune on the big drum.” Pentland heard the request and replied, “I will accommodate the young ladies,” and strapping on the drum he took a stick in each hand and began to pound tremendously. Occasionally he would rap the sticks together, toss one of them into the air, catching it as it came down, and then pound away again like mad. In fact, he cut up all sorts of pranks with that big drum and when he was tired out and stopped, he was gratified at being told by the “young ladies” that they had never heard a big drum before, but he “played it splendid,” and they thought it was altogether the best part of the entire performance!

The next forenoon we arrived at Macon, and congratulated ourselves that we had again reached the regions of civilization.

In going from Columbus, Georgia, to Montgomery, Alabama, we were obliged to cross a thinly-settled, desolate tract, known as the “Indian Nation,” and as several persons had been murdered by hostile Indians in that region, it was deemed dangerous to travel the road without an escort. Only the day before we started, the mail stage had been stopped and the passengers murdered, the driver alone escaping. We were well armed, however, and trusted that our numbers would present too formidable a force to be attacked, though we dreaded to incur the risk. Vivalla alone was fearless and was ready to encounter fifty Indians and drive them into the swamp.

Accordingly, when we had safely passed over the entire route to within fourteen miles of Montgomery, and were beyond the reach of danger, Joe Pentland determined to test Vivalla’s bravery. He had secretly purchased at Mount Megs, on the way, an old Indian dress with a fringed hunting shirt and moccasins and these he put on, after coloring his face with Spanish brown. Then, shouldering his musket he followed Vivalla and the party and, approaching stealthily, leaped into their midst with a tremendous whoop.

Vivalla’s companions were in the secret, and they instantly fled in all directions. Vivalla himself ran like a deer and Pentland after him, gun in hand and yelling horribly. After running a full mile the poor little Italian, out of breath and frightened nearly to death, dropped on his knees and begged for his life. The “Indian” levelled his gun at his victim, but soon seemed to relent and signified that Vivalla should turn his pockets inside out – which he did, producing and handing over a purse, containing eleven dollars. The savage then marched Vivalla to an oak and with a handkerchief tied him in the most approved Indian manner to the tree, leaving him half dead with fright.

Pentland then joined us, and washing his face and changing his dress, we all went to the relief of Vivalla. He was overjoyed to see us, and when he was released his courage returned; he swore that after his companions left him the Indian had been re-enforced by six more to whom, in default of a gun or other means to defend himself, Vivalla had been compelled to surrender. We pretended to believe his story for a week and then told him the joke, which he refused to credit, and also declined to take the money which Pentland offered to return, as it could not possibly be his since seven Indians had taken his money. We had a great deal of fun over Vivalla’s courage, but the matter made him so cross and surly that we were finally obliged to drop it altogether. From that time forward, however, Vivalla never boasted of his prowess.

We arrived at Montgomery, February 28th, 1837. Here I met Henry Hawley a legerdemain performer, about forty-five years of age, but as he was prematurely gray he looked at least seventy, and I sold him one-half of my exhibition. He had a ready wit, a happy way of localizing his tricks, was very popular in that part of the country, where he had been performing for several years, and I never saw him nonplussed but once. This was when he was performing on one occasion the well-known egg and bag trick, which he did with his usual success, producing egg after egg from the bag and finally breaking one to show that they were genuine. “Now,” said Hawley, “I will show you the old hen that laid them.” It happened, however, that the negro boy to whom had been intrusted the duty of supplying the bag had made a slight mistake which was manifest when Hawley triumphantly produced, not “the old hen that laid the eggs,” but a rooster! The whole audience was convulsed with

laughter and the abashed Hawley retreated to the dressing room cursing the stupidity of the black boy who had been paid to put a hen in the bag.

After performing in different places in Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee, we disbanded at Nashville in May, 1837, Vivalla going to New York, where he performed on his own account for a while previous to sailing for Cuba, Hawley staying in Tennessee to look after our horses which had been turned out to grass, and I returning home to spend a few weeks with my family.

Early in July, returning west with a new company of performers, I rejoined Hawley and we began our campaign in Kentucky. We were not successful; one of our small company was incompetent; another was intemperate – both were dismissed; and our negro-singer was drowned in the river at Frankfort. Funds were low and I was obliged to leave pledges here and there, in payment for bills, which I afterwards redeemed. Hawley and I dissolved in August and making a new partnership with Z. Graves, I left him in charge of the establishment and went to Tiffin, Ohio, where I re-engaged Joe Pentland, buying his horses and wagons and taking him, with several musicians, to Kentucky.

During my short stay at Tiffin, a religious conversation at the hotel introduced me to several gentlemen who requested me to lecture on the subjects we had discussed, and I did so to a crowded audience in the school-house Sunday afternoon and evening. At the solicitation of a gentleman from Republic, I also delivered two lectures in that town on the evenings of September 4th and 5th.

On our way to Kentucky, just before we reached Cincinnati, we met a drove of hogs and one of the drivers making an insolent remark because our wagons interfered with his swine, I replied in the same vein, when he dismounted and pointing a pistol at my breast swore he would shoot me if I did not apologize. I begged him to permit me to consult with a friend in the next wagon, and the misunderstanding should be satisfactorily settled. My friend was a loaded double-barreled gun which I pointed at him and said:

“Now, sir, *you* must apologize, for your brains are in danger. You drew a weapon upon me for a trivial remark. You seem to hold human life at a cheap price; and now, sir, you have the choice between a load of shot and an apology.”

This led to an apology and a friendly conversation in which we both agreed that many a life is sacrificed in sudden anger because one or both of the contending parties carry deadly weapons.

In our subsequent southern tour we exhibited at Nashville (where I visited General Jackson, at the Hermitage), Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Vicksburg and intermediate places, doing tolerably well. At Vicksburg we sold all our land conveyances, excepting the band wagon and four horses, bought the steamboat “Ceres” for six thousand dollars, hired the captain and crew, and started down the river to exhibit at places on the way. At Natchez our cook left us and in the search for another I found a white widow who would go, only she expected to marry a painter. I called on the painter who had not made up his mind whether to marry the widow or not, but I told him if he would marry her the next morning I would hire her at twenty-five dollars a month as cook, employ him at the same wages as painter, with board for both, and a cash bonus of fifty dollars. There was a wedding on board the next day and we had a good cook and a good dinner.

During one of our evening performances at Francisville, Louisiana, a man tried to pass me at the door of the tent, claiming that he had paid for admittance. I refused him entrance; and as he was slightly intoxicated he struck me with a slung shot, mashing my hat and grazing what phrenologists call “the organ of caution.” He went away and soon returned with a gang of armed and half-drunken companions who ordered us to pack up our “traps and plunder” and to get on board our steamboat within an hour. The big tent speedily came down. No one was permitted to help us, but the company worked with a will and within five minutes of the expiration of the hour we were on board and ready to leave. The scamps who had caused our departure escorted us and our last load, waving pine torches, and saluted us with a hurrah as we swung into the stream.

The New Orleans papers of March 19, 1838, announced the arrival of the “Steamer Ceres, Captain Barnum, with a theatrical company.” After a week’s performances, we started for the



Attakapas country. At Opelousas we exchanged the steamer for sugar and molasses; our company was disbanded, and I started for home, arriving in New York, June 4, 1838.

## CHAPTER VII. AT THE FOOT OF THE LADDER

DISGUST AT THE TRAVELLING BUSINESS – ADVERTISING FOR AN ASSOCIATE – RUSH OF THE MILLION-MAKERS – COUNTERFEITERS, CHEATS AND QUACKS – A NEW BUSINESS – SWINDLED BY MY PARTNER – DIAMOND THE DANCER – A NEW COMPANY – DESERTIONS – SUCCESSES AT NEW ORLEANS – TYRONE POWER AND FANNY ELLSLER – IN JAIL AGAIN – BACK TO NEW YORK – ACTING AS A BOOK AGENT – LEASING VAUXHALL – FROM HAND TO MOUTH – DETERMINATION TO MAKE MONEY – FORTUNE OPENING HER DOOR – THE AMERICAN MUSEUM FOR SALE – NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PURCHASE – HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS – THE TRAIN LAID – SMASHING A RIVAL COMPANY.

I HAVE said that the show business has as many grades of dignity as trade, which ranges all the way from the mammoth wholesale establishment down to the corner stand. The itinerant amusement business is at the bottom of the ladder. I had begun there, but I had no wish to stay there; in fact, I was thoroughly disgusted with the trade of a travelling showman, and although I felt that I could succeed in that line, yet I always regarded it, not as an end, but as a means to something better.

Longing now for some permanent respectable business, I advertised for a partner, stating that I had \$2,500 to invest and would add my unremitting personal attention to the capital and the business. This advertisement gave me an altogether new insight into human nature. Whoever wishes to know how some people live, or want to live, let him advertise for a partner, at the same time stating that he has a large or small capital to invest. I was flooded with answers to my advertisements and received no less than ninety-three different propositions for the use of my capital. Of these, at least one-third were from porter-house keepers. Brokers, pawnbrokers, lottery-policy dealers, patent medicine men, inventors, and others also made application. Some of my correspondents declined to specifically state the nature of their business, but they promised to open the door to untold wealth.

I had interviews with some of these mysterious million-makers. One of them was a counterfeiter, who, after much hesitation and pledges of secrecy showed me some counterfeit coin and bank notes; he wanted \$2,500 to purchase paper and ink and to prepare new dies, and he actually proposed that I should join him in the business which promised, he declared, a safe and rich harvest. Another sedate individual, dressed in Quaker costume, wanted me to join him in an oat speculation. By buying a horse and wagon and by selling oats, bought at wholesale, in bags, he thought a good business could be done, especially as people would not be particular to measure after a Quaker.

“Do you mean to cheat in measuring your oats?” I asked.

“O, I should probably make them hold out,” he answered, with a leer.

One application came from a Pearl street wool merchant, who failed a month afterwards. Then came a “perpetual motion” man who had a fortune-making machine, in which I discovered a main-spring slyly hid in a hollow post, the spring making perpetual motion – till it ran down. Finally, I went into partnership with a German, named Proler, who was a manufacturer of paste-blackening, water-proof paste for leather, Cologne water and bear’s grease. We took the store No. 101½ Bowery, at a rent (including the dwelling) of \$600 per annum, and opened a large manufactory of the above articles. Proler manufactured and sold the goods at wholesale in Boston, Charleston, Cleveland, and various other parts of the country. I kept the accounts, and attended to sales in the store, wholesale and retail. For a while the business seemed to prosper – at least till my capital was absorbed and notes for stock began to fall due, with nothing to meet them, since we had sold our goods on long

credits. In January, 1840, I dissolved partnership with Proler, he buying the entire interest for \$2,600 on credit, and then running away to Rotterdam without paying his note, and leaving me nothing but a few recipes. Proler was a good-looking, plausible, promising – scamp.

During my connection with Proler, I became acquainted with a remarkable young dancer named John Diamond. He was one of the first and best of the numerous negro and “break-down” dancers who have since surprised and amused the public, and I entered into an engagement with his father for his services, putting Diamond in the hands of an agent, as I did not wish to appear in the transaction. In the spring of 1840, I hired and opened the Vauxhall Garden saloon, in New York, and gave a variety of performances, including singing, dancing, Yankee stories, etc. In this saloon Miss Mary Taylor, afterwards so celebrated as an actress and singer, made her first appearance on the stage. The enterprise, however, did not meet my expectation and I relinquished it in August.

What was to be done next? I dreaded resuming the life of an itinerant showman, but funds were low, I had a family to care for, and as nothing better presented I made up my mind to endure the vexations and uncertainties of a tour in the West and South. I collected a company, consisting of Mr. C. D. Jenkins, an excellent singer and delineator of Yankee and other characters; Master John Diamond, the dancer; Francis Lynch, an orphan vagabond, fourteen years old, whom I picked up at Troy, and a fiddler. My brother-in-law, Mr. John Hallett, preceded us as agent and advertiser, and our route passed through Buffalo, Toronto, Detroit, Chicago, Ottawa, Springfield, the intermediate places, and St. Louis, where I took the steamboat for New Orleans with a company reduced by desertions to Master Diamond and the fiddler.

Arriving in New Orleans, January 2, 1841, I had but \$100 in my purse, and I had started from New York four months before with quite as much in my pocket. Excepting some small remittances to my family I had made nothing more than current expenses; and, when I had been in New Orleans a fortnight, funds were so low that I was obliged to pledge my watch as security for my board bill. But on the 16th, I received from the St. Charles Theatre \$500 as my half share of Diamond's benefit; the next night I had \$50; and the third night \$479 was my share of the proceeds of a grand dancing match at the theatre between Diamond and a negro dancer from Kentucky. Subsequent engagements at Vicksburg and Jackson were not so successful, but returning to New Orleans we again succeeded admirably and afterwards at Mobile. Diamond, however, after extorting considerable sums of money from me, finally ran away, and, March 12th, I started homeward by way of the Mississippi and the Ohio.

While I was in New Orleans I made the acquaintance of that genial man, Tyrone Power, who was just concluding an engagement at the St. Charles Theatre. In bidding me farewell, he wished me every success and hoped we should meet again. Alas, poor Power! All the world knows how he set sail from our shores, and he and his ship were never seen again. Fanny Ellsler was also in New Orleans, and when I saw seats in the dress circle sold at an average of four dollars and one-half, I gave her agent, Chevalier Henry Wyckoff, great credit for exciting public enthusiasm to the highest pitch and I thought the prices enormous. I did not dream then that, within twelve years, I should be selling tickets in the same city for full five times that sum.

At Pittsburg, where I arrived March 30th, I learned that Jenkins, who had enticed Francis Lynch away from me at St. Louis, was exhibiting him at the Museum under the name of “Master Diamond,” and visiting the performance, the next day I wrote Jenkins an ironical review for which he threatened suit and he actually instigated R. W. Lindsay, from whom I hired Joice Heth in Philadelphia in 1835, and whom I had not seen since, though he was then residing in Pittsburg, to sue me for a pipe of brandy which, it was pretended, was promised in addition to the money paid him. I was required to give bonds of \$500, which, as I was among strangers, I could not immediately procure, and I was accordingly thrown into jail till four o'clock in the afternoon, when I was liberated. The next day I caused the arrest of Jenkins for trespass in assuming Master Diamond's name and reputation for Master Lynch, and he was sent to jail till four o'clock in the afternoon. Each having had his turn

at this amusement, we adjourned our controversy to New York where I beat him. As for Lindsay, I heard nothing more of his claim or him till twelve years afterwards when he called on me in Boston with an apology. He was very poor and I was highly prosperous, and I may add that Lindsay did not lack a friend.

I arrived in New York, April 23rd, 1841, after an absence of eight months; finding my family in good health, I resolved once more that I would never again be an itinerant showman. Three days afterwards I contracted with Robert Sears, the publisher, for five hundred copies of "Sears' Pictorial Illustrations of the Bible," at \$500, and accepting the United States agency, I opened an office, May 10th, at the corner of Beekman and Nassau Streets, the site of the present Nassau Bank. I had had a limited experience with that book in this way: When I was in Pittsburg, an acquaintance, Mr. C. D. Harker, was complaining that he had nothing to do, when I picked up a New York paper and saw the advertisement of "Sears's Pictorial Illustrations of the Bible, price \$2 a copy." Mr. Harker thought he could get subscribers, and I bought him a specimen copy, agreeing to furnish him with as many as he wanted at \$1.37½ a copy, though I had never before seen the work and did not know the wholesale price. The result was that he obtained eighty subscribers in two days, and made \$50. My own venture in the work was not so successful; I advertised largely, had plenty of agents, and, in six months, sold thousands of copies; but irresponsible agents used up all my profits and my capital.

While engaged in this business I once more leased Vauxhall saloon, opening it June 14th, 1841, employing Mr. John Hallett, my brother-in-law, as manager under my direction, and at the close of the season, September 25th, we had cleared about two hundred dollars. This sum was soon exhausted, and with my family on my hands and no employment I was glad to do anything that would keep the wolf from the door. I wrote advertisements and notices for the Bowery Amphitheatre, receiving for the service four dollars a week, which I was very glad to get, and I also wrote articles for the Sunday papers, deriving a fair remuneration and managing to get a living. But I was at the bottom round of fortune's ladder, and it was necessary to make an effort which would raise me above want.

I was specially stimulated to this effort by a letter which I received, about this time, from my esteemed friend, Hon. Thomas T. Whittlesey, of Danbury. He held a mortgage of five hundred dollars on a piece of property I owned in that place, and, as he was convinced that I would never lay up anything, he wrote me that I might as well pay him then as ever. This letter made me resolve to live no longer from hand to mouth, but to concentrate my energies upon laying up something for the future.

While I was forming this practical determination I was much nearer to its realization than my most sanguine hopes could have predicted. The road to fortune was close by. Without suspecting it, I was about to enter upon an enterprise, which, while giving full scope for whatever tact, industry and pluck I might possess, was to take me from the foot of the ladder and place me many rounds above.

As outside clerk for the Bowery Amphitheatre I had casually learned that the collection of curiosities comprising Scudder's American Museum, at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street, was for sale. It belonged to the daughters of Mr. Scudder, and was conducted for their benefit by John Furzman, under the authority of Mr. John Heath, administrator. The price asked for the entire collection was fifteen thousand dollars. It had cost its founder, Mr. Scudder, probably fifty thousand dollars, and from the profits of the establishment he had been able to leave a large competency to his children. The Museum, however, had been for several years a losing concern, and the heirs were anxious to sell it. Looking at this property, I thought I saw that energy, tact and liberality, were only needed to make it a paying institution, and I determined to purchase it if possible.

"You buy the American Museum!" said a friend, who knew the state of my funds, "what do you intend buying it with?"

"Brass," I replied, "for silver and gold have I none."

The Museum building belonged to Mr. Francis W. Olmsted, a retired merchant, to whom I wrote stating my desire to buy the collection, and that although I had no means, if it could, be purchased upon reasonable credit, I was confident that my tact and experience, added to a determined

devotion to business, would enable me to make the payments when due. I therefore asked him to purchase the collection in his own name; to give me a writing securing it to me provided I made the payments punctually, including the rent of his building; to allow me twelve dollars and a half a week on which to support my family; and if at any time I failed to meet the instalment due, I would vacate the premises and forfeit all that might have been paid to that date. "In fact, Mr. Olmsted," I continued in my earnestness, "you may bind me in any way, and as tightly as you please – only give me a chance to dig out, or scratch out, and I will do so or forfeit all the labor and trouble I may have incurred."

In reply to this letter, which I took to his house myself, he named an hour when I could call on him, and as I was there at the exact moment, he expressed himself pleased with my punctuality. He inquired closely as to my habits and antecedents, and I frankly narrated my experiences as a caterer for the public, mentioning my amusement ventures in Vauxhall Garden, the circus, and in the exhibitions I had managed at the South and West.

"Who are your references?" he inquired.

"Any man in my line," I replied, "from Edmund Simpson, manager of the Park Theatre, or William Niblo, to Messrs. Welch, June, Titus, Turner, Angevine, or other circus or menagerie proprietors; also Moses Y. Beach, of the *New York Sun*."

"Can you get any of them to call on me?" he continued.

I told him that I could, and the next day my friend Niblo rode down and had an interview with Mr. Olmsted, while Mr. Beach and several other gentlemen also called, and the following morning I waited upon him for his decision.

"I don't like your references, Mr. Barnum," said Mr. Olmsted, abruptly, as soon as I entered the room.

I was confused, and said "I regretted to hear it."

"They all speak too well of you," he added, laughing; "in fact they all talk as if they were partners of yours, and intended to share the profits."

Nothing could have pleased me better. He then asked me what security I could offer in case he concluded to make the purchase for me, and it was finally agreed that, if he should do so, he should retain the property till it was entirely paid for, and should also appoint a ticket-taker and accountant (at my expense), who should render him a weekly statement. I was further to take an apartment hitherto used as a billiard room in an adjoining building, allowing therefor, \$500 a year, making a total rent of \$3,000 per annum, on a lease of ten years. He then told me to see the administrator and heirs of the estate, to get their best terms, and to meet him on his return to town a week from that time.

I at once saw Mr. John Heath, the administrator, and his price was \$15,000. I offered \$10,000, payable in seven annual instalments, with good security. After several interviews, it was finally agreed that I should have it for \$12,000, payable as above – possession to be given on the 15th November. Mr. Olmsted assented to this, and a morning was appointed to draw and sign the writings. Mr. Heath appeared, but said he must decline proceeding any farther in my case, as he had sold the collection to the directors of Peale's Museum (an incorporated institution), for \$15,000, and had received \$1,000 in advance.

I was shocked, and appealed to Mr. Heath's honor. He said that he had signed no writing with me; was in no way legally bound, and that it was his duty to do the best he could for the heirs. Mr. Olmsted was sorry, but could not help me; the new tenants would not require him to incur any risk, and my matter was at an end.

Of course, I immediately informed myself as to the character of Peale's Museum company. It proved to be a band of speculators who had bought Peale's collection for a few thousand dollars, expecting to join the American Museum with it, issue and sell stock to the amount of \$50,000, pocket \$30,000 profits, and permit the stockholders to look out for themselves.

I went immediately to several of the editors, including Major M. M. Noah, M. Y. Beach, my good friends West, Herrick and Ropes, of the *Atlas*, and others, and stated my grievances. "Now,"

said I, "if you will grant me the use of your columns, I'll blow that speculation sky-high." They all consented, and I wrote a large number of squibs, cautioning the public against buying the Museum stock, ridiculing the idea of a board of broken-down bank directors engaging in the exhibition of stuffed monkey and gander skins; appealing to the case of the Zoölogical Institute, which had failed by adopting such a plan as the one now proposed; and finally I told the public that such a speculation would be infinitely more ridiculous than Dickens's "Grand United Metropolitan Hot Muffin and Crumpet-baking and Punctual Delivery Company."

The stock was as "dead as a herring!" I then went to Mr. Heath and asked him when the directors were to pay the other \$14,000. "On the 26th day of December, or forfeit the \$1,000 already paid," was the reply. I assured him that they would never pay it, that they could not raise it, and that he would ultimately find himself with the Museum collection on his hands, and if once I started off with an exhibition for the South, I would not touch the Museum at *any* price. "Now," said I, "if you will agree with me confidentially, that in case these gentlemen do not pay you on the 26th of December, I may have it on the 27th for \$12,000, I will run the risk, and wait in this city until that date." He readily agreed to the proposition, but said he was sure they would not forfeit their \$1,000.

"Very well," said I; "all I ask of you is, that this arrangement shall not be mentioned." He assented. "On the 27th day of December, at ten o'clock A. M., I wish you to meet me in Mr. Olmsted's apartments, prepared to sign the writings, provided this incorporated company do not pay you \$14,000 on the 26th." He agreed to this, and by my request put it in writing.

From that moment I felt that the Museum was mine. I saw Mr. Olmsted, and told him so. He promised secrecy, and agreed to sign the documents if the other parties did not meet their engagement.

This was about November 15th, and I continued my shower of newspaper squibs at the new company, which could not sell a dollar's worth of its stock. Meanwhile, if any one spoke to me about the Museum, I simply replied that I had lost it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE AMERICAN MUSEUM

A TRAP SET FOR ME – I CATCH THE TRAPPERS – I BECOME PROPRIETOR OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM – HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT – HARD WORK AND COLD DINNERS – ADDITIONS TO THE MUSEUM – EXTRAORDINARY ADVERTISING – BARNUM'S BRICK-MAN – EXCITING PUBLIC CURIOSITY – INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES – A DRUNKEN ACTOR – IMITATIONS OF THE ELDER BOOTH – PLEASING MY PATRONS – SECURING TRANSIENT NOVELTIES – LIVING CURIOSITIES – MAKING PEOPLE TALK – A WILDERNESS OF WONDERS – NIAGARA FALLS WITH REAL WATER – THE CLUB THAT KILLED COOK – SELLING LOUIS GAYLORD CLARK – THE FISH WITH LEGS – THE FEJEE MERMAID – HOW IT CAME INTO MY POSSESSION – THE TRUE STORY OF THAT CURIOSITY – JAPANESE MANUFACTURE OF FABULOUS ANIMALS – THE USE I MADE OF THE MERMAID – WHOLESALE ADVERTISING AGAIN – THE BALCONY BAND – DRUMMOND LIGHTS.

MY newspaper squib war against the Peale combination was vigorously kept up; when one morning, about the first of December, I received a letter from the Secretary of that company (now calling itself the “New York Museum Company,”) requesting me to meet the directors at the Museum on the following Monday morning. I went, and found the directors in session. The venerable president of the board, who was also the ex-president of a broken bank, blandly proposed to hire me to manage the united museums, and though I saw that he merely meant to buy my silence, I professed to entertain the proposition, and in reply to an inquiry as to what salary I should expect, I specified the sum of \$3,000 a year. This was at once acceded to, the salary to begin January 1, 1842, and after complimenting me on my ability, the president remarked: “Of course, Mr. Barnum, we shall have no more of your squibs through the newspapers” – to which I replied that I should “ever try to serve the interests of my employers,” and I took my leave.

It was as clear to me as noonday that after buying my silence so as to appreciate their stock, these directors meant to sell out to whom they could, leaving me to look to future stockholders for my salary. They thought, no doubt, that they had nicely entrapped me, but I knew I had caught them.

For, supposing me to be out of the way, and having no other rival purchaser, these directors postponed the advertisement of their stock to give people time to forget the attacks I had made on it, and they also took their own time for paying the money promised to Mr. Heath, December 26th – indeed, they did not even call on him at the appointed time. But on the following morning, as agreed, I was promptly and hopefully at Mr. Olmstead's apartments with my legal adviser, at half-past nine o'clock; Mr. Heath came with his lawyer at ten, and before two o'clock that day I was in formal possession of the American Museum. My first managerial act was to write and despatch the following complimentary note:

*American Museum, New York, Dec. 27, 1841.*

*To the President and Directors of the New York Museum:*

Gentlemen: – It gives me great pleasure to inform you that you are placed upon the Free List of this establishment until further notice.

*P. T. Barnum, Proprietor.*

It is unnecessary to say that the “President of the New York Museum” was astounded, and when he called upon Mr. Heath, and learned that I had bought and was really in possession of the American Museum, he was indignant. He talked of prosecution, and demanded the \$1,000 paid on his agreement, but he did not prosecute, and he justly forfeited his deposit money.

And now that I was proprietor and manager of the American Museum I had reached a new epoch in my career which I felt was the beginning of better days, though the full significance of this important step I did not see. I was still in the show business, but in a settled, substantial phase of it, that invited industry and enterprise, and called for ever earnest and ever heroic endeavor. Whether I should sink or swim depended wholly upon my own energy. I must pay for the establishment within a stipulated time, or forfeit it with whatever I had paid on account. I meant to make it my own, and brains, hands and every effort were devoted to the interests of the Museum.

The nucleus of this establishment, Scudder’s Museum, was formed in 1810, the year in which I was born. It was begun in Chatham Street, and was afterwards transferred to the old City Hall, and from small beginnings, by purchases, and to a considerable degree by presents, it had grown to be a large and valuable collection. People in all parts of the country had sent in relics and rare curiosities; sea captains, for years, had brought and deposited strange things from foreign lands; and besides all these gifts, I have no doubt that the previous proprietor had actually expended, as was stated, \$50,000 in making the collection. No one could go through the halls, as they were when they came under my proprietorship, and see one-half there was worth seeing in a single day; and then, as I always justly boasted afterwards, no one could visit my Museum and go away without feeling that he had received the full worth of his money. In looking over the immense collection, the accumulation of so many years, I saw that it was only necessary to properly present its merits to the public, to make it the most attractive and popular place of resort and entertainment in the United States.

Valuable as the collection was when I bought it, it was only the beginning of the American Museum as I made it. In my long proprietorship I considerably more than doubled the permanent attractions and curiosities of the establishment. In 1842, I bought and added to my collection the entire contents of Peale’s Museum; in 1850, I purchased the large Peale collection in Philadelphia; and year after year, I bought genuine curiosities, regardless of cost, wherever I could find them, in Europe or America.

At the very outset, I was determined to deserve success. My plan of economy included the intention to support my family in New York on \$600 a year, and my treasure of a wife not only gladly assented, but was willing to reduce the sum to \$400, if necessary. Some six months after I had bought the Museum, Mr. Olmsted happened in at my ticket-office at noon and found me eating a frugal dinner of cold corned beef and bread, which I had brought from home.

“Is this the way you eat your dinner?” he asked.

“I have not eaten a warm dinner, except on Sundays,” I replied, “since I bought the Museum, and I never intend to, on a week day, till I am out of debt.”

“Ah!” said he, clapping me on the shoulder, “you are safe, and will pay for the Museum before the year is out.”

And he was right, for within twelve months I was in full possession of the property as my own and it was entirely paid for from the profits of the business.

In 1865, the space occupied for my Museum purposes was more than double what it was in 1842. The Lecture Room, originally narrow, ill-contrived and inconvenient, was so enlarged and improved that it became one of the most commodious and beautiful amusement halls in the City of New York. At first, my attractions and inducements were merely the collection of curiosities by day, and an evening entertainment, consisting of such variety performances as were current in ordinary shows. Then Saturday afternoons, and, soon afterwards, Wednesday afternoons were devoted to entertainments and the popularity of the Museum grew so rapidly that I presently found it expedient and profitable to open the great Lecture Room every afternoon, as well as every evening, on every



week-day in the year. The first experiments in this direction, more than justified my expectations, for the day exhibitions were always more thronged than those of the evening. Of course I made the most of the holidays, advertising extensively and presenting extra inducements; nor did attractions elsewhere seem to keep the crowd from coming to the Museum. On great holidays, I gave as many as twelve performances to as many different audiences.

By degrees the character of the stage performances was changed. The transient attractions of the Museum were constantly diversified, and educated dogs, industrious fleas, automaton, jugglers, ventriloquists, living statuary, tableaux, gipsies, Albinoes, fat boys, giants, dwarfs, rope-dancers, live "Yankees," pantomime, instrumental music, singing and dancing in great variety, dioramas, panoramas, models of Niagara, Dublin, Paris, and Jerusalem; Hannington's dioramas of the Creation, the Deluge, Fairy Grotto, Storm at Sea; the first English Punch and Judy in this country, Italian Fantoccini, mechanical figures, fancy glass-blowing, knitting machines and other triumphs in the mechanical arts; dissolving views, American Indians, who enacted their warlike and religious ceremonies on the stage, – these, among others, were all exceedingly successful.

I thoroughly understood the art of advertising, not merely by means of printer's ink, which I have always used freely, and to which I confess myself so much indebted for my success, but by turning every possible circumstance to my account. It was my monomania to make the Museum the town wonder and town talk. I often seized upon an opportunity by instinct, even before I had a very definite conception as to how it should be used, and it seemed, somehow, to mature itself and serve my purpose. As an illustration, one morning a stout, hearty-looking man, came into my ticket-office and begged some money. I asked him why he did not work and earn his living? He replied that he could get nothing to do and that he would be glad of any job at a dollar a day. I handed him a quarter of a dollar, told him to go and get his breakfast and return, and I would employ him at light labor at a dollar and a half a day. When he returned I gave him five common bricks.

"Now," said I, "go and lay a brick on the sidewalk at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street; another close by the Museum; a third diagonally across the way at the corner of Broadway and Vesey Street, by the Astor House; put down the fourth on the sidewalk in front of St Paul's Church, opposite; then, with the fifth brick in hand, take up a rapid march from one point to the other, making the circuit, exchanging your brick at every point, and say nothing to any one."

"What is the object of this?" inquired the man.

"No matter," I replied; "all you need to know is that it brings you fifteen cents wages per hour. It is a bit of my fun, and to assist me properly you must seem to be as deaf as a post; wear a serious countenance; answer no questions; pay no attention to any one; but attend faithfully to the work and at the end of every hour by St. Paul's clock show this ticket at the Museum door; enter, walking solemnly through every hall in the building; pass out, and resumé your work."

With the remark that it was "all one to him, so long as he could earn his living," the man placed his bricks and began his round. Half an hour afterwards, at least five hundred people were watching his mysterious movements. He had assumed a military step and bearing, and looking as sober as a judge, he made no response whatever to the constant inquiries as to the object of his singular conduct. At the end of the first hour, the sidewalks in the vicinity were packed with people all anxious to solve the mystery. The man, as directed, then went into the Museum, devoting fifteen minutes to a solemn survey of the halls, and afterwards returning to his round. This was repeated every hour till sundown and whenever the man went into the Museum a dozen or more persons would buy tickets and follow him, hoping to gratify their curiosity in regard to the purpose of his movements. This was continued for several days – the curious people who followed the man into the Museum considerably more than paying his wages – till finally the policeman, to whom I had imparted my object, complained that the obstruction of the sidewalk by crowds had become so serious that I must call in my "brick man." This trivial incident excited considerable talk and amusement; it advertised me; and it materially advanced my purpose of making a lively corner near the Museum.

I am tempted to relate some of the incidents and anecdotes which attended my career as owner and manager of the Museum. The stories illustrating merely my introduction of novelties would more than fill this book, but I must make room for a few of them.

An actor, named La Rue, presented himself as an imitator of celebrated histrionic personages, including Macready, Forrest, Kemble, the elder Booth, Kean, Hamblin, and others. Taking him into the green-room for a private rehearsal, and finding his imitations excellent, I engaged him. For three nights he gave great satisfaction, but early in the fourth evening he staggered into the Museum so drunk that he could hardly stand, and in half an hour he must be on the stage! Calling an assistant, we took La Rue between us, and marched him up Broadway as far as Chambers Street, and back to the lower end of the Park, hoping to sober him. At this point we put his head under a pump, and gave him a good ducking, with visible beneficial effect, – then a walk around the Park, and another ducking, – when he assured me that he should be able to give his imitations “to a charm.”

“You drunken brute,” said I, “if you fail, and disappoint my audience, I will throw you out of the window.”

He declared that he was “all right,” and I led him behind the scenes, where I waited with considerable trepidation to watch his movements on the stage. He began by saying:

“Ladies and gentlemen: I will now give you an imitation of Mr. Booth, the eminent tragedian.”

His tongue was thick, his language somewhat incoherent, and I had great misgivings as he proceeded; but as no token of disapprobation came from the audience, I began to hope he would go through with his parts without exciting suspicion of his condition. But before he had half finished his representation of Booth, in the soliloquy in the opening act of *Richard III.*, the house discovered that he was very drunk, and began to hiss. This only seemed to stimulate him to make an effort to appear sober, which, as is usual in such cases, only made matters worse, and the hissing increased. I lost all patience, and going on the stage and taking the drunken fellow by the collar, I apologized to the audience, assuring them that he should not appear before them again. I was about to march him off, when he stepped to the front, and said:

“Ladies and gentlemen: Mr. Booth often appeared on the stage in a state of inebriety, and I was simply giving you a truthful representation of him on such occasions. I beg to be permitted to proceed with my imitations.”

The audience at once supposed it was all right, and cried out, “go on, go on”; which he did, and at every imitation of Booth, whether as Richard, Shylock, or Sir Giles Overreach, he received a hearty round of applause. I was quite delighted with his success; but when he came to imitate Forrest and Hamblin, necessarily representing them as drunk also, the audience could be no longer deluded; the hissing was almost deafening, and I was forced to lead the actor off. It was his last appearance on my stage.

From the first, it was my study to give my patrons a superfluity of novelties, and for this I make no special claim to generosity, for it was strictly a business transaction. To send away my visitors more than doubly satisfied, was to induce them to come again and to bring their friends. I meant to make people talk about my Museum; to exclaim over its wonders; to have men and women all over the country say: “There is not another place in the United States where so much can be seen for twenty-five cents as in Barnum’s American Museum.” It was the best advertisement I could possibly have, and one for which I could afford to pay. I knew, too, that it was an honorable advertisement, because it was as deserved as it was spontaneous. And so, in addition to the permanent collection and the ordinary attractions of the stage, I labored to keep the Museum well supplied with transient novelties; I exhibited such living curiosities as a rhinoceros, giraffes, grizzly bears, ourang-outangs, great serpents, and whatever else of the kind money would buy or enterprise secure.

Knowing that a visit to my varied attractions and genuine curiosities was well worth to any one three times the amount asked as an entrance fee, I confess that I was not so scrupulous, as possibly I should have been, about the methods used to call public attention to my establishment. The one end

aimed at was to make men and women think and talk and wonder, and, as a practical result, go to the Museum. This was my constant study and occupation.

It was the world's way then, as it is now, to excite the community with flaming posters, promising almost everything for next to nothing. I confess that I took no pains to set my enterprising fellow-citizens a better example. I fell in with the world's way; and if my "puffing" was more persistent, my advertising more audacious, my posters more glaring, my pictures more exaggerated, my flags more patriotic and my transparencies more brilliant than they would have been under the management of my neighbors, it was not because I had less scruple than they, but more energy, far more ingenuity, and a better foundation for such promises. In all this, if I cannot be justified, I at least find palliation in the fact that I presented a wilderness of wonderful, instructive and amusing realities of such evident and marked merit that I have yet to learn of a single instance where a visitor went away from the Museum complaining that he had been defrauded of his money. Surely this is an offset to any eccentricities to which I may have resorted to make my establishment widely known.

Very soon after introducing my extra exhibitions, I purchased for \$200, a curiosity which had much merit and some absurdity. It was a model of Niagara Falls, in which the merit was that the proportions of the great cataract, the trees, rocks, and buildings in the vicinity were mathematically given, while the absurdity was in introducing "real water" to represent the falls. Yet the model served a purpose in making "a good line in the bill" – an end in view which was never neglected – and it helped to give the Museum notoriety. One day I was summoned to appear before the Board of Croton Water Commissioners, and was informed that as I paid only \$25 per annum for water at the Museum, I must pay a large extra compensation for the supply for my Niagara Falls. I begged the board not to believe all that appeared in the papers, nor to interpret my show-bills too literally, and assured them that a single barrel of water, if my pump was in good order, would furnish my falls for a month.

It was even so, for the water flowed into a reservoir behind the scenes, and was forced back with a pump over the falls. On one occasion, Mr. Louis Gaylord Clark, the editor of the *Knickerbocker*, came to view my museum, and introduced himself to me. As I was quite anxious that my establishment should receive a first-rate notice at his hands, I took pains to show him everything of interest, except the Niagara Falls, which I feared would prejudice him against my entire show. But as we passed the room the pump was at work, warning me that the great cataract was in full operation, and Clark, to my dismay, insisted upon seeing it.

"Well, Barnum, I declare, this is quite a new idea; I never saw the like before."

"No?" I faintly inquired, with something like reviving hope.

"No," said Clark, "and I hope, with all my heart, I never shall again."

But the *Knickerbocker* spoke kindly of me, and refrained from all allusions to "the Cataract of Niagara, with real water." Some months after, Clark came in breathless one day, and asked me if I had the club with which Captain Cook was killed? As I had a lot of Indian war clubs in the collection of aboriginal curiosities, and owing Clark something on the old Niagara Falls account, I told him I had the veritable club with documents which placed its identity beyond question, and I showed him the warlike weapon.

"Poor Cook! poor Cook!" said Clark, musingly. "Well, Mr. Barnum," he continued, with great gravity, at the same time extending his hand and giving mine a hearty shake, "I am really very much obliged to you for your kindness. I had an irrepressible desire to see the club that killed Captain Cook, and I felt quite confident you could accommodate me. I have been in half a dozen smaller museums, and as they all had it, I was sure a large establishment like yours would not be without it."

A few weeks afterwards, I wrote to Clark that if he would come to my office I was anxious to consult him on a matter of great importance. He came, and I said:

"Now, I don't want any of your nonsense, but I want your sober advice."

He assured me that he would serve me in any way in his power, and I proceeded to tell him about a wonderful fish from the Nile, offered to me for exhibition at \$100 a week, the owner of which

was willing to forfeit \$5,000, if, within six weeks, this fish did not pass through a transformation in which the tail would disappear and the fish would then have legs.

“Is it possible!” asked the astonished Clark.

I assured him that there was no doubt of it.

Thereupon he advised me to engage the wonder at any price; that it would startle the naturalists, wake up the whole scientific world, draw in the masses, and make \$20,000 for the Museum. I told him that I thought well of the speculation, only I did not like the name of the fish.

“That makes no difference whatever,” said Clark; “what is the name of the fish?”

“Tadpole,” I replied with becoming gravity, “but it is vulgarly called ‘pollywog.’ ”

“Sold, by thunder!” exclaimed Clark, and he left.

A curiosity, which in an extraordinary degree served my ever-present object of extending the notoriety of the Museum was the so-called “Fejee Mermaid.” It has been supposed that this mermaid was manufactured by my order, but such is not the fact. I was known as a successful showman, and strange things of every sort were brought to me from all quarters for sale or exhibition. In the summer of 1842, Mr. Moses Kimball, of the Boston Museum, came to New York and showed me what purported to be a mermaid. He had bought it from a sailor whose father, a sea captain, had purchased it in Calcutta, in 1822, from some Japanese sailors. I may mention here that this identical preserved specimen was exhibited in London in 1822, as I fully verified in my visit to that city in 1858, for I found an advertisement of it in an old file of the London *Times*, and a friend gave me a copy of the *Mirror*, published by J. Limbird, 335 Strand, November 9, 1822, containing a cut of this same creature and two pages of letter-press describing it, together with an account of other mermaids said to have been captured in different parts of the world. The *Mirror* stated that this specimen was “the great source of attraction in the British metropolis, and three to four hundred people every day pay their shilling to see it.”

This was the curiosity which had fallen into Mr. Kimball’s hands. I requested my naturalist’s opinion of the genuineness of the animal and he said he could not conceive how it could have been manufactured, for he never saw a monkey with such peculiar teeth, arms, hands, etc., and he never saw a fish with such peculiar fins; but he did not believe in mermaids. Nevertheless, I concluded to hire this curiosity and to modify the general incredulity as to the possibility of the existence of mermaids, and to awaken curiosity to see and examine the specimen, I invoked the potent power of printer’s ink.

Since Japan has been opened to the outer world it has been discovered that certain “artists” in that country manufacture a great variety of fabulous animals, with an ingenuity and mechanical perfection well calculated to deceive. No doubt my mermaid was a specimen of this curious manufacture. I used it mainly to advertise the regular business of the Museum, and this effective indirect advertising is the only feature I can commend, in a special show of which, I confess, I am not proud. I might have published columns in the newspapers, presenting and praising the great collection of genuine specimens of natural history in my exhibition, and they would not have attracted nearly so much attention as did a few paragraphs about the mermaid which was only a small part of my show. Newspapers throughout the country copied the mermaid notices, for they were novel and caught the attention of readers. Thus was the fame of the Museum, as well as the mermaid, wafted from one end of the land to the other. I was careful to keep up the excitement, for I knew that every dollar sown in advertising would return in tens, and perhaps hundreds, in a future harvest, and after obtaining all the notoriety possible by advertising and by exhibiting the mermaid at the Museum, I sent the curiosity throughout the country, directing my agent to everywhere advertise it as “From Barnum’s Great American Museum, New York.” The effect was immediately felt; money flowed in rapidly and was readily expended in more advertising.

While I expended money liberally for attractions for the inside of my Museum, and bought or hired everything curious or rare which was offered or could be found, I was prodigal in my outlays to arrest or arouse public attention. When I became proprietor of the establishment, there were only the

words: “American Museum,” to indicate the character of the concern; there was no bustle or activity about the place; no posters to announce what was to be seen; – the whole exterior was as dead as the skeletons and stuffed skins within. My experiences had taught me the advantages of advertising. I printed whole columns in the papers, setting forth the wonders of my establishment. Old “fogies” opened their eyes in amazement at a man who could expend hundreds of dollars in announcing a show of “stuffed monkey skins”; but these same old fogies paid their quarters, nevertheless, and when they saw the curiosities and novelties in the Museum halls, they, like all other visitors, were astonished as well as pleased, and went home and told their friends and neighbors and thus assisted in advertising my business.

For other and not less effective advertising, – flags and banners, began to adorn the exterior of the building. I kept a band of music on the front balcony and announced “Free Music for the Million.” People said, “Well, that Barnum is a liberal fellow to give us music for nothing,” and they flocked down to hear my outdoor free concerts. But I took pains to select and maintain the poorest band I could find – one whose discordant notes would drive the crowd into the Museum, out of earshot of my outside orchestra. Of course, the music was poor. When people expect to get “something for nothing” they are sure to be cheated, and generally deserve to be, and so, no doubt, some of my out-door patrons were sorely disappointed; but when they came inside and paid to be amused and instructed, I took care to see that they not only received the full worth of their money, but were more than satisfied. Powerful Drummond lights were placed at the top of the Museum, which, in the darkest night, threw a flood of light up and down Broadway, from the Battery to Niblo’s, that would enable one to read a newspaper in the street. These were the first Drummond lights ever seen in New York, and they made people talk, and so advertise my Museum.

## CHAPTER IX. THE ROAD TO RICHES

THE MOST POPULAR PLACE OF AMUSEMENT IN THE WORLD  
– THE MORAL DRAMA – REFORMING THE ABUSES OF THE STAGE  
– FAMOUS ACTORS AND ACTRESSES AT THE MUSEUM – ADDING  
TO THE SALOONS – AFTERNOON AND HOLIDAY PERFORMANCES  
– FOURTH OF JULY FLAGS – THE MUSEUM CONNECTED WITH ST.  
PAUL'S – VICTORY OVER THE VESTRYMEN – THE EGRESS – ST.  
PATRICK'S DAY IN THE MORNING – A WONDERFUL ANIMAL, THE  
"AIGRESS" – INPOURING OF MONEY – ZOOLOGICAL ERUPTION – THE  
CITY ASTOUNDED – BABY SHOWS, AND THEIR OBJECT – FLOWER,  
BIRD, DOG AND POULTRY SHOWS – GRAND FREE BUFFALO HUNT  
IN HOBOKEN – N. P. WILLIS – THE WOOLLY HORSE – WHERE HE  
CAME FROM – COLONEL BENTON BEATEN – PURPOSE OF THE  
EXHIBITION – AMERICAN INDIANS – P. T. BARNUM EXHIBITED – A  
CURIOUS SPINSTER – THE TOUCHING STORY OF CHARLOTTE TEMPLE  
– SERVICES IN THE LECTURE ROOM – A FINANCIAL VIEW OF THE  
MUSEUM – AN "AWFUL RICH MAN."

THE American Museum was the ladder by which I rose to fortune. Whenever I cross Broadway at the head of Vesey Street, and see the *Herald* building and that gorgeous pile, the Park Bank, my mind's eye recalls that less solid, more showy edifice which once occupied the site and was covered with pictures of all manner of beasts, birds and creeping things, and in which were treasures that brought treasures and notoriety and pleasant hours to me. The Jenny Lind enterprise was more audacious, more immediately remunerative, and I remember it with a pride which I do not attempt to conceal; but instinctively I often go back and live over again the old days of my struggles and triumphs in the American Museum.

The Museum was always open at sunrise, and this was so well known throughout the country that strangers coming to the city would often take a tour through my halls before going to breakfast or to their hotels. I do not believe there was ever a more truly popular place of amusement. I frequently compared the annual number of visitors with the number officially reported as visiting (free of charge), the British Museum in London, and my list was invariably the larger. Nor do I believe that any man or manager ever labored more industriously to please his patrons. I furnished the most attractive exhibitions which money could procure; I abolished all vulgarity and profanity from the stage, and I prided myself upon the fact that parents and children could attend the dramatic performances in the so-called Lecture Room, and not be shocked or offended by anything they might see or hear; I introduced the "Moral Drama," producing such plays as "The Drunkard," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Moses in Egypt," "Joseph and His Brethren," and occasional spectacular melodramas produced with great care and at considerable outlay.

Mr. Sothern, who has since attained such wide-spread celebrity at home and abroad as a character actor, was a member of my dramatic company for one or two seasons. Mr. Barney Williams also began his theatrical career at the Museum, occupying, at first, quite a subordinate position, at a salary of ten dollars a week. During the past twelve or fifteen years, I presume his weekly receipts, when he has acted, have been nearly \$3,000. The late Miss Mary Gannon also commenced at the Museum, and many more actors and actresses of celebrity have been, from time to time, engaged there. What was once the small Lecture Room was converted into a spacious and beautiful theatre, extending over the lots adjoining the Museum, and capable of holding about three thousand persons.

The saloons were greatly multiplied and enlarged, and the “egress” having been made to work to perfection, on holidays I advertised Lecture Room performances every hour through the afternoon and evening, and consequently the actors and actresses were dressed for the stage as early as eleven o’clock in the morning, and did not resume their ordinary clothes till ten o’clock at night. In these busy days the meals for the company were brought in and served in the dressing-rooms and green-rooms, and the company always received extra pay.

Leaving nothing undone that would bring Barnum and his Museum before the public, I often engaged some exhibition, knowing that it would directly bring no extra dollars to the treasury, but hoping that it would incite a newspaper paragraph which would float through the columns of the American press and be copied, perhaps, abroad, and my hopes in this respect were often gratified.

I confess that I liked the Museum mainly for the opportunities it afforded for rapidly making money. Before I bought it, I weighed the matter well in my mind, and was convinced that I could present to the American public such a variety, quantity and quality of amusement, blended with instruction, “all for twenty-five cents, children half price,” that my attractions would be irresistible, and my fortune certain. I myself relished a higher grade of amusement, and I was a frequent attendant at the opera, first-class concerts, lectures, and the like; but I worked for the million, and I knew the only way to make a million from my patrons was to give them abundant and wholesome attractions for a small sum of money.

About the first of July, 1842, I began to make arrangements for extra novelties, additional performances, a large amount of extra advertising, and an outdoor display for the “Glorious Fourth.” Large particolored bills were ordered, transparencies were prepared, the free band of music was augmented by a trumpeter, and columns of advertisements, headed with large capitals, were written and put on file.

I wanted to run out a string of American flags across the street on that day, for I knew there would be thousands of people passing the Museum with leisure and pocket-money, and I felt confident that an unusual display of national flags would arrest their patriotic attention, and bring many of them within my walls. Unfortunately for my purpose, St. Paul’s Church stood directly opposite, and there was nothing to which I could attach my flag-rope, unless it might be one of the trees in the churchyard. I went to the vestrymen for permission to so attach my flag rope on the Fourth of July, and they were indignant at what they called my “insulting proposition”; such a concession would be “sacrilege.” I plied them with arguments, and appealed to their patriotism, but in vain.

Returning to the Museum I gave orders to have the string of flags made ready, with directions at daylight on the Fourth of July to attach one end of the rope to one of the third story windows of the Museum, and the other end to a tree in St. Paul’s churchyard. The great day arrived, and my orders were strictly followed. The flags attracted great attention, and before nine o’clock I have no doubt that hundreds of additional visitors were drawn by this display into the Museum. By half-past nine Broadway was thronged, and about that time two gentlemen in a high state of excitement rushed into my office, announcing themselves as injured and insulted vestrymen of St. Paul’s Church.

“Keep cool, gentlemen,” said I; “I guess it is all right.”

“Right!” indignantly exclaimed one of them, “do you think it is right to attach your Museum to our Church? We will show you what is ‘right’ and what is law, if we live till to-morrow; those flags must come down instantly.”

“Thank you,” I said, “but let us not be in a hurry. I will go out with you and look at them, and I guess we can make it all right.”

Going into the street I remarked: “Really, gentlemen, these flags look very beautiful; they do not injure your tree; I always stop my balcony music for your accommodation whenever you hold week-day services, and it is but fair that you should return the favor.”

“We could indict your ‘music,’ as you call it, as a nuisance, if we chose,” answered one vestryman, “and now I tell you that if these flags are not taken down in ten minutes, *I* will cut them down.”

His indignation was at the boiling point. The crowd in the street was dense, and the angry gesticulation of the vestryman attracted their attention. I saw there was no use in trying to parley with him or coax him, and so, assuming an angry air, I rolled up my sleeves, and exclaimed, in a loud tone, —

“Well, Mister, I should just like to see you dare to cut down the American flag on the Fourth of July; you must be a ‘Britisher’ to make such a threat as that; but I’ll show you a thousand pairs of Yankee hands in two minutes, if you dare to attempt to take down the stars and stripes on this great birth-day of American freedom!”

“What’s that John Bull a-saying,” asked a brawny fellow, placing himself in front of the irate vestryman; “Look here, old fellow,” he continued, “if you want to save a whole bone in your body, you had better slope, and never dare to talk again about hauling down the American flag in the city of New York.”

Throngs of excited, exasperated men crowded around, and the vestryman, seeing the effect of my ruse, smiled faintly and said, “Oh, of course it is all right,” and he and his companion quietly edged out of the crowd. The flags remained up all day and all night. The next morning I sought the vanquished vestrymen and obtained formal permission to make this use of the tree on following holidays, in consideration of my willingness to arrest the doleful strains of my discordant balcony band whenever services were held on week days in the church.

On that Fourth of July, at one o’clock, P. M., my Museum was so densely crowded that we could admit no more visitors, and we were compelled to stop the sale of tickets. I pushed through the throng until I reached the roof of the building, hoping to find room for a few more, but it was in vain. Looking down into the street it was a sad sight to see the thousands of people who stood ready with their money to enter the Museum, but who were actually turned away. It was exceedingly harrowing to my feelings. Rushing down stairs, I told my carpenter and his assistants to cut through the partition and floor in the rear and to put in a temporary flight of stairs so as to let out people by that egress into Ann Street. By three o’clock the egress was opened and a few people were passed down the new stairs, while a corresponding number came in at the front. But I lost a large amount of money that day by not having sufficiently estimated the value of my own advertising, and consequently not having provided for the thousands who had read my announcements and seen my outside show, and had taken the first leisure day to visit the Museum. I had learned one lesson, however, and that was to have the egress ready on future holidays.

Early in the following March, I received notice from some of the Irish population that they meant to visit me in great numbers on “St. Patrick’s day in the morning.” “All right,” said I to my carpenter, “get your egress ready for March 17”; and I added, to my assistant manager: “If there is much of a crowd, don’t let a single person pass out at the front, even if it were St. Patrick himself; put every man out through the egress in the rear.” The day came, and before noon we were caught in the same dilemma as we were on the Fourth of July; the Museum was jammed and the sale of tickets was stopped. I went to the egress and asked the sentinel how many hundreds had passed out?

“Hundreds,” he replied, “why only three persons have gone out by this way and they came back, saying that it was a mistake and begging to be let in again.”

“What does this mean?” I inquired; “surely thousands of people have been all over the Museum since they came in.”

“Certainly,” was the reply “but after they have gone from one saloon to another and have been on every floor, even to the roof, they come down and travel the same route over again.”

At this time I espied a tall Irish woman with two good-sized children whom I had happened to notice when they came in early in the morning.



“Step this way, madam,” said I politely, “you will never be able to get into the street by the front door without crushing these dear children. We have opened a large egress here and you can pass by these rear stairs into Ann Street and thus avoid all danger.”

“Sure,” replied the woman, indignantly, “an’ I’m not going out at all, at all, nor the children aither, for we’ve brought our dinners and we are going to stay all day.”

Further, investigation showed that pretty much all of my visitors had brought their dinners with the evident intention of literally “making a day of it.” No one expected to go home till night; the building was overcrowded, and meanwhile hundreds were waiting at the front entrance to get in when they could. In despair I sauntered upon the stage behind the scenes, biting my lips with vexation, when I happened to see the scene-painter at work and a happy thought struck me: “Here,” I exclaimed, “take a piece of canvas four feet square, and paint on it, as soon as you can, in large letters —

### **#TO THE EGRESS.”**

Seizing his brush he finished the sign in fifteen minutes, and I directed the carpenter to nail it over the door leading to the back stairs. He did so, and as the crowd, after making the entire tour of the establishment, came pouring down the main stairs from the third story, they stopped and looked at the new sign, while some of them read audibly: “To the Aigress.”

“The Aigress,” said others, “sure: that’s an animal we haven’t seen,” and the throng began to pour down the back stairs only to find that the “Aigress” was the elephant, and that the elephant was all out o’ doors, or so much of it as began with Ann Street. Meanwhile, I began to accommodate those who had long been waiting with their money at the Broadway entrance.

Notwithstanding my continual outlays for additional novelties and attractions, or rather I might say, because of these outlays, money poured in upon me so rapidly that I was sometimes actually embarrassed to devise means to carry out my original plan for laying out the entire profits of the first year in advertising. I meant to sow first and reap afterwards. I finally hit upon a plan which cost a large sum, and that was to prepare large oval oil paintings to be placed between the windows of the entire building, representing nearly every important animal known in zoology. These paintings were put on the building in a single night, and so complete a transformation in the appearance of an edifice is seldom witnessed. When the living stream rolled down Broadway the next morning and reached the Astor House corner, opposite the Museum, it seemed to meet with a sudden check. I never before saw so many open mouths and astonished eyes. Some people were puzzled to know what it all meant; some looked as if they thought it was an enchanted palace that had suddenly sprung up; others exclaimed, “Well, the animals all seem to have ‘broken out’ last night,” and hundreds came in to see how the establishment survived the sudden eruption. At all events, from that morning the Museum receipts took a jump forward of nearly a hundred dollars a day, and they never fell back again. Strangers would look at this great pictorial magazine and argue that an establishment with so many animals on the outside must have something on the inside, and in they would go to see. Inside, I took particular pains to please and astonish these strangers, and when they went back to the country, they carried plenty of pictorial bills and lithographs, which I always lavishly furnished, and thus the fame of Barnum’s Museum became so wide-spread, that people scarcely thought of visiting the city without going to my establishment.

In fact, the Museum had become an established institution in the land. Now and then some one would cry out “humbug” and “charlatan,” but so much the better for me. It helped to advertise me, and I was willing to bear the reputation — and I engaged queer curiosities, and even monstrosities, simply to add to the notoriety of the Museum.

Dr. Valentine will be remembered by many as a man who gave imitations and delineations of eccentric characters. He was quite a card at the Museum when I first purchased that establishment, and before I introduced dramatic representations into the “Lecture Room.” His representations were

usually given as follows: A small table was placed in about the centre of the stage; a curtain reaching to the floor covered the front and two ends of the table; under this table, on little shelves and hooks, were placed caps, hats, coats, wigs, moustaches, curls, cravats, and shirt collars, and all sorts of gear for changing the appearance of the upper portion of the person. Dr. Valentine would seat himself in a chair behind the table, and addressing his audience, would state his intention to represent different peculiar characters, male and female, including the Yankee tin peddler; "Tabitha Twist," a maiden lady; "Sam Slick, Jr.," the precocious author; "Solomon Jenkins," a crusty old bachelor, with a song; the down-east school-teacher with his refractory pupils, with many other characters; and he simply asked the indulgence of the audience for a few seconds between each imitation, to enable him to stoop down behind the table and "dress" each character appropriately.

The Doctor himself was a most eccentric character. He was very nervous, and was always fretting lest his audience should be composed of persons who would not appreciate his "imitations." During one of his engagements the Lecture Room performances consisted of negro minstrelsy and Dr. Valentine's imitations. As the minstrels gave the entire first half of the entertainment, the Doctor would post himself at the entrance to the Museum to study the character of the visitors from their appearance. He fancied that he was a great reader of character in this way, and as most of my visitors were from the country, the Doctor, after closely perusing their faces, would decide that they were not the kind of persons who would appreciate his efforts, and this made him extremely nervous. When this idea was once in his head, it took complete possession of the poor Doctor, and worked him up into a nervous excitement which it was often painful to behold. Every country-looking face was a dagger to the Doctor, for he had a perfect horror of exhibiting to an unappreciative audience. When so much excited that he could stand at the door no longer, the disgusted Doctor would come into my office and pour out his lamentations in this wise:

"There, Barnum, I never saw such a stupid lot of country bumpkins in my life. I shan't be able to get a smile out of them. I had rather be horse-whipped than attempt to satisfy an audience who have not got the brains to appreciate me. Sir, mine is a highly intellectual entertainment, and none but refined and educated persons can comprehend it."

"Oh, I think you will make them laugh some, Doctor," I replied.

"Laugh, sir, laugh! why, sir, they have no laugh in them, sir; and if they had, your devilish nigger minstrels would get it all out of them before I commenced."

"Don't get excited, Doctor," I said; "you will please the people."

"Impossible, sir! I was a fool to ever permit my entertainment to be mixed up with that of nigger singers."

"But you could not give an entire entertainment satisfactorily to the public; they want more variety."

"Then you should have got something more refined, sir. Why, one of those cursed nigger break-downs excites your audience so they don't want to hear a word from me. At all events, I ought to commence the entertainment and let the niggers finish up. I tell you, Mr. Barnum, I won't stand it! I would rather go to the poor-house. I won't stay here over a fortnight longer! It is killing me!"

In this excited state the Doctor would go upon the stage, dressed very neatly in a suit of black. Addressing a few pleasant words to the audience, he would then take a seat behind his little table, and with a broad smile covering his countenance would ask the audience to excuse him a few seconds, and he would appear as "Tabitha Twist," a literary spinster of fifty-five. On these occasions I was usually behind the scenes, standing at one of the wings opposite the Doctor's table, where I could see and hear all that occurred "behind the curtain." The moment the Doctor was down behind the table, a wonderful change came over that smiling countenance.

"Blast this infernal, stupid audience! they would not laugh to save the city of New York!" said the Doctor, while he rapidly slipped on a lady's cap and a pair of long curls. Then, while arranging a lace handkerchief around his shoulders, he would grate his teeth and curse the Museum, its manager,

the audience and everybody else. The instant the handkerchief was pinned, the broad smile would come upon his face, and up would go his head and shoulders showing to the audience a rollicking specimen of a good-natured old maid.

“How do you do, ladies and gentlemen? You all know me, Tabitha Twist, the happiest maiden in the village; always laughing. Now, I’ll sing you one of my prettiest songs.”

The mock maiden would then sing a lively, funny ditty, followed by faint applause, and down would bob the head behind the table to prepare for a presentation of “Sam Slick, junior.”

“Curse such a set of fools” (off goes the cap, followed by the curls). “They think it’s a country Sunday school” (taking off the lace handkerchief). “I expect they will hiss me next, the donkeys” (on goes a light wig of long, flowing hair). “I wish the old Museum was sunk in the Atlantic” (puts on a Yankee round-jacket, and broadbrimmed hat). “I never will be caught in this infernal place, curse it;” up jump head and shoulders of the Yankee, and Sam Slick, junior, sings out a merry —

“Ha! ha! why, folks, how de dew. Darn glad to see you, by hokey; I came down here to have lots of fun, for you know I always believe we must laugh and grow fat.”

After five minutes of similar rollicking nonsense, down would bob the head again, and the cursing, swearing, tearing, and teeth-grating would commence, and continue till the next character appeared to the audience, bedecked with smiles and good-humor.

On several occasions I got up “Baby shows,” at which I paid liberal prizes for the finest baby, the fattest baby, the handsomest twins, for triplets, and so on. I always gave several months’ notice of these intended shows and limited the number of babies at each exhibition to one hundred. Long before the appointed time, the list would be full and I have known many a fond mother to weep bitterly because the time for application was closed and she could not have the opportunity to exhibit her beautiful baby. These shows were as popular as they were unique, and while they paid in a financial point of view, my chief object in getting them up was to set the newspapers to talking about me, thus giving another blast on the trumpet which I always tried to keep blowing for the Museum. Flower shows, dog shows, poultry shows and bird shows, were held at intervals in my establishment and in each instance the same end was attained as by the baby shows. I gave prizes in the shape of medals, money and diplomas and the whole came back to me four-fold in the shape of advertising.

There was great difficulty, however, in awarding the principal prize of \$100 at the baby shows. Every mother thought her own baby the brightest and best, and confidently expected the capital prize.

For where was ever seen the mother  
Would give her baby for another?

Not foreseeing this when I first stepped into the expectant circle and announced in a matter of fact way that a committee of ladies had decided upon the baby of Mrs. So and So as entitled to the leading prize, I was ill-prepared for the storm of indignation that arose on every side. Ninety-nine disappointed, and as they thought, deeply injured, mothers made common cause and pronounced the successful little one the meanest, homeliest baby in the lot, and roundly abused me and my committee for our stupidity and partiality. “Very well, ladies,” said I in the first instance, “select a committee of your own and I will give another \$100 prize to the baby you shall pronounce to be the best specimen.” This was only throwing oil upon flame; the ninety-nine confederates were deadly enemies from the moment and no new babies were presented in competition for the second prize. Thereafter, I took good care to send in a written report and did not attempt to announce the prize in person.

At the first exhibition of the kind, there was a vague, yet very current rumor, that in the haste of departure from the Museum several young mothers had exchanged babies (for the babies were nearly all of the same age and were generally dressed alike) and did not discover the mistake till they arrived home and some such conversation as this occurred between husband and wife:

“Did our baby take the prize?”

“No! the darling was cheated out of it.”

“Well, why didn’t you bring home the same baby you carried to the Museum?”

I am glad to say that I could not trace this cruel rumor to an authentic source.

In June 1843, a herd of yearling buffaloes was on exhibition in Boston. I bought the lot, brought them to New Jersey, hired the race course at Hoboken, chartered the ferry-boats for one day, and advertised that a hunter had arrived with a herd of buffaloes – I was careful not to state their age – and that August 31st there would be a “Grand Buffalo Hunt” on the Hoboken race course – all persons to be admitted free of charge.

The appointed day was warm and delightful, and no less than twenty-four thousand people crossed the North River in the ferry-boats to enjoy the cooling breeze and to see the “Grand Buffalo Hunt.” The hunter was dressed as an Indian, and mounted on horseback; he proceeded to show how the wild buffalo is captured with a lasso, but unfortunately the yearlings would not run till the crowd gave a great shout, expressive at once of derision and delight at the harmless humbug. This shout started the young animals into a weak gallop and the lasso was duly thrown over the head of the largest calf. The crowd roared with laughter, listened to my balcony band, which I also furnished “free,” and then started for New York, little dreaming who was the author of this sensation, or what was its object.

Mr. N. P. Willis, then editor of the *Home Journal*, wrote an article illustrating the perfect good nature with which the American public submit to a clever humbug. He said that he went to Hoboken to witness the Buffalo Hunt. It was nearly four o’clock when the boat left the foot of Barclay Street, and it was so densely crowded that many persons were obliged to stand on the railings and hold on to the awning posts. When they reached the Hoboken side a boat equally crowded was coming out of the slip. The passengers just arriving cried out to those who were coming away, “Is the Buffalo Hunt over?” To which came the reply, “Yes, and it was the biggest humbug you ever heard of!” Willis added that passengers on the boat with him instantly gave three cheers for the author of the humbug, whoever he might be.

After the public had enjoyed a laugh for several days over the Hoboken “Free Grand Buffalo Hunt,” I permitted it to be announced that the proprietor of the American Museum was responsible for the joke, thus using the buffalo hunt as a sky-rocket to attract public attention to my Museum. The object was accomplished and although some people cried out “humbug,” I had added to the notoriety which I so much wanted and I was satisfied. As for the cry of “humbug,” it never harmed me, and I was in the position of the actor who had much rather be roundly abused than not to be noticed at all. I ought to add, that the forty-eight thousand sixpences – the usual fare – received for ferry fares, less what I paid for the charter of the boats on that one day, more than remunerated me for the cost of the buffaloes and the expenses of the “hunt,” and the enormous gratuitous advertising of the Museum must also be placed to my credit.

With the same object – that is, advertising my Museum, – I purchased, for \$500, in Cincinnati, Ohio, a “Woolly Horse” I found on exhibition in that city. It was a well formed, small sized horse, with no mane, and not a particle of hair on his tail, while his entire body and legs were covered with thick, fine hair or wool, which curled tight to his skin. This horse was foaled in Indiana, and was a remarkable freak of nature, and certainly a very curious looking animal.

I had not the remotest idea, when I bought this horse, what I should do with him; but when the news came that Colonel John C. Fremont (who was supposed to have been lost in the snows of the Rocky Mountains) was in safety, the “Woolly Horse” was exhibited in New York, and was widely advertised as a most remarkable animal that had been captured by the great explorer’s party in the passes of the Rocky Mountains. The exhibition met with only moderate success in New York, and in several Northern provincial towns, and the show would have fallen flat in Washington, had it not been for the over-zeal of Colonel Thomas H. Benton, then a United States Senator from Missouri. He went to the show, and then caused the arrest of my agent for obtaining twenty-five cents from him under “false pretences.” No mention had been made of this curious animal in any letter he had

received from his son-in-law, Colonel John C. Fremont, and therefore the Woolly Horse had not been captured by any of Fremont's party. The reasoning was hardly as sound as were most of the arguments of "Old Bullion," and the case was dismissed. After a few days of merriment, public curiosity no longer turned in that direction, and the old horse was permitted to retire to private life. My object in the exhibition, however, was fully attained. When it was generally known that the proprietor of the American Museum was also the owner of the famous "Woolly Horse," it caused yet more talk about me and my establishment, and visitors began to say that they would give more to see the proprietor of the Museum than to view the entire collection of curiosities. As for my ruse in advertising the "Woolly Horse" as having been captured by Fremont's exploring party, of course the announcement neither added to nor took from the interest of the exhibition; but it arrested public attention, and it was the only feature of the show that I now care to forget.

It will be seen that very much of the success which attended my many years proprietorship of the American Museum was due to advertising, and especially to my odd methods of advertising. Always claiming that I had curiosities worth showing and worth seeing, and exhibited "dog cheap" at "twenty-five cents admission, children half price" – I studied ways to arrest public attention; to startle, to make people talk and wonder; in short, to let the world know that I had a Museum.

About this time, I engaged a band of Indians from Iowa. They had never seen a railroad or steamboat until they saw them on the route from Iowa to New York. Of course they were wild and had but faint ideas of civilization. The party comprised large and noble specimens of the untutored savage, as well as several very beautiful squaws, with two or three interesting "papooses." They lived and lodged in a large room on the top floor of the Museum, and cooked their own victuals in their own way. They gave their war-dances on the stage in the Lecture Room with great vigor and enthusiasm, much to the satisfaction of the audiences. But these wild Indians seemed to consider their dances as realities. Hence when they gave a real War Dance, it was dangerous for any parties, except their manager and interpreter, to be on the stage, for the moment they had finished their war dance, they began to leap and peer about behind the scenes in search of victims for their tomahawks and scalping knives! Indeed, lest in these frenzied moments they might make a dash at the orchestra or the audience, we had a high rope barrier placed between them and the savages on the front of the stage.

After they had been a week in the Museum, I proposed a change of performance for the week following, by introducing new dances. Among these was the Indian Wedding Dance. At that time I printed but one set of posters (large bills) per week, so that whatever was announced for Monday, was repeated every day and evening during that week. Before the Wedding Dance came off on Monday afternoon, I was informed that I was to provide a large new red woollen blanket, at a cost of ten dollars, for the bridegroom to present to the father of the bride. I ordered the purchase to be made; but was considerably taken aback, when I was informed that I must have another new blanket for the evening, inasmuch as the savage old Indian Chief, father-in-law to the bridegroom, would not consent to his daughter's being approached with the Wedding Dance unless he had his blanket present.

I undertook to explain to the chief, through the interpreter, that this was only a "make believe" wedding; but the old savage shrugged his shoulders, and gave such a terrific "Ugh!" that I was glad to make my peace by ordering another blanket. As we gave two performances per day, I was out of pocket \$120 for twelve "wedding blankets," that week.

One of the beautiful squaws named Do-humme died in the Museum. She had been a great favorite with many ladies, – among whom I can especially name Mrs. C. M. Sawyer, wife of the Rev. Dr. T. J. Sawyer. Do-humme was buried on the border of Sylvan Water, at Greenwood Cemetery, where a small monument, erected by her friends, designates her last resting place.

The poor Indians were very sorrowful for many days, and desired to get back again to their western wilds. The father and the betrothed of Do-humme cooked various dishes of food and placed them upon the roof of the Museum, where they believed the spirit of their departed friend came

daily for its supply; and these dishes were renewed every morning during the stay of the Indians at the Museum.

It was sometimes very amusing to hear the remarks of strangers who came to visit my Museum. One afternoon a prim maiden lady from Portland, Maine, walked into my private office, where I was busily engaged in writing, and taking a seat on the sofa she asked:

“Is this Mr. Barnum?”

“It is,” I replied.

“Is this Mr. P. T. Barnum, the proprietor of the Museum?” she asked.

“The same,” was my answer.

“Why, really, Mr. Barnum,” she continued, “you look much like other common folks, after all.”

I remarked that I presumed I did; but I could not help it, and I hoped she was not disappointed at my appearance.

“Oh, no,” she said; “I suppose I have no right to be disappointed, but I have read and heard so much about you and your Museum that I was quite prepared to be astonished.”

I asked her if she had been through the establishment.

“I have,” she replied; “I came in immediately after breakfast; I have been here ever since, and, I can say I think with the Queen of Sheba, that ‘the half had not been told me.’ But, Mr. Barnum,” she, continued, “I have long felt a desire to see you; I wanted to attend when you lectured on temperance in Portland, but I had a severe cold and could not go out.”

“Do you like my collection as well as you do the one in the Boston Museum?” I asked.

“Dear me! Mr. Barnum,” said she, “I never went to any Museum before, nor to any place of amusement or public entertainment, excepting our school exhibitions; and I have sometimes felt that they even may be wicked, for some parts of the dialogues seemed frivolous; but I have heard so much of your ‘moral drama’ and the great good you are doing for the rising generation that I thought I must come here and see for myself.”

“We represent the pathetic story of ‘Charlotte Temple’ in the Lecture Room to-day,” I remarked, with an inward chuckle at the peculiarities of my singular visitor, who, although she was nearly fifty years of age, had probably never been in an audience of a hundred persons, unless it might be at a school exhibition, or in Sunday school, or in church.

“Indeed! I am quite familiar with the sad history of Miss Temple, and I think I can derive great consolation from witnessing the representation of the touching story.”

At this moment the gong sounded to announce the opening of the Lecture Room, and the crowd passed on in haste to secure seats. My spinster visitor sprang to her feet and anxiously inquired:

“Are the services about to commence?”

“Yes,” I replied, “the congregation is now going up.”

She marched along with the crowd as demurely as if she was going to a funeral. After she was seated, I watched her, and in the course of the play I noticed that she was several times so much overcome as to be moved to tears. She was very much affected, and when the “services” were over, without seeking another interview with me, she went silently and tearfully away.

One day, two city boys who had thoroughly explored the wonders of the Museum, on their way out passed the open door of my private office, and seeing me sitting there, one of them exclaimed to his companion:

“There! That’s Mr. Barnum.”

“No! is it?” asked the other, and then with his mind full of the glories of the stuffed gander-skins, and other wealth which had been displayed to his wondering eyes in the establishment, he summed up his views of the vastness and value of the whole collection, and its fortunate proprietor in a single sentence:

“Well, he’s an awful rich old cuss, ain’t he!”

Those boys evidently took a strictly financial view of the establishment.

## CHAPTER X. ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SPECULATION

PEALE'S MUSEUM – MYSTERIOUS MESMERISM – YANKEE HILL – HENRY BENNETT – THE RIVAL MUSEUMS – THE ORPHEAN AND ORPHAN FAMILIES – THE FUDGE MERMAID – BUYING OUT MY RIVAL – RUNNING OPPOSITION TO MYSELF – ABOLISHING THEATRICAL NUISANCES – NO CHECKS AND NO BAR – THE MUSEUM MY MANIA – MY FIRST INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES S. STRATTON – GENERAL TOM THUMB IN NEW YORK – RE-ENGAGEMENT – AN APT PUPIL – FREE FROM DEBT – THE PROFITS OF TWO YEARS – IN SEARCH OF A NEW FIELD – STARTING FOR LIVERPOOL – THE GOOD SHIP “YORKSHIRE” – MY PARTY – ESCORT TO SANDY HOOK – THE VOYAGE – A TOBACCO TRICK – A BRAGGING JOHN BULL OUTWITTED – ARRIVAL AT LIVERPOOL – A GENTLEMAN BEGGAR – MADAME CELESTE – CHEAP DWARFS – TWO-PENNY SHOWS – EXHIBITION OF GENERAL TOM THUMB IN LIVERPOOL – FIRST-CLASS ENGAGEMENT FOR LONDON.

THE president and directors of the “New York Museum Company” not only failed to buy the American Museum as they confidently expected to do, but, after my newspaper squib war and my purchase of the Museum, they found it utterly impossible to sell their stock. By some arrangement, the particulars of which I do not remember, if, indeed, I ever cared to know them, Mr. Peale was conducting Peale's Museum which he claimed was a more “scientific” establishment than mine, and he pretended to appeal to a higher class of patrons. Mesmerism was one of his scientific attractions, and he had a subject upon whom he operated at times with the greatest seeming success, and fairly astonished his audiences. But there were times when the subject was wholly unimpressible and then those who had paid their money to see the woman put into the mesmeric state cried out “humbug,” and the reputation of the establishment seriously suffered.

It devolved upon me to open a rival mesmeric performance, and accordingly I engaged a bright little girl who was exceedingly susceptible to such mesmeric influences as I could induce. That is, she learned her lesson thoroughly, and when I had apparently put her to sleep with a few passes and stood behind her, she seemed to be duly “impressed” as I desired; raised her hands as I willed; fell from her chair to the floor; and if I put candy or tobacco into my mouth, she was duly delighted or disgusted. She never failed in these routine performances. Strange to say, believers in mesmerism used to witness her performances with the greatest pleasure and adduce them as positive proofs that there was something in mesmerism, and they applauded tremendously – up to a certain point.

That point was reached, when leaving the girl “asleep,” I called up some one in the audience, promising to put him “in the same state” within five minutes, or forfeit fifty dollars. Of course, all my “passes” would not put any man in the mesmeric state; at the end of three minutes he was as wide awake as ever.

“Never mind,” I would say, looking at my watch; “I have two minutes more, and meantime, to show that a person in this state is utterly insensible to pain, I propose to cut off one of the fingers of the little girl who is still asleep.” I would then take out my knife and feel of the edge, and when I turned around to the girl whom I left on the chair she had fled behind the scenes to the intense amusement of the greater part of the audience and to the amazement of the mesmerists who were present.

“Why! where's my little girl?” I asked with feigned astonishment.

“Oh! she ran away when you began to talk about cutting off fingers.”

“Then she was wide awake, was she?”

“Of course she was, all the time.”

“I suppose so; and, my dear sir, I promised that you should be ‘in the same state’ at the end of five minutes, and as I believe you are so, I do not forfeit fifty dollars.”

I kept up this performance for several weeks, till I quite killed Peale’s “genuine” mesmerism in the rival establishment. After Peale, “Yankee” Hill undertook the management of that Museum, but in a little while he failed. It was then let to Henry Bennett, who reduced the entrance price to one shilling, – a half price which led me to characterize his concern as “cheap and nasty,” – and he began a serious rivalry with my Museum. His main reliances were burlesques and caricatures of whatever novelties I was exhibiting; thus, when I advertised an able company of vocalists, well-known as the Orphean Family, Bennett announced the “Orphan Family;” my Fejee Mermaid he offset with a figure made of a monkey and codfish joined together and called the “Fudg-ee Mermaid.” These things created some laughter at my expense, but they also served to advertise my Museum.

When the novelty of this opposition died away, Bennett did a decidedly losing business. I used to send a man with a shilling to his place every night and I knew exactly how much he was doing and what were his receipts. The holidays were coming and might tide him over a day or two, but he was at the very bottom and I said to him, one day:

“Bennett, if you can keep open one week after New Year’s I will give you a hundred dollars.”

He made every effort to win the money, and even went to the landlord and offered him the entire receipts for a week if he would only let him stay there; but he would not do it, and the day after New Year’s, January 2, 1843, Bennett shut up shop, having lost his last dollar and even failing to secure the handsome premium I offered him.

The entire collection fell into the hands of the landlord for arrearages of rent, and I privately purchased it for \$7,000 cash, hired the building, and secretly engaged Bennett as my agent. We ran a very spirited opposition for a long time and abused each other terribly in public. It was very amusing when actors and performers failed to make terms with one of us and went to the other, carrying from one to the other the price each was willing to pay for an engagement. We thus used to hear extraordinary stories about each other’s “liberal terms,” but between the two we managed to secure such persons as we wanted at about the rates at which their services were really worth. While these people were thus running from one manager to the other, supposing we were rivals, Bennett said to me one day:

“You and I are like a pair of shears; we seem to cut each other, but we only cut what comes between.”

I ran my opposition long enough to beat myself. It answered every purpose, however, in awakening public attention to my Museum, and was an advantage in preventing others from starting a genuine opposition. At the end of six months, the whole establishment, including the splendid gallery of American portraits, was removed to the American Museum and I immediately advertised the great card of a “Double attraction” and “Two Museums in One,” without extra charge.

A Museum proper obviously depends for patronage largely upon country people who visit the city with a worthy curiosity to see the novelties of the town. As I had opened a dramatic entertainment in connection with my curiosities, it was clear that I must adapt my stage to the wants of my country customers. While I was disposed to amuse my provincial patrons, I was determined that there should be nothing in my establishment, where many of my visitors would derive their first impressions of city life, that could contaminate or corrupt them. At this period, it was customary to tolerate very considerable license on the stage. Things were said and done and permitted in theatres that elsewhere would have been pronounced highly improper. The public seemed to demand these things, and it is an axiom in political economy, that the demand must regulate the supply. But I determined, at the start, that, let the demand be what it might, the Museum dramatic entertainments should be unexceptionable on the score of morality.



I have already mentioned some of the immediate reforms I made in the abuses of the stage. I went farther, and, at the risk of some pecuniary sacrifice, I abolished what was common enough in other theatres, even the most “respectable,” and was generally known as the “third tier.” Nor was a bar permitted on my premises. To be sure, I had no power to prevent my patrons from going out between the acts and getting liquor if they chose to do so, and I gave checks, as is done in other theatres, and some of my city customers availed themselves of the opportunity to go out for drinks and return again. Practically, then, it was much the same as if I had kept a bar in the Museum, and so I abolished the check business. There was great reason to apprehend that such a course would rob me of the patronage of a considerable class of play-goers, but I rigidly adhered to the new rule, and what I may have lost in money, I more than gained in the greater decorum which characterized my audiences.

The Museum became a mania with me and I made everything possible subservient to it. On the eve of elections, rival politicians would ask me for whom I was going to vote, and my answer invariably was, “I vote for the American Museum.” In fact, at that time, I cared very little about politics, and a great deal about my business. Meanwhile the Museum prospered wonderfully, and everything I attempted or engaged in seemed at the outset an assured success.

The giants whom I exhibited from time to time were always literally great features in my establishment, and they oftentimes afforded me, as well as my patrons, food for much amusement as well as wonder. The Quaker giant, Hales, was quite a wag in his way. He went once to see the new house of an acquaintance who had suddenly become rich, but who was a very ignorant man. When he came back he described the wonders of the mansion and said that the proud proprietor showed him everything from basement to attic; “parlors, bed-rooms, dining room, and,” said Hales, “what he called his ‘study’ – meaning, I suppose, the place where he intends to study his spelling-book!”

I had at one time two famous men, the French giant, M. Bihin, a very slim man, and the Arabian giant, Colonel Goshen. These men generally got on together very well, though, of course, each was jealous of the other, and of the attention the rival received, or the notice he attracted. One day they quarrelled, and a lively interchange of compliments ensued, the Arabian calling the Frenchman a “Shanghai,” and receiving in return the epithet of “Nigger.” From words both were eager to proceed to blows, and both ran to my collection of arms, one seizing the club with which Captain Cook or any other man might have been killed, if it were judiciously wielded, and the other laying hands on a sword of the terrific size which is supposed to have been conventional in the days of the Crusades. The preparations for a deadly encounter, and the high words of the contending parties brought a dozen of the Museum *attaches* to the spot, and these men threw themselves between the gigantic combatants. Hearing the disturbance, I ran from my private office to the duelling ground, and said:

“Look here! This is all right; if you want to fight each other, maiming and perhaps killing one or both of you, that is your affair; but my interest lies here – you are both under engagement to me, and if this duel is to come off, I and the public have a right to participate. It must be duly advertised, and must take place on the stage of the Lecture Room. No performance of yours would be a greater attraction, and if you kill each other, our engagement can end with your duel.”

This proposition, made in apparent earnest, so delighted the giants that they at once burst into a laugh, shook hands, and quarrelled no more.

I now come to the details of one of the most interesting, as well as successful, of all the show enterprises in which I have engaged – one which not only taxed all my ingenuity and industry, but which gave unqualified delight to thousands of people on two continents and put enormous sums of money into many pockets besides my own.

In November, 1842, I was in Albany on business, and as the Hudson River was frozen over, I returned to New York by the Housatonic Railroad, stopping one night at Bridgeport, Connecticut, with my brother, Philo F. Barnum, who at that time kept the Franklin Hotel. I had heard of a remarkably small child in Bridgeport, and, at my request, my brother brought him to the hotel. He was not two feet high; he weighed less than sixteen pounds, and was the smallest child I ever saw that

could walk alone; but he was a perfectly formed, bright-eyed little fellow, with light hair and ruddy cheeks and he enjoyed the best of health. He was exceedingly bashful, but after some coaxing he was induced to talk with me, and he told me that he was the son of Sherwood E. Stratton, and that his own name was Charles S. Stratton. After seeing him and talking with him, I at once determined to secure his services from his parents and to exhibit him in public.

But as he was only five years of age, to exhibit him as a “dwarf” might provoke the inquiry “How do you know he is a dwarf?” Some liberty might be taken with the facts, but even with this license, I felt that the venture was only an experiment, and I engaged him for four weeks at three dollars a week, with all travelling and boarding charges for himself and his mother at my expense. They came to New York, Thanksgiving day, December 8, 1842, and Mrs. Stratton was greatly surprised to see her son announced on my Museum bills as “General Tom Thumb.”

I took the greatest pains to educate and train my diminutive prodigy, devoting many hours to the task by day and by night, and I was very successful, for he was an apt pupil with a great deal of native talent, and a keen sense of the ludicrous. He made rapid progress in preparing himself for such performances as I wished him to undertake and he became very much attached to his teacher.

When the four weeks expired, I re-engaged him for one year at seven dollars a week, with a gratuity of fifty dollars at the end of the engagement, and the privilege of exhibiting him anywhere in the United States, in which event his parents were to accompany him and I was to pay all travelling expenses. He speedily became a public favorite, and, long before the year was out, I voluntarily increased his weekly salary to twenty-five dollars, and he fairly earned it. Sometimes I exhibited him for several weeks in succession at the Museum, and when I wished to introduce other novelties I sent him to different towns and cities, accompanied by my friend, Mr. Fordyce Hitchcock, and the fame of General Tom Thumb soon spread throughout the country.

Two years had now elapsed since I bought the Museum and I had long since paid for the entire establishment from the profits; I had bought out my only rival; I was free from debt, and had a handsome surplus in the treasury. The business had long ceased to be an experiment; it was an established success and was in such perfect running order, that it could safely be committed to the management of trustworthy and tried agents.

Accordingly, looking for a new field for my individual efforts, I entered into an agreement for General Tom Thumb's services for another year, at fifty dollars a week and all expenses, with the privilege of exhibiting him in Europe. I proposed to test the curiosity of men and women on the other side of the Atlantic. Much as I hoped for success, in my most sanguine moods, I could not anticipate the half of what was in store for me; I did not foresee nor dream that I was shortly to be brought in close contact with kings, queens, lords and illustrious commoners, and that such association, by means of my exhibition, would afterwards introduce me to the great public and the public's money, which was to fill my coffers. Or, if I saw some such future, it was dreamily, dimly, and with half-opened eyes, as the man saw the “trees walking.”

After arranging my business affairs for a long absence, and making every preparation for an extended foreign tour, on Thursday, January 18, 1844, I went on board the new and fine sailing ship “Yorkshire,” Captain D. G. Bailey, bound for Liverpool. Our party included General Tom Thumb, his parents, his tutor, and Professor Guillaudeu, the French naturalist. We were accompanied by several personal friends, and the City Brass Band kindly volunteered to escort us to Sandy Hook.

My name has been so long associated with mirthful incidents that I presume many persons do not suppose I am susceptible of sorrowful, or even sentimental emotions; but when the bell of the steamer that towed our ship down the bay announced the hour of separation, and then followed the hastily-spoken words of farewell, and the parting grasp of friendly hands, I confess that I was very much in the “melting mood,” and when the band played “Home, Sweet Home,” I was moved to tears.

A voyage to Liverpool is now an old, familiar story, and I abstain from entering into details, though I have abundant material respecting my own experiences of my first sea-voyage in the first two

of a series of one hundred letters which I wrote in Europe as correspondent of the New York *Atlas*. But some of the incidents and adventures of my voyage on the “Yorkshire” are worth transcribing in these pages of my personal history.

Occasional calms and adverse winds protracted our passage to nineteen days, but a better ship and a more competent captain never sailed. I was entirely exempt from sea-sickness, and enjoyed the voyage very much. Good fellowship prevailed among the passengers, the time passed rapidly, and we had a good deal of fun on board.

Several of the passengers were English merchants from Canada and one of the number, who reckoned himself “A, No. 1,” and often hinted that he was too ‘cute for any Yankee, boasted so much of his shrewdness that a Yankee friend of mine confederated with me to test it. I thought of an old trick and arranged with my friend to try it on the boastful John Bull. Coming out of my state-room, with my hand to my face, and apparently in great pain, I asked my fellow passengers what was good for the tooth-ache. My friend and confederate recommended heating tobacco, and holding it to my face. I therefore borrowed a little tobacco, and putting it in a paper of a peculiar color, placed it on the stove to warm. I then retired for a few minutes, during which time the Yankee proposed playing a trick on me by emptying the tobacco, and filling the paper with ashes, which our smart Englishman thought would be a very fine joke, and he himself made the substitution, putting ashes into the paper and throwing the tobacco into the fire.

I soon reappeared and gravely placed the paper to my face to the great amusement of the passengers and walked up and down the cabin as if I was suffering terribly. At the further end of the cabin I slyly exchanged the paper for another in my pocket of the same color and containing tobacco and then walked back again a picture of misery. Whereupon, the Merry Englishman cried out:

“Mr. Barnum, what have you got in that paper?”

“Tobacco,” I replied.

“What will you bet it is tobacco?” said the Englishman.

“Oh, don’t bother me,” said I; “my tooth pains me sadly; I know it is tobacco, for I put it there myself.”

“I’ll bet you a dozen of champagne that it is not tobacco,” said the Englishman.

“Nonsense,” I replied, “I will not bet, for it would not be fair; I know it is tobacco.”

“I’ll bet you fifty dollars it is not,” said John Bull, and he counted ten sovereigns upon the table.

“I’ll not bet the money,” I replied, “for I tell you I know it is tobacco; I placed it there myself.”

“You dare not bet!” he rejoined.

At last, merely to accommodate him, I bet a dozen of champagne. The Englishman fairly jumped with delight, and roared out:

“Open the paper! open the paper!”

The passengers crowded round the table in great glee to see me open the paper, for all but the Yankee thought I was taken in. I quietly opened the paper, and remarked:

“There, I told you it was tobacco – how foolish you were to suppose it was not – for, as I told you, I put it there myself.”

The passengers, my confederate excepted, were amazed and the Englishman was absolutely astounded. It was the biter bitten. But he told the steward to bring the champagne, and turning to my confederate who had so effectually assisted in “selling” him, he pronounced the affair “a contemptible Yankee trick.” It was several days before he recovered his good humor, but he joined at last with the rest of us in laughing at the joke, and we heard no more about his extraordinary shrewdness.

On our arrival at Liverpool, quite a crowd had assembled at the dock to see Tom Thumb, for it had been previously announced that he would arrive in the “Yorkshire,” but his mother managed to smuggle him ashore unnoticed, for she carried him, as if he was an infant, in her arms. We went to the Waterloo Hotel, and, after an excellent dinner, walked out to take a look at the town. While I was viewing the Nelson monument a venerable looking, well-dressed old gentleman volunteered to

explain to me the different devices and inscriptions. I looked upon him as a disinterested and attentive man of means who was anxious to assist a stranger and to show his courtesy; but when I gave him a parting bow of thanks, half ashamed that I had so trespassed on his kindness, he put out the hand of a beggar and said that he would be thankful for any remuneration I saw fit to bestow upon him for his trouble. I was certainly astonished, and I thrust a shilling into his hand and walked rapidly away.

In the evening of the same day, a tall, raw-boned man came to the hotel and introduced himself to me as a brother Yankee, who would be happy in pointing out the many wonders in Liverpool that a stranger would be pleased to see.

I asked him how long he had been in Liverpool, and he replied, "Nearly a week." I declined his proffered services abruptly, remarking that if he had been there only a week, I probably knew as much about England as he did.

"Oh," said he, "you are mistaken. I have been in England before, though never till recently in Liverpool."

"What part of England?" I inquired.

"Opposite Niagara Falls," he replied; "I spent several days there with the British soldiers."

I laughed in his face, and reminded him that England did not lie opposite Niagara Falls. The impudent fellow was confused for a moment, and then triumphantly exclaimed:

"I didn't mean England. I know what country it is as well as you do."

"Well, what country is it?" I asked, quite assured that he did not know.

"Great Britain, of course," he replied.

It is needless to add that the honor of his company as a guide in Liverpool was declined, and he went off apparently in a huff because his abilities were not appreciated.

Later in the evening, the proprietor of a cheap wax-works show, at three ha' pence admission, called upon me. He had heard of the arrival of the great American curiosity, and he seized the earliest opportunity to make the General and myself the magnificent offer of ten dollars a week if we would join ourselves to his already remarkable and attractive exhibition. I could not but think, that dwarfs must be literally at a "low figure" in England, and my prospects were gloomy indeed. I was a stranger in the land; my letters of introduction had not been delivered; beyond my own little circle, I had not seen a friendly face, nor heard a familiar voice. I was "blue," homesick, almost in despair. Next morning, there came a ray of sunshine in the following note:

"Madame Celeste presents her compliments to Mr. Barnum, and begs to say that her private box is quite at his service, any night, for himself and friends.

"Theatre Royal, Williamson Square."

This polite invitation was thankfully accepted, and we went to the theatre that evening. Our party, including the General, who was partly concealed by his tutor's cloak, occupied Celeste's box, and in the box adjoining sat an English lady and gentleman whose appearance indicated respectability, intelligence and wealth. The General's interest in the performance attracted their attention, and the lady remarked to me:

"What an intelligent-looking child you have! He appears to take quite an interest in the stage."

"Pardon me, madam," said I, "this is not a child. This is General Tom Thumb."

"Indeed!" they exclaimed. They had seen the announcements of our visit and were greatly gratified at an interview with the pigmy prodigy. They at once advised me in the most complimentary and urgent manner to take the General to Manchester, where they resided, assuring me that an exhibition in that place would be highly remunerative. I thanked my new friends for their counsel and encouragement, and ventured to ask them what price they would recommend me to charge for admission.

"The General is so decidedly a curiosity," said the lady, "that I think you might put it as high as tuppence!" (two-pence.)

She was, however, promptly interrupted by her husband, who was evidently the economist of the family: "I am sure you would not succeed at that price," said he; "you should put admission at one penny, for that is the usual price for seeing giants and dwarfs in England."

This was worse than the ten dollars a week offer of the wax-works proprietor, but I promptly answered "Never shall the price be less than one shilling sterling and some of the nobility and gentry of England will yet pay gold to see General Tom Thumb."

My letters of introduction speedily brought me into friendly relations with many excellent families and I was induced to hire a hall and present the General to the public, for a short season, in Liverpool. I had intended to proceed directly to London and begin operations at "head-quarters," that is, in Buckingham Palace, if possible; but I had been advised that the royal family was in mourning for the death of Prince Albert's father, and would not permit the approach of any entertainments.

Meanwhile confidential letters from London informed me that Mr. Maddox, Manager of Princess's Theatre, was coming down to witness my exhibition, with a view to making an engagement. He came privately, but I was fully informed as to his presence and object. A friend pointed him out to me in the hall, and when I stepped up to him, and called him by name, he was "taken all aback," and avowed his purpose in visiting Liverpool. An interview resulted in an engagement of the General for three nights at Princess's Theatre. I was unwilling to contract for a longer period, and even this short engagement, though on liberal terms, was acceded to only as a means of advertisement. So soon, therefore, as I could bring my short, but highly successful season in Liverpool to a close, we went to London.

## CHAPTER XI.

### GENERAL TOM THUMB IN ENGLAND

ARRIVAL IN LONDON – THE GENERAL'S DEBUT IN THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE – ENORMOUS SUCCESS – MY MANSION AT THE WEST END – DAILY LEVEES FOR THE NOBILITY AND GENTRY – HON. EDWARD EVERETT – HIS INTEREST IN THE GENERAL – VISIT TO THE BARONESS ROTHSCHILD – OPENING IN EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY – MR. CHARLES MURRAY, MASTER OF THE QUEEN'S HOUSEHOLD – AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY – A ROYAL RECEPTION – THE FAVORABLE IMPRESSION MADE BY THE GENERAL – AMUSING INCIDENTS OF THE VISIT – BACKING OUT – FIGHT WITH A POODLE – COURT JOURNAL NOTICE – SECOND VISIT TO THE QUEEN – THE PRINCE OF WALES AND PRINCESS ROYAL – THE QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS – THIRD VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE – KING LEOPOLD, OF BELGIUM – ASSURED SUCCESS – THE BRITISH PUBLIC EXCITED – EGYPTIAN HALL CROWDED – QUEEN DOWAGER ADELAIDE – THE GENERAL'S WATCH – NAPOLEON AND THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON – DISTINGUISHED FRIENDS.

IMMEDIATELY after our arrival in London, the General came out at the Princess's Theatre, and made so decided a "hit" that it was difficult to decide who was best pleased, the spectators, the manager, or myself. The spectators were delighted because they could not well help it; the manager was satisfied because he had coined money by the engagement; and I was greatly pleased because I now had a visible guaranty of success in London. I was offered far higher terms for a re-engagement, but my purpose had been already answered; the news was spread everywhere that General Tom Thumb, an unparalleled curiosity, was in the city; and it only remained for me to bring him before the public, on my own account and in my own time and way.

I took a furnished mansion in Grafton Street, Bond Street, West End, in the very centre of the most fashionable locality. The house had previously been occupied for several years by Lord Talbot, and Lord Brougham and half a dozen families of the aristocracy and many of the gentry were my neighbors. From this magnificent mansion, I sent letters of invitation to the editors and several of the nobility, to visit the General. Most of them called, and were highly gratified. The word of approval was indeed so passed around in high circles, that uninvited parties drove to my door in crested carriages, and were not admitted.

This procedure, though in some measure a stroke of policy, was neither singular nor hazardous, under the circumstances. I had not yet announced a public exhibition, and as a private American gentleman, it became me to maintain the dignity of my position. I therefore instructed my liveried servant to deny admission to see my "ward," excepting to persons who brought cards of invitation. He did it in a proper manner, and no offence could be taken, though I was always particular to send an invitation immediately to such as had not been admitted.

During our first week in London, the Hon. Edward Everett, the American Minister, to whom I had letters of introduction, called and was highly pleased with his diminutive though renowned countryman. We dined with him the next day, by invitation, and his family loaded the young American with presents. Mr. Everett kindly promised to use influence at the Palace in person, with a view to having Tom Thumb introduced to Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

A few evenings afterwards the Baroness Rothschild sent her carriage for us. Her mansion is a noble structure in Piccadilly, surrounded by a high wall, through the gate of which our carriage

was driven, and brought up in front of the main entrance. Here we were received by half a dozen servants, and were ushered up the broad flight of marble stairs to the drawing-room, where we met the Baroness and a party of twenty or more ladies and gentlemen. In this sumptuous mansion of the richest banker in the world, we spent about two hours, and when we took our leave a well-filled purse was quietly slipped into my hand. The golden shower had begun to fall, and that it was no dream was manifest from the fact that, very shortly afterwards, a visit to the mansion of Mr. Drummond, another eminent banker, came to the same golden conclusion.

I now engaged the "Egyptian Hall," in Piccadilly, and the announcement of my unique exhibition was promptly answered by a rush of visitors, in which the wealth and fashion of London were liberally represented. I made these arrangements because I had little hope of being soon brought to the Queen's presence, (for the reason before mentioned,) but Mr. Everett's generous influence secured my object. I breakfasted at his house one morning, by invitation, in company with Mr. Charles Murray, an author of creditable repute, who held the office of Master of the Queen's Household. In the course of conversation, Mr. Murray inquired as to my plans, and I informed him that I intended going to the Continent shortly, though I should be glad to remain if the General could have an interview with the Queen – adding that such an event would be of great consequence to me.

Mr. Murray kindly offered his good offices in the case, and the next day one of the Life Guards, a tall, noble-looking fellow, bedecked as became his station, brought me a note, conveying the Queen's invitation to General Tom Thumb and his guardian, Mr. Barnum, to appear at Buckingham Palace on an evening specified. Special instructions were the same day orally given me by Mr. Murray, by Her Majesty's command, to suffer the General to appear before her, as he would appear anywhere else, without any training in the use of the titles of royalty, as the Queen desired to see him act naturally and without restraint.

Determined to make the most of the occasion, I put a placard on the door of the Egyptian Hall: "Closed this evening, General Tom Thumb being at Buckingham Palace by command of Her Majesty."

On arriving at the Palace, the Lord in Waiting put me "under drill" as to the manner and form in which I should conduct myself in the presence of royalty. I was to answer all questions by Her Majesty through him, and in no event to speak directly to the Queen. In leaving the royal presence I was to "back out," keeping my face always towards Her Majesty, and the illustrious lord kindly gave me a specimen of that sort of backward locomotion. How far I profited by his instructions and example, will presently appear.

We were conducted through a long corridor to a broad flight of marble steps, which led to the Queen's magnificent picture gallery, where Her Majesty and Prince Albert, the Duchess of Kent, and twenty or thirty of the nobility were awaiting our arrival. They were standing at the farther end of the room when the doors were thrown open, and the General walked in, looking like a wax doll gifted with the power of locomotion. Surprise and pleasure were depicted on the countenances of the royal circle at beholding this remarkable specimen of humanity so much smaller than they had evidently expected to find him.

The General advanced with a firm step, and as he came within hailing distance made a very graceful bow, and exclaimed, "Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen!"

A burst of laughter followed this salutation. The Queen then took him by the hand, led him about the gallery, and asked him many questions, the answers to which kept the party in an uninterrupted strain of merriment. The General familiarly informed the Queen that her picture gallery was "first-rate," and told her he should like to see the Prince of Wales. The Queen replied that the Prince had retired to rest, but that he should see him on some future occasion. The General then gave his songs, dances, and imitations, and after a conversation with Prince Albert and all present, which continued for more than an hour, we were permitted to depart.

Before describing the process and incidents of “backing out,” I must acknowledge how sadly I broke through the counsel of the Lord in Waiting. While Prince Albert and others were engaged with the General, the Queen was gathering information from me in regard to his history, etc. Two or three questions were put and answered through the process indicated in my drill. It was a round-about way of doing business not at all to my liking, and I suppose the Lord in Waiting was seriously shocked, if not outraged, when I entered directly into conversation with Her Majesty. She, however, seemed not disposed to check my boldness, for she immediately spoke directly to me in obtaining the information which she sought. I felt entirely at ease in her presence, and could not avoid contrasting her sensible and amiable manners with the stiffness and formality of upstart gentility at home or abroad.

The Queen was modestly attired in plain black, and wore no ornaments. Indeed, surrounded as she was by ladies arrayed in the highest style of magnificence, their dresses sparkling with diamonds, she was the last person whom a stranger would have pointed out in that circle as the Queen of England.

The Lord in Waiting was perhaps mollified toward me when he saw me following his illustrious example in retiring from the royal presence. He was accustomed to the process, and therefore was able to keep somewhat ahead (or rather aback) of me, but even I stepped rather fast for the other member of the retiring party. We had a considerable distance to travel in that long gallery before reaching the door, and whenever the General found he was losing ground, he turned around and ran a few steps, then resumed the position of “backing out,” then turned around and ran, and so continued to alternate his methods of getting to the door, until the gallery fairly rang with the merriment of the royal spectators. It was really one of the richest scenes I ever saw; running, under the circumstances, was an offence sufficiently heinous to excite the indignation of the Queen’s favorite poodle-dog, and he vented his displeasure by barking so sharply as to startle the General from his propriety. He, however, recovered immediately, and with his little cane commenced an attack on the poodle, and a funny fight ensued, which renewed and increased the merriment of the royal party.

This was near the door of exit. We had scarcely passed into the ante-room, when one of the Queen’s attendants came to us with the expressed hope of Her Majesty that the General had sustained no damage – to which the Lord in Waiting playfully added, that in case of injury to so renowned a personage, he should fear a declaration of war by the United States!

The courtesies of the Palace were not yet exhausted, for we were escorted to an apartment in which refreshments had been provided for us. We did ample justice to the viands, though my mind was rather looking into the future than enjoying the present. I was anxious that the “Court Journal” of the ensuing day should contain more than a mere line in relation to the General’s interview with the Queen, and, on inquiry, I learned that the gentleman who had charge of that feature in the daily papers was then in the Palace. He was sent for by my solicitation, and promptly acceded to my request for such a notice as would attract attention. He even generously desired me to give him an outline of what I sought, and I was pleased to see afterwards, that he had inserted my notice *verbatim*.

This notice of my visit to the Queen wonderfully increased the attraction of my exhibition and compelled me to obtain a more commodious hall for my exhibition. I accordingly removed to the larger room in the same building, for some time previously occupied by our countryman, Mr. Catlin, for his great Gallery of Portraits of American Indians and Indian Curiosities, all of which remained as an adornment.

On our second visit to the Queen, we were received in what is called the “Yellow Drawing-Room,” a magnificent apartment, surpassing in splendor and gorgeousness anything of the kind I had ever seen. It is on the north side of the gallery, and is entered from that apartment. It was hung with drapery of rich yellow satin damask, the couches, sofas and chairs being covered with the same material. The vases, urns and ornaments were all of modern patterns, and the most exquisite workmanship. The room was panelled in gold, and the heavy cornices beautifully carved and gilt. The tables, pianos, etc., were mounted with gold, inlaid with pearl of various hues, and of the most elegant designs.



We were ushered into this gorgeous drawing-room before the Queen and royal circle had left the dining-room, and, as they approached, the General bowed respectfully, and remarked to Her Majesty “that he had seen her before,” adding, “I think this is a prettier room than the picture gallery; that chandelier is very fine.”

The Queen smilingly took him by the hand, and said she hoped he was very well.

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied, “I am first rate.”

“General,” continued the Queen, “this is the Prince of Wales.”

“How are you, Prince?” said the General, shaking him by the hand; and then standing beside the Prince, he remarked, “the Prince is taller than I am, but I feel as big as anybody” – upon which he strutted up and down the room as proud as a peacock, amid shouts of laughter from all present.

The Queen then introduced the Princess Royal, and the General immediately led her to his elegant little sofa, which we took with us, and with much politeness sat himself down beside her. Then, rising from his seat, he went through his various performances, and the Queen handed him an elegant and costly souvenir, which had been expressly made for him by her order – for which, he told her, “he was very much obliged, and would keep it as long as he lived.” The Queen of the Belgians, (daughter of Louis Philippe) was present on this occasion. She asked the General where he was going when he left London?

“To Paris,” he replied.

“Whom do you expect to see there?” she continued.

Of course all expected he would answer, “the King of the French,” but the little fellow replied:

“I shall see Monsieur Guillaudeu in Paris.”

The two Queens looked inquiringly to me, and when I informed them that M. Guillaudeu was my French naturalist, who had preceded me to Paris, they laughed most heartily.

On our third visit to Buckingham Palace, Leopold, King of the Belgians, was also present. He was highly pleased, and asked a multitude of questions. Queen Victoria desired the General to sing a song, and asked him what song he preferred to sing.

“Yankee Doodle,” was the prompt reply.

This answer was as unexpected to me as it was to the royal party. When the merriment it occasioned somewhat subsided, the Queen good-humoredly remarked, “That is a very pretty song, General. Sing it if you please.” The General complied, and soon afterwards we retired. I ought to add, that after each of our three visits to Buckingham Palace, a very handsome sum was sent to me, of course by the Queen’s command. This, however, was the smallest part of the advantage derived from these interviews, as will be at once apparent to all who consider the force of Court example in England.

The British public were now fairly excited. Not to have seen General Tom Thumb was decidedly unfashionable, and from March 20th until July 20th, the levees of the little General at Egyptian Hall were continually crowded, the receipts averaging during the whole period about five hundred dollars per day, and sometimes going considerably beyond that sum. At the fashionable hour, between fifty and sixty carriages of the nobility have been counted at one time standing in front of our exhibition rooms in Piccadilly.

Portraits of the little General were published in all the pictorial papers of the time. Polkas and quadrilles were named after him, and songs were sung in his praise. He was an almost constant theme for the London *Punch*, which served up the General and myself so daintily that it no doubt added vastly to our receipts.

Besides his three public performances per day, the little General attended from three to four private parties per week, for which we were paid eight to ten guineas each. Frequently we would visit two parties in the same evening, and the demand in that line was much greater than the supply. The Queen Dowager Adelaide requested the General’s attendance at Marlborough House one afternoon. He went in his court dress, consisting of a richly embroidered brown silk-velvet coat and short

breeches, white satin vest with fancy-colored embroidery, white silk stockings and pumps, wig, bag-wig, cocked hat, and a dress sword.

“Why, General,” said the Queen Dowager, “I think you look very smart to-day.”

“I guess I do,” said the General complacently.

A large party of the nobility were present. The old Duke of Cambridge offered the little General a pinch of snuff, which, he declined. The General sang his songs, performed his dances, and cracked his jokes, to the great amusement and delight of the distinguished circle of visitors.

“Dear little General,” said the kind-hearted Queen, taking him upon her lap, “I see you have got no watch. Will you permit me to present you with a watch and chain?”

“I would like them very much,” replied the General, his eyes glistening with joy as he spoke.

“I will have them made expressly for you,” responded the Queen Dowager; and at the same moment she called a friend and desired him to see that the proper order was executed. A few weeks thereafter we were called again to Marlborough House. A number of the children of the nobility were present, as well as some of their parents. After passing a few compliments with the General, Queen Adelaide presented him with a beautiful little gold watch, placing the chain around his neck with her own hands. The little fellow was delighted, and scarcely knew how sufficiently to express his thanks. The good Queen gave him some excellent advice in regard to his morals, which he strictly promised to obey.

After giving his performances, we withdrew from the royal presence, and the elegant little watch presented by the hands of Her Majesty the Queen Dowager was not only duly heralded, but was also placed upon a pedestal in the hall of exhibition, together with the presents from Queen Victoria, and covered with a glass vase. These presents, to which were soon added an elegant gold snuff-box mounted with turquoise, presented by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, and many other costly gifts of the nobility and gentry, added greatly to the attractions of the exhibition. The Duke of Wellington called frequently to see the little General at his public levees. The first time he called, the General was personating Napoleon Bonaparte, marching up and down the platform, and apparently taking snuff in deep meditation. He was dressed in the well-known uniform of the Emperor. I introduced him to the “Iron Duke,” who inquired the subject of his meditations. “I was thinking of the loss of the battle of Waterloo,” was the little General’s immediate reply. This display of wit was chronicled throughout the country, and was of itself worth thousands of pounds to the exhibition.

While we were in London the Emperor Nicholas, of Russia, visited Queen Victoria, and I saw him on several public occasions. I was present at the grand review of troops in Windsor Park in honor of and before the Emperor of Russia and the King of Saxony.

General Tom Thumb had visited the King of Saxony and also Ibrahim Pacha who was then in London. At the different parties we attended, we met, in the course of the season, nearly all of the nobility. I do not believe that a single nobleman in England failed to see General Tom Thumb at his own house, at the house of a friend, or at the public levees at Egyptian Hall. The General was a decided pet with some of the first personages in the land, among whom may be mentioned Sir Robert and Lady Peel, the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham, Duke of Bedford, Duke of Devonshire, Count d’Orsay, Lady Blessington, Daniel O’Connell, Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence, Lord Chesterfield, Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Bates, of the firm of Baring Brothers &

Co., and many other persons of distinction. We had the free entrée to all the theatres, public gardens, and places of entertainment, and frequently met the principal artists, editors, poets, and authors of the country. Albert Smith was a particular friend of mine. He wrote a play for the General entitled “Hop o’ my Thumb,” which was presented with great success at the Lyceum Theatre, London, and in several of the provincial theatres. Our visit in London and tour through the provinces were enormously successful, and after a brilliant season in Great Britain I made preparations to take the General to Paris.

## CHAPTER XII. IN FRANCE

GOING OVER TO ARRANGE PRELIMINARIES – PREVIOUS VISIT TO PARIS – ROBERT HOUDIN – WONDERFUL MECHANICAL TOYS – THE AUTOMATON LETTER-WRITER – DION BOUCICAULT – TALK ON NATURAL CURIOSITIES – HOW I COMPROMISED – THE GENERAL AND PARTY IN PARIS – FIRST VISIT TO KING LOUIS PHILIPPE – A SPLENDID PRESENT – DIPLOMACY – I ASK A FAVOR AND GET IT – LONG CHAMPS – THE GENERAL'S EQUIPAGE – THE FINEST ADVERTISEMENT EVER KNOWN – ALL PARIS IN A FUROR – OPENING OF THE LEVEES – “TOM POUCE” EVERYWHERE – THE GENERAL AS AN ACTOR – “PETIT POUCE” – SECOND AND THIRD VISITS AT THE TUILERIES – INVITATION TO ST. CLOUD – THE GENERAL PERSONATING NAPOLEON BONAPARTE – ST. DENIS – THE INVALIDES – REGNIER – ANECDOTE OF FRANKLIN – LEAVING PARIS – TOUR THROUGH FRANCE – DEPARTURE FOR BRUSSELS.

BEFORE taking the little General and party to Paris, I went over alone to arrange the preliminaries for our campaign in that city. Paris was not altogether a strange place to me. Months before, when I had successfully established my exhibition in London, I ran over to Paris to see what I could pick up in the way of curiosities for my Museum in New York, for during my whole sojourn abroad, and amid all the excitements of my new career, I never forgot the interests of my many and generous patrons at home. The occasion which first called me to France was the “quinquennial exposition” in Paris. At that time, there was an assemblage, every five years, of inventors and manufacturers who exhibited specimens of their skill, especially in articles of curious and ingenious mechanism, and I went from London mainly to attend this exposition.

There I met and became well acquainted with Robert Houdin, the celebrated conjurer. He was a watchmaker by trade, but very soon displayed a wonderful ability and ingenuity which he devoted with so much assiduity to the construction of a complicated machine, that he lost all mental power for a considerable period. When he recovered, he employed himself with great success in the manufacture of mechanical toys and automata which attracted much attention, and afterwards he visited Great Britain and other countries, giving a series of juggling exhibitions which were famous throughout Europe.

At this quinquennial exposition which I attended, he received a gold medal for his automata, and the best figure which he had on exhibition I purchased at a good round price. It was an automaton writer and artist, a most ingenious little figure, which sat at a table, and readily answered with the pencil certain questions. For instance: if asked for an emblem of fidelity, the figure instantly drew a correct picture of a handsome dog; the emblem of love was shown in an exquisite drawing of a little Cupid; the automaton would also answer many questions in writing. I carried this curious figure to London and exhibited it for some time in the Royal Adelaide Gallery, and then sent it across the Atlantic to the American Museum.

During my very brief visit to Paris, Houdin was giving evening performances in the Palais Royale, in legerdemain, and I was frequently present by invitation. Houdin also took pains to introduce me to other inventors of moving figures which I purchased freely, and made a prominent feature in my Museum attractions. I managed, too, during my short stay, to see something of the surface of the finest city in the world.

And now, going to Paris the second time, I was very fortunate in making the acquaintance of Mr. Dion Boucicault, who was then temporarily sojourning in that city, and who at once kindly volunteered to advise and assist me in regard to numerous matters of importance relating to the approaching visit of the General. He spent a day with me in the search for suitable accommodations for my company, and by giving me the benefit of his experience, he saved me much trouble and expense. I have never forgotten the courtesy extended to me by this gentleman.

I stopped at the Hotel Bedford, and securing an interpreter, began to make my arrangements. The first difficulty in the way was the government tax for exhibiting natural curiosities, which was no less than one-fourth of the gross receipts, while theatres paid only eleven per cent. This tax was appropriated to the benefit of the city hospitals. Now, I knew from my experience in London, that my receipts would be so large as to make twenty-five per cent of them a far more serious tax than I thought I ought to pay to the French government, even for the benefit of the admirable hospitals of Paris. Accordingly, I went to the license bureau and had an interview with the chief. I told him I was anxious to bring a “dwarf” to Paris, but that the percentage to be paid for a license was so large as to deter me from bringing him; but letting the usual rule go, what should I give him in advance for a two months’ license?

“My dear sir,” he answered, “you had better not come at all; these things never draw, and you will do nothing, or so little that the percentage need not trouble you.”

I expressed my willingness to try the experiment and offered one thousand francs in advance for a license. The chief would not consent and I then offered two thousand francs. This opened his eyes to a chance for a speculation and he jumped at my offer; he would do it on his own account, he said, and pay the amount of one-quarter of my receipts to the hospitals; he was perfectly safe in making such a contract, he thought, for he had 15,000 francs in bank.

But I declined to arrange this with him individually, so he called his associates together and presented the matter in such a way that the board took my offer on behalf of the government. I paid down the 2,000 francs and received a good, strong contract and license. The chief was quite elated and handed me the license with the remark:

“Now we have made an agreement, and if you do not exhibit, or if your dwarf dies during the two months you shall not get back your money.”

“All right,” thought I; “if you are satisfied I am sure I have every reason to be so.” I then hired at a large rent, the Salle Musard, Rue Vivienne, in a central and fashionable quarter close by the boulevards, and engaged an interpreter, ticket-seller, and a small but excellent orchestra. In fact, I made the most complete arrangements, even to starting the preliminary paragraphs in the Paris papers; and after calling on the Honorable William Rufus King, the United States Minister at the Court of France – who assured me that after my success in London there would be no difficulty whatever in my presentation to King Louis Philippe and family – I returned to England.

I went back to Paris with General Tom Thumb and party some time before I intended to begin my exhibitions, and on the very day after my arrival I received a special command to appear at the Tuileries on the following Sunday evening. It will be remembered that Louis Philippe’s daughter, the wife of King Leopold, of Belgium, had seen the General at Buckingham Palace – a fact that had been duly chronicled in the French as well as English papers, and I have no doubt that she had privately expressed her gratification at seeing him. With this advantage, and with the prestige of our receptions by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, we went to the Tuileries with full confidence that our visit and reception would be entirely satisfactory.

At the appointed hour the General and I, arrayed in the conventional court costume, were ushered into a grand saloon of the palace where we were introduced to the King, the Queen, Princess Adelaide, the Duchess d’Orleans and her son the Count de Paris, Prince de Joinville, Duke and Duchess de Nemours, the Duchess d’Aumale, and a dozen or more distinguished persons, among whom was the editor of the official *Journal des Debats*. The court circle entered into conversation

with us without restraint, and were greatly delighted with the little General. King Louis Philippe was minute in his inquiries about my country and talked freely about his experiences when he wandered as an exile in America. He playfully alluded to the time when he earned his living as a tutor, and said he had roughed it generally and had even slept in Indian wigwams. General Tom Thumb then went through with his various performances to the manifest pleasure of all who were present, and at the close the King presented to him a large emerald brooch set with diamonds. The General expressed his gratitude, and the King, turning to me, said: "you may put it on the General, if you please," which I did, to the evident gratification of the King as well as the General.

King Louis Philippe was so condescending and courteous that I felt quite at home in the royal presence, and ventured upon a bit of diplomacy. The Longchamps celebration was coming – a day once devoted to religious ceremony, but now conspicuous for the display of court and fashionable equipages in the Champs Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne, and as the King was familiarly conversing with me, I ventured to say that I had hurried over to Paris to take part in the Longchamps display and I asked him if the General's carriage could not be permitted to appear in the avenue reserved for the court and the diplomatic corps, representing that the General's small but elegant establishment, with its ponies and little coachman and footman, would be in danger of damage in the general throng unless the special privilege I asked was accorded.

The King smilingly turned to one of the officers of his household and after conversing with him for a few moments he said to me:

"Call on the Prefect of Police to-morrow afternoon and you will find a permit ready for you."

Our visit occupied two hours, and when we went away the General was loaded with fine presents. The next morning all the newspapers noticed the visit, and the *Journal des Debats* gave a minute account of the interview and of the General's performances, taking occasion to say, in speaking of the character parts, that "there was one costume which the General wisely kept at the bottom of his box." That costume, however, – the uniform of Bonaparte – was once exhibited, by particular request, as will be seen anon.

Longchamps day arrived, and among the many splendid equipages on the grand avenue, none attracted more attention than the superb little carriage with four ponies and liveried and powdered coachman and footman, belonging to the General, and conspicuous in the line of carriages containing the Ambassadors to the Court of France. Thousands upon thousands rent the air with cheers for "General Tom Pouce." There never was such an advertisement; the journals next day made elaborate notices of the "turnout," and thereafter whenever the General's carriage appeared on the boulevards, as it did daily, the people flocked to the doors of the cafés and shops to see it pass.

Thus, before I opened the exhibition all Paris knew that General Tom Thumb was in the city. The French are exceedingly impressible; and what in London is only excitement, in Paris becomes furor. Under this pressure, with the prestige of my first visit to the Tuileries and the numberless paragraphs in the papers, I opened my doors to an eager throng. The élite of the city came to the exhibition; the first day's receipts were 5,500 francs, which would have been doubled if I could have made room for more patrons. There were afternoon and evening performances and from that day secured seats at an extra price were engaged in advance for the entire two months. The season was more than a success, it was a triumph.

It seemed, too, as if the whole city was advertising me. The papers were profuse in their praises of the General and his performances. *Figaro*, the *Punch* of

Paris, gave a picture of an immense mastiff running away with the General's carriage and horses in his mouth. Statuettes of "Tom Pouce" appeared in all the windows, in plaster, Parian, sugar and chocolate; songs were written about him and his lithograph was seen everywhere. A fine café on one of the boulevards took the name of "Tom Pouce" and displayed over the door a life-size statue of the General. In Paris, as in London, several eminent painters expressed their desire to paint his portrait, but the General's engagements were so pressing that he found little time to sit to artists. All

the leading actors and actresses came to the General's levees and petted him and made him many presents. Meanwhile, the daily receipts continued to swell, and I was compelled to take a cab to carry my bag of silver home at night.

The official, who had compromised with me for a two months' license at 2,000 francs, was amazed as well as annoyed at the success of my "dwarf." He came, or sent a man, to the levees to take account of the receipts and every additional thousand francs gave him an additional twinge. He seriously appealed to me to give him more money; but when I reminded him of the excellent bargain he supposed he was making, especially when he added the conditional clause that I should forfeit the 2,000 francs if I did not exhibit or if the General died, he smiled faintly and said something about a "Yankee trick." I asked him if he would renew our agreement for two months more on the same terms; and he shrugged his shoulders and said:

"No, Monsieur Barnum; you will pay me twenty-five per cent of your receipts when the two months of our contract expires."

But I did not; for I appealed to the authorities, claiming that I should pay only the ordinary theatrical tax, since the General's exhibition consisted chiefly of character imitations in various costumes, and he was more attractive as an actor than as a natural curiosity. My view of the case was decided to be correct, and thereafter, in Paris and throughout France, with few exceptions, I paid only the eleven per cent theatrical tax.

Indeed, in Paris, the General made a great hit as an actor and was elected a member of the French Dramatic Society. Besides holding his levees, he appeared every night at the Vaudeville Theatre in a French play, entitled "Petit Poucet," and written expressly for him, and he afterwards repeated the part with great success in other cities. The demands upon our time were incessant. We were invited everywhere to dinners and entertainments, and as many of these were understood to be private performances of the General, we were most liberally remunerated therefor. M. Galignani invited us to a soiree and introduced us to some of the most prominent personages, including artists, actors and editors, in Paris. The General was frequently engaged at a large price to show himself for a quarter of an hour at some fancy or charitable fair, and much money was made in this way. On Sundays, he was employed at one or another of the great gardens in the outskirts, and thus was seen by thousands of working people who could not attend his levees. All classes became acquainted with "Tom Pouce."

We were commanded to appear twice more at the Tuileries, and we were also invited to the palace on the King's birthday to witness the display of fireworks in honor of the anniversary. Our fourth and last visit to the royal family was by special invitation at St. Cloud. On each occasion we met nearly the same persons, but the visit to St. Cloud was by far the most interesting of our interviews. On this one occasion, and by the special request of the King, the General personated Napoleon Bonaparte in full costume. Louis Philippe had heard of the General in this character, and particularly desired to see him; but the affair was quite "on the sly," and no mention was made of it in the papers, particularly in the *Journal des Debats*, which thought, no doubt, that costume was still "at the bottom of the General's box." We remained an hour, and at parting, each of the royal company gave the General a splendid present, almost smothered him with kisses, wished him a safe journey through France, and a long and happy life. After bidding them adieu, we retired to another portion of the palace to make a change of the General's costume, and to partake of some refreshments which were prepared for us. Half an hour afterwards, as we were about leaving the palace, we went through a hall leading to the front door, and in doing so passed the sitting-room in which the royal family were spending the evening. The door was open, and some of them happening to espy the General, called out for him to come in and shake hands with them once more. We entered the apartment, and there found the ladies sitting around a square table, each provided with two candles, and every one of them, including the Queen, was engaged in working at embroidery, while a young lady was reading aloud for their edification. I am sorry to say, I believe this is a sight seldom seen in families of the aristocracy on

either side of the water. At the church fairs in Paris, I had frequently seen pieces of embroidery for sale, which were labelled as having been presented and worked by the Duchess d'Orleans, Princess Adelaide, Duchess de Nemours, and other titled ladies.

We also visited, by invitation, the Napoleon School for young ladies, established by the First Napoleon, at St. Denis, five miles north of Paris, and the General greatly delighted the old pensioners at the Invalides by calling upon them, and shaking many of them by the hand. If the General could have been permitted to present to these survivors of Waterloo his representation of their chief and Emperor, he would have aroused their enthusiasm as well as admiration.

On the Fourth of July, 1844, I was in Grenelle, outside the barriers of Paris, when I remembered that I had the address of Monsieur Regnier, an eminent mechanic, who lived in the vicinity. Wishing to purchase a variety of instruments such as he manufactured, I called at his residence. He received me very politely, and I soon was deeply interested in this intelligent and learned man. He was a member of many scientific institutions, was "Chevalier of the Legion of Honor," etc.

While he was busy in making out my bill, I was taking a cursory view of the various plates, drawings, etc., which adorned his walls, when my eyes fell on a portrait which was familiar to me. I was certain that I could not be mistaken, and on approaching nearer it proved to be, as I expected, the engraved portrait of Benjamin Franklin. It was placed in a glazed frame, and on the outside of the glass were arranged thirteen stars made of metal, forming a half circle round his head.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "I see you have here a portrait of my fellow-countryman, Dr. Franklin."

"Yes," replied M. Regnier, "and he was a great and an excellent man. When he was in Paris in '98, he was honored and respected by all who knew him, and by none more so than by the scientific portion of the community. At that time, Dr. Franklin was invited by the President of the Society of Emulation to decide upon the merits of various works of art submitted for inspection, and he awarded my father, for a complicated lock, the prize of a gold medal.

"While my father was with him at his hotel, a young Quaker called upon the Doctor. He was a total stranger to Franklin, but at once proceeded to inform him that he had come to Paris on business, had unfortunately lost all his money, and wished to borrow six hundred francs to enable him to return to his family in Philadelphia. Franklin inquired his family name, and upon hearing it immediately counted out the money, gave the young stranger some excellent advice, and bade him adieu. My father was struck by the generosity of Dr. Franklin, and as soon as the young man had departed, he told the Doctor that he was astonished to see him so free with his money to a stranger; that people did not do business in that way in Paris; and what he considered very careless was, that Franklin took no receipt, not even a scratch of a pen from the young man. Franklin replied that he always felt a duty and pleasure in relieving his fellow-men, and especially in this case, as he knew the family; and they were honest and worthy persons. My father, himself a generous man," continued M. Regnier, "was affected nearly to tears, and begged the Doctor to present him with his portrait. He did so, and this is it. My father has been dead some years. He bequeathed the portrait to me, and there is not money enough in Paris to buy it."

I need not say that I was delighted with this recital. I remarked to M. Regnier that he should double the number of stars, as we now (in 1844) had twenty-six States instead of thirteen, the original number.

"I am aware of that," he replied; "but I do not like to touch the work which was left by my father. I hold it sacred; and," added he, "I suppose you are not aware of the uses we make of these stars?" Assuring him in the negative – "Those stars," said he, "are made of steel, and on the night of every anniversary of American Independence (which is this night), it was always the practice of my father, and will always be mine, to collect our family and children together, darken the room, and by means of electricity, these stars, which are connected, are lighted up, and the portrait illuminated by electricity, Franklin's favorite science – thus forming a halo of glory about his head, and doing honor to the name of a man whose fame should be perpetuated to eternity."

In continuing the conversation, I found that this good old gentleman was perfectly acquainted with the history of America, and he spoke feelingly of what he believed to be the high and proud destiny of our republic. He insisted on my remaining to supper, and witnessing his electrical illumination. Need I say that I accepted the invitation? Could an American refuse?

We partook of a substantial supper, upon which the good old gentleman invoked the blessing of our Father in Heaven, and at the conclusion he returned hearty thanks. At nine o'clock the children and family of M. Regnier and his son-in-law were called in, the room was darkened, the electrical battery was charged, and the wire touched to one of the outer stars. The whole thirteen became instantly bright as fire, and a beautiful effect was produced. What more simple and yet beautiful and appropriate manner could be chosen to honor the memory of Franklin? And what an extraordinary coincidence it was that I, a total stranger in Paris, should meet such a singular man as M. Regnier at all, and more especially on that day of days, the anniversary of our Independence! At ten o'clock I took my leave of this worthy family, but not till we had all joined in the following toast proposed by M. Regnier:

“Washington, Franklin, and Lafayette – heroes, philosophers, patriots, and honest men: May their names stand brightest on the list of earthly glory, when, in after ages, this whole world shall be one universal republic, and every individual under Heaven shall acknowledge the truth that man is capable of self-government.”

It will not be considered surprising that I should feel at home with Monsieur Regnier. Both the day and the man conspired to excite and gratify my patriotism; and the presence of Franklin, my love of my native land.

During my stay in Paris, a Russian Prince, who had been living in great splendor in that city, suddenly died, and his household and personal effects were sold at auction. I attended the sale for several days in succession, buying many articles of vertu, and, among others, a magnificent gold tea-set, and a silver dining-service, and many rare specimens of Sevres china. These articles bore the initials of the family name of the Prince, and his own, “P. T.,” thus damaging the articles, so that the silver and gold were sold for their weight value only. I bought them, and adding “B.” to the “P. T.,” had a very fine table service, still in my possession, and bearing my own initials, “P. T. B.”

While dining one day with my friend, Dr. Brewster, in Paris, all the company present were in raptures over some very fine “Lafitte” wine on the table, and the usual exclamations, “delicious!” and “fruity!” were heard on all sides. When I went to the south of France, the Doctor gave me a letter of introduction to Lafitte’s agent, Mr. Good, at Bordeaux, and I was shown through the extensive cellar of the establishment. The agent talked learnedly, almost affectionately, about the choice and exclusive vineyards of the establishment, and how the stones in the ground retailed the warmth derived from the sun during the day throughout the night, thus mellowing and maturing the grapes, and resulting in the production of a peculiar wine which was possible to no other plot of ground in the entire grape country.

I afterwards learned, however, that this exclusive establishment bought up the entire wine product of all the vineyards in the region round about – it was like the celebrated “Cabana” cigars in Havana. One day a friend was dining with me in Bordeaux and I called for a bottle of “Lafitte,” which, purchased on the very ground of its manufacture, was of course genuine and deliciously “fruity.” It was very old wine of some famous year, and the bottle as brought up from the bin was covered with cobwebs and dust. But while we were sipping the wine and exclaiming “fruity” at proper intervals, I happened to take out my knife and quite inadvertently cut off a bit of the label. The next day when my friend was again dining with me I called for another bottle of the peculiar Lafitte which had so delighted us yesterday. It came cobwebbed and dust-covered and was duly discussed and pronounced deliciously “fruity.” But horrors! all at once, something caught my attention and I exclaimed:



“Do you see that cut label? That is the very bottle which held the rare old wine of yesterday; there is the ‘ear-mark’ which I left with my knife on the bottle” – and I summoned the landlord and thus addressed him:

“What do you mean, you scoundrel, by putting your infernal *vin ordinaire* into old bottles, and passing it off upon us as genuine ‘Lafitte?’ ”

He protested that such a thing was impossible; we were at the very fountain head of the wine, and no one would dare to attempt such a fraud, especially upon experienced wine-tasters like ourselves. But I showed him my careless but remembered mark on the bottle, and proved by my friend that we had the same bottle for our wine of the day before. This was shown so conclusively and emphatically that the landlord finally confessed his fraud, and said that though he had sold thousands of bottles of so-called “Lafitte” to his guests, he never had two dozen bottles of the genuine article in his possession in his life!

Every one who has been in the wine district knows that the wine is trodden from the grapes by the bare feet of the peasants, and while I was there, desiring a new experience, I myself trod out a half barrel or so with my own naked feet, dancing vigorously the while to the sound of a fiddle.

In spite of the extraordinary attention and unbounded petting the little General received at the hands of all classes, he was in no sense a “spoiled child,” but retained throughout that natural simplicity of character and demeanor which added so much to the charm of his exhibitions. He was literally the pet of Paris, and after a protracted and most profitable season we started on a tour through France. The little General’s small Shetland ponies and miniature carriage would be sure to arouse the enthusiasm of the “Provincials,” so I determined to take them along with us. We went first to Rouen, and from thence to Toulon, visiting all the intermediate towns, including Orleans, Nantes, Brest, Bordeaux, – where I witnessed a review by the Dukes de Nemours and d’Aumale, of 20,000 soldiers who were encamped near the city. From Bordeaux we went to Toulouse, Montpellier, Nismes, Marseilles, and many other less important places, holding levees for a longer or shorter time. While at Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseilles the General also appeared in the theatres in his French part of “Petit Poucet.”

Very soon after leaving Paris for our tour through France, I found that there were many places where it would be impossible to proceed otherwise than by post. General Tom Thumb’s party numbered twelve persons, and these, with all their luggage, four little ponies, and a small carriage, must be transported in posting vehicles of some description. I therefore resolved that as posting in France was as cheap, and more independent than any other method of travel, a purchase of posting vehicles should be made for the sole use of the renowned General Tom Thumb and suite. One vehicle, however large, would have been insufficient for the whole company and “effects,” and, moreover, would have been against the regulations. These regulations required that each person should pay for the use of one horse, whether using it or not, and I therefore made the following arrangements: I purchased a post-chaise to carry six persons, to be drawn by six horses; a vehicle on springs, with seats for four persons, and room for the General’s four ponies and carriage, to be drawn by four horses; and lastly, a third vehicle for conveying the baggage of the company, including the elegant little house and furniture set on the stage in the General’s performances of “Petit Poucet” at the theatres, the whole drawn by two horses.

With such a retinue the General “cut quite a swell” in journeying through the country, travelling, indeed, in grander style than a Field Marshal would have thought of doing in posting through France. All this folly and expense, the uninitiated would say, of employing twelve horses and twelve persons, to say nothing of the General’s four ponies, in exhibiting a person weighing only fifteen pounds! But when this retinue passed along the roads, and especially when it came into a town, people naturally and eagerly inquired what great personage was on his travels, and when told that it was “the celebrated General Tom Thumb and suite,” everybody desired to go and see him. It was thus the best advertising

we could have had, and was really, in many places, our cheapest and in some places, our only mode of getting from point to point where our exhibitions were to be given.

During most of the tour I was a week or two ahead of the company, making arrangements for the forthcoming exhibitions, and doing my entire business without the aid of an interpreter, for I soon “picked up” French enough to get along very well indeed. I did not forget that Franklin learned to speak French when he was seventy years of age, and I did not consider myself too old to learn, what, indeed, I was obliged to learn in the interests of my business. As for the little General, who was accompanied by a preceptor and translator, he very soon began to give his entire speaking performances in French, and his piece “Petit Poucet” was spoken as if he were a native.

In fact, I soon became the General’s *avant courier*, though not doing the duties of an *avant courier* to an ordinary exhibition, since these duties generally consist in largely puffing the “coming man” and expected show, thus endeavoring to create a public appetite and to excite curiosity. My duties were quite different; after engaging the largest theatre or saloon to be found in the town, I put out a simple placard, announcing that the General would appear on such a day. Thereafter, my whole energies were directed, apparently, to keeping the people quiet; I begged them not to get excited; I assured them through the public journals, that every opportunity should be afforded to permit every person to see “the distinguished little General, who had delighted the principal monarchs of Europe, and more than a million of their subjects,” and that if one exhibition in the largest audience room in the town would not suffice, two or even three would be given.

This was done quietly, and yet, as an advertisement, effectively, for, strange as it may seem, people who were told to keep quiet, would get terribly excited, and when the General arrived and opened his exhibitions, excitement would be at fever heat, the levees would be thronged, and the treasury filled!

Numerous were the word battles I had with mayors, managers of theatres, directors of hospitals, and others, relative to what I considered – justly, I think – the outrageous imposition which the laws permitted in the way of taxes upon “exhibitions.” Thus the laws required, for the sake of charity, twenty-five per cent of my gross receipts for the hospitals; while to encourage a local theatre, or theatres, which might suffer from an outside show, twenty per cent more must be given to the local managers.

Of course this law was nearly a dead letter; for, to have taken forty-five per cent of my gross receipts at every exhibition would soon have driven me from the provinces, so the hospitals were generally content with ten per cent, and five or ten francs a day satisfied the manager of a provincial theatre. But at Bordeaux the manager of the theatre wished to engage the General to appear in his establishment, and as I declined his offer, he threatened to debar me from exhibiting anywhere in town, by demanding for himself the full twenty per cent the law allowed, besides inducing the directors of the hospitals to compel me to pay them twenty-five per cent more.

Here was a dilemma! I must yield and take half I thought myself entitled to and permit the General to play for the manager, or submit to legal extortion, or forego my exhibitions. I offered the manager six per cent of my receipts and he laughed at me. I talked with the hospital directors and they told me that as the manager favored them, they felt bound to stand by him. I announced in the public journals that the General could not appear in Bordeaux on account of the cupidity and extortionate demands of the theatre manager and the hospital directors. The people talked and the papers denounced; but manager and directors remained as firm as rocks in their positions. Tom Thumb was to arrive in two days and I was in a decided scrape. The mayor interceded for me, but to no avail; the manager had determined to enforce an almost obsolete law unless I would permit the General to play in his theatre every night. My Yankee “dander” was up and I declared that I would exhibit the General gratis rather than submit to the demand. Whereupon, the manager only laughed at me the more to think how snugly he had got me.

Now it happened that, once upon a time, Bordeaux, like most cities, was a little village, and the little village of Vincennes lay one mile east of it. Bordeaux had grown and stretched itself and thickly settled far beyond Vincennes, bringing the latter nearly in the centre of Bordeaux; yet, strange to say, Vincennes maintained its own identity, and had its own Mayor and municipal rights quite independent of Bordeaux. I could scarcely believe my informant who told me this, but I speedily sought out the Mayor of Vincennes, found such a personage, and cautiously inquired if there was a theatre or a hospital within his limits? He assured me there was not. I told him my story, and asked:

“If I open an exhibition within your limits will there be any percentages to pay from my receipts?”

“Not a sou,” replied the Mayor.

“Will you give me a writing to that effect?”

“With the greatest pleasure,” replied the Mayor, and he did so at once.

I put this precious paper in my pocket, and in a few moments I hired the largest dancing saloon in the place, a room capable of holding over 2,000 people. I then announced, especially to the delighted citizens of Bordeaux, that the General would open his exhibitions in Vincennes, which he soon did to an overflowing house. For thirteen days we exhibited to houses averaging more than 3,000 francs per day, and for ten days more at largely increased receipts, not one sou of which went for taxes or percentages. The manager and directors, theatre and hospital, got nothing, instead of the fair allowance I would willingly have given them. Oh, yes! they got something, – that is, a lesson, – not to attempt to offset French Shylockism against Yankee shrewdness.

We were in the South of France in the vintage season. Nothing can surpass the richness of the country at that time of the year. We travelled for many miles where the eye could see nothing but vineyards loaded with luscious grapes and groves of olive trees in full bearing. It is literally a country of wine and oil. Our remunerative and gratifying round of mingled pleasure and profit, brought us at last to Lille, capital of the department of Nord, and fifteen miles from the Belgian frontier, and from there we proceeded to Brussels.

## CHAPTER XIII. IN BELGIUM

CROSSING THE FRONTIER – PROFESSOR PINTE – QUALIFICATIONS OF A GOOD SHOWMAN – “SOFT SUP” – GENEROUS DISTRIBUTION OF MEDALS – PRINCE CHARLES STRATTON – AT BRUSSELS – PRESENTATION TO KING LEOPOLD AND HIS QUEEN – THE GENERAL’S JEWELS STOLEN – THE THIEF CAUGHT – RECOVERY OF THE PROPERTY – THE FIELD OF WATERLOO – MIRACULOUSLY MULTIPLIED RELICS – CAPTAIN TIPPITIWITCHET OF THE CONNECTICUT FUSILEERS – AN ACCIDENT – GETTING BACK TO BRUSSELS IN A CART – STRATTON SWINDLED – LOSING AN EXHIBITION – TWO HOURS IN THE RAIN ON THE ROAD – THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY – A STRICT CONSTRUCTIONIST – STRATTON’S HEAD SHAVED – “BRUMMAGEM” RELICS – HOW THEY ARE PLANTED AT WATERLOO – WHAT LYONS SAUSAGES ARE MADE OF – FROM BRUSSELS TO LONDON.

IN crossing the border from France into Belgium, Professor Pinte, our interpreter and General Tom Thumb’s preceptor, discovered that he had left his passport behind him – at Lille, at Marseilles, or elsewhere in France, he could not tell where, for it was a long time since he had been called upon to present it. I was much annoyed and indignantly told him that he “would never make a good showman, because a good showman never forgot anything.” I could see that my allusion to him as a “showman” was by no means pleasant, which leads me to recount the circumstances under which I was first brought in contact with the Professor.

He was really a “Professor” and teacher of English in one of the best educational establishments in Paris. Very soon after opening my exhibitions in that city, I saw the necessity of having a translator who was qualified to act as a medium between the General and the highly cultivated audiences that daily favored us at our levees. I had begun with a not over-cultivated interpreter, who, when the General personated Cupid, for instance, would cry out “Coopeed,” to which some one would be sure to respond “Stoopeed,” to the annoyance of myself and the amusement of the audience. I accordingly determined to procure the best interpreter I could find and I was directed to call upon Professor Pinte. I saw him and briefly stated what I wanted, in what capacity I proposed to employ him, and what salary I would pay him. He was highly indignant and informed me that he was “no showman,” and had no desire to learn or engage in the business.

“But, my dear sir,” said I, “it is not as a showman that I wish to employ your valuable services, but as a preceptor to my young and interesting ward, General Tom Thumb, whom I desire to have instructed in the French language and in other accomplishments you are so competent to impart. At the same time, I should expect that you would be willing to accompany my ward and your pupil and attend his public exhibitions for the purpose of translating, as may be necessary, to the cultivated people of your own class who are the principal patrons of our entertainments.”

This seemed to put an entirely new face upon the matter, especially as I had offered the Professor a salary five times larger, probably, than he was then receiving. So he rapidly revolved the subject in his mind and said:

“Ah! while I could not possibly accept a situation as a showman, I should be most happy to accept the terms and the position as preceptor to your ward.”

He was engaged, and at once entered upon his duties, not only as preceptor to the General, but as the efficient and always excellent interpreter at our exhibitions, and wherever we needed his

services on the route. As he had lost his passport, when we came to Courtrai on the Belgian frontier, I managed to procure a permit for him which enabled him to proceed with the party. This was but the beginning of difficulties, for I had all our property, including the General's ponies and equipage, to pass through the Custom-house, and among other things there was a large box of medals, with a likeness of the General on one side and of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on the other side, which were sold in large numbers as souvenirs at our exhibitions. They were struck off at a considerable expense in England, and commanded a ready sale.

The Custom-house officers were informed, however, that these medals were mere advertising cards, as they really were, of our exhibitions, and I begged their acceptance of as many as they pleased to put in their pockets. They were beautiful medals, and a few dozen were speedily distributed among the delighted officials, who forthwith passed our show-bills, lithographs and other property with very little trouble. They wanted, however, to charge a duty upon the General's ponies and carriage, but when I produced a document showing that the French government had admitted them duty-free, they did the same. This superb establishment led these officials to think he must be a very distinguished man, and they asked what rank he held in his own country.

"He is Prince Charles Stratton, of the Dukedom of Bridgeport, in the Kingdom of Connecticut," said Sherman.

Whereupon they all reverently raised their hats when the General entered the car. Some of the railway men who had seen the distribution of medals among the Custom-house officers came to me and begged similar "souvenirs" of their distinguished passenger, and I gave the medals very freely, till the applications became so persistent as to threaten a serious pecuniary loss. At last I handed out a final dozen in one package, and said: "There, that is the last of them; the rest are in the box, and beyond my reach."

All this while Professor Pinte was brooding over my remark to him about the loss of his passport; the word "showman" rankled, and he asked me:

"Mr. Barnum, do you consider me a showman?"

I laughingly replied, "Why, I consider you the eminent Professor Pinte, preceptor to General Tom Thumb; but, after all, we are all showmen."

Finding himself so classed with the rest of us, he ventured to inquire "what were the qualifications of a good showman," to which I replied:

"He must have a decided taste for catering for the public; prominent perceptive faculties; tact; a thorough knowledge of human nature; great suavity; and plenty of 'soft soap.' "

"Soft sup!" exclaimed the interested Professor, "what is 'soft sup.' "

I explained, as best I could, how the literal meaning of the words had come to convey the idea of getting into the good graces of people and pleasing those with whom we are brought in contact. Pinte laughed, and as he thought of the generous medal distribution, an idea struck him:

"I think those railway officials must have very dirty hands – you are compelled to use so much 'soft sup.' "

Brussels is Paris in miniature and is one of the most charming cities I ever visited. We found elegant quarters, and the day after our arrival by command we visited King Leopold and the Queen at their palace. The King and Queen had already seen the General in London, but they wished to present him to their children and to the distinguished persons whom we found assembled. After a most agreeable hour we came away – the General, as usual, receiving many fine presents.

The following day, I opened the exhibition in a beautiful hall, which on that day and on every afternoon and evening while we remained there, was crowded by throngs of the first people in the city. On the second or third day, in the midst of the exhibition, I suddenly missed the case containing the valuable presents the General had received from kings, queens, noblemen and gentlemen, and instantly gave the alarm; some thief had intruded for the express purpose of stealing these jewels, and, in the crowd, had been entirely successful in his object.

The police were notified, and I offered 2,000 francs reward for the recovery of the property. A day or two afterwards a man went into a jeweller's shop and offered for sale, among other things, a gold snuff-box, mounted with turquoises, and presented by the Duke of Devonshire to the General. The jeweller, seeing the General's initials on the box, sharply questioned the man, who became alarmed and ran out of the shop. An alarm was raised, and the man was caught. He made a clean breast of it, and in the course of a few hours the entire property was returned, to the great delight of the General and myself. Wherever we exhibited afterwards, no matter how respectable the audience, the case of presents was always carefully watched.

While I was in Brussels I could do no less than visit the battle-field of Waterloo, and I proposed that our party should be composed of Professor Pinte, Mr. Stratton, father of General Tom Thumb, Mr. H. G. Sherman, and myself. Going sight-seeing was a new sensation to Stratton, and as it was necessary to start by four o'clock in the morning, in order to accomplish the distance (sixteen miles) and return in time for our afternoon performance, he demurred.

"I don't want to get up before daylight and go off on a journey for the sake of seeing a darned old field of wheat," said Stratton.

"Sherwood, do try to be like somebody, once in your life, and go," said his wife.

The appeal was irresistible, and he consented. We engaged a coach and horses the night previous, and started punctually at the hour appointed. We stopped at the neat little church in the village of Waterloo, for the purpose of examining the tablets erected to the memory of some of the English who fell in the contest. Thence we passed to the house in which the leg of Lord Uxbridge (Marquis of Anglesey) was amputated. A neat little monument in the garden designates the spot where the shattered member had been interred. In the house is shown a part of the boot which is said to have once covered the unlucky leg. The visitor feels it but considerate to hand a franc or two to the female who exhibits the monument and limb. I did so, and Stratton, though he felt that he had not received the worth of his money, still did not like to be considered penurious, so he handed over a piece of silver coin to the attendant. I expressed a desire to have a small piece of the boot to exhibit in my Museum; the lady cut off, without hesitation, a slip three inches long by one in width. I handed her a couple more francs, and Stratton desiring, as he said, to "show a piece of the boot in old Bridgeport," received a similar slip, and paid a similar amount. I could not help thinking that if the lady was thus liberal in dispensing pieces of the "identical boot" to all visitors, this must have been about the ninety-nine thousandth boot that had been cut as the "Simon pure" since 1815.

With the consoling reflection that the female purchased all the cast-off boots in Brussels and its vicinity, and rejoicing that somebody was making a trifle out of that accident besides the inventor of the celebrated "Anglesey leg," we passed on towards the battle-field, lying about a mile distant.

Arriving at Mont Saint Jean, a quarter of a mile from the ground, we were beset by some eighteen or twenty persons, who offered their services as guides, to indicate the most important localities. Each applicant professed to know the exact spot where every man had been placed who had taken part in the battle, and each, of course, claimed to have been engaged in that sanguinary contest, although it had occurred thirty years before, and some of these fellows were only, it seemed, from twenty-five to twenty-eight years of age! We accepted an old man, who, at first declared that he was killed in the battle, but perceiving our looks of incredulity, consented to modify his statement so far as to assert that he was horribly wounded, and lay upon the ground three days before receiving assistance.

Once upon the ground, our guide, with much gravity, pointed out the place where the Duke of Wellington took his station during a great part of the action; the locality where the reserve of the British army was stationed; the spot where Napoleon placed his favorite guard; the little mound on which was erected a temporary observatory for his use during the battle; the portion of the field at which Blucher entered with the Prussian army; the precise location of the Scotch Greys; the spot where fell Sir Alexander Gordon, Lieut. Col. Canning, and many others of celebrity. I asked him

if he could tell me where Captain Tippetiwichet, of the Connecticut Fusileers, was killed. "Oui, Monsieur," he replied, with perfect confidence, for he felt bound to know, or to pretend to know, every particular. He then proceeded to point out exactly the spot where my unfortunate Connecticut friend had breathed his last. After indicating the locations where some twenty more fictitious friends from Coney Island, New Jersey, Cape Cod and Saratoga Springs, had given up the ghost, we handed him his commission and declined to give him further trouble. Stratton grumbled at the imposition as he handed out a couple of francs for the information received.

Upon quitting the battle-field we were accosted by a dozen persons of both sexes with baskets on their arms or bags in their hands, containing relics of the battle for sale. These consisted of a great variety of implements of war, pistols, bullets, etc., besides brass French eagles, buttons, etc. I purchased a number of them for the Museum, and Stratton was equally liberal in obtaining a supply for his friends in "Old Bridgeport." We also purchased maps of the battle-ground, pictures of the triumphal mound surmounted by the colossal Belgic Lion in bronze, etc., etc. These frequent and renewed taxations annoyed Stratton very much, and as he handed out a five franc piece for a "complete guide-book," he remarked, that "he guessed the battle of Waterloo had cost a darned sight more since it was fought than it did before!"

But his misfortunes did not terminate here. When we had proceeded four or five miles upon our road home, crash went the carriage. We alighted, and found that the axle-tree was broken. It was now a quarter past one o'clock. The little General's exhibition was advertised to commence in Brussels at two o'clock, and could not take place without us. We were unable to walk the distance in double the time at our disposal, and as no carriage was to be got in that part of the country, I concluded to take the matter easy, and forego all idea of exhibiting before evening. Stratton, however, could not bear the thought of losing the chance of taking in six or eight hundred francs, and he determined to take matters in hand, in order, if possible, to get our party into Brussels in time to save the afternoon exhibition. He hastened to a farm-house, accompanied by the interpreter, Professor Pinte, Sherman and myself leisurely bringing up the rear. Stratton asked the old farmer if he had a carriage. He had not. "Have you no vehicle?" he inquired.

"Yes, I have that vehicle," he replied, pointing to an old cart filled with manure, and standing in his barnyard.

"Thunder! is that all the conveyance you have got?" asked Stratton. Being assured that it was, Stratton concluded that it was better to ride in a manure cart than not get to Brussels in time.

"What will you ask to drive us to Brussels in three-quarters of an hour?" demanded Stratton.

"It is impossible," replied the farmer; "I should want two hours for my horse to do it in."

"But ours is a very pressing case, and if we are not there in time we lose more than five hundred francs," said Stratton.

The old farmer pricked up his ears at this, and agreed to get us to Brussels in an hour, for eighty francs. Stratton tried to beat him down, but it was of no use.

"Oh, go it, Stratton," said Sherman; "eighty francs you know is only sixteen dollars, and you will probably save a hundred by it, for I expect a full house at our afternoon exhibition to-day."

"But I have already spent about ten dollars for nonsense," said Stratton, "and we shall have to pay for the broken carriage besides."

"But what can you do better?" chimed in Professor Pinte.

"It is an outrageous extortion to charge sixteen dollars for an old horse and cart to go ten miles. Why, in old Bridgeport I could get it done for three dollars," replied Stratton, in a tone of vexation.

"It is the custom of the country," said Professor Pinte, "and we must submit to it."

By the way, this was a favorite expression of the Professor's. Whenever we were imposed upon, or felt that we were not used right, Pinte would always endeavor to smooth it over by informing us it was "the custom of the country."

“Well, it’s a thundering mean custom, any how,” said Stratton, “and I won’t stand such an imposition.”

“But what shall we do?” earnestly inquired Mr. Pinte. “It may be a high price, but it is better to pay that than to lose our afternoon performance and five or six hundred francs.”

This appeal to the pocket touched Stratton’s feelings; so submitting to the extortion, he replied to our interpreter, “Well, tell the old robber to dump his dung-cart as soon as possible, or we shall lose half an hour in starting.”

The cart was “dumped” and a large, lazy-looking Flemish horse was attached to it with a rope harness. Some boards were laid across the cart for seats, the party tumbled into the rustic vehicle, a red-haired boy, son of the old farmer, mounted the horse, and Stratton gave orders to “get along.” “Wait a moment,” said the farmer, “you have not paid me yet,” “I’ll pay your boy when we get to Brussels, provided he gets there within the hour,” replied Stratton.

“Oh, he is sure to get there in an hour,” said the farmer, “but I can’t let him go unless you pay in advance.” The minutes were flying rapidly, the anticipated loss of the day exhibition of General Tom Thumb flitted before his eyes, and Stratton, in very desperation, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth sixteen five-franc pieces, which he dropped, one at a time, into the hand of the farmer, and then called out to the boy, “There now, do try to see if you can go ahead.”

The boy did go ahead, but it was with such a snail’s pace that it would have puzzled a man of tolerable eyesight to have determined whether the horse was moving or standing still. To make it still more interesting, it commenced raining furiously. As we had left Brussels in a coach, and the morning had promised us a pleasant day, we had omitted our umbrellas. We were soon soaked to the skin. We “grinned and bore it” awhile without grumbling. At length Stratton, who was almost too angry to speak, desired Mr. Pinte to ask the red-haired boy if he expected to walk his horse all the way to Brussels.

“Certainly,” replied the boy; “he is too big and fat to do any thing but walk. We never trot him.”

Stratton was terrified as he thought of the loss of the day exhibition; and he cursed the boy, the cart, the rain, the luck, and even the battle of Waterloo itself. But it was all of no use, the horse would not run, but the rain did – down our backs.

At two o’clock, the time appointed for our exhibition, we were yet some seven miles from Brussels. The horse walked slowly and philosophically through the pitiless storm, the steam majestically rising from the old manure-cart, to the no small disturbance of our unfortunate olfactories. “It will take two hours to get to Brussels at this rate,” growled Stratton. “Oh, no,” replied the boy, “it will only take about two hours from the time we started.”

“But your father agreed to get us there in an hour,” answered Stratton.

“I know it,” responded the boy, “but he knew it would take more than two.”

“I’ll sue him for damage, by thunder,” said Stratton.

“Oh, there would be no use in that,” chimed in Mr. Pinte, “for you could get no satisfaction in this country.”

“But I shall lose more than a hundred dollars by being two hours instead of one,” said Stratton.

“They care nothing about that; all they care for is your eighty francs,” remarked Pinte.

“But they have lied and swindled me,” replied Stratton.

“Oh, you must not mind that, it is the custom of the country.”

Stratton gave “the country,” and its “customs,” another cursing.

All things will finally have an end, and our party did at length actually arrive in Brussels, cart and all, in precisely two hours and a half from the time we left the farmer’s house. Of course we were too late to exhibit the little General. Hundreds of visitors had gone away disappointed.

With feelings of utter desperation, Stratton started for a barber’s shop. He had a fine, black, bushy head of hair, of which he was a little proud, and every morning he submitted it to the curling-tongs of the barber. His hair had not been cut for several weeks, and after being shaved, he desired



the barber to trim his flowing locks a little. The barber clipped off the ends of the hair, and asked Stratton if that was sufficient. "No," he replied, "I want it trimmed a little shorter; cut away, and I will tell you when to stop."

Stratton had risen from bed at an unusual hour, and after having passed through the troubles and excitements of the unlucky morning, he began to feel a little drowsy. This feeling was augmented by the soothing sensations of the tonsorial process, and while the barber quietly pursued his avocation, Stratton as quietly fell asleep. The barber went entirely over his head, cutting off a couple of inches of hair with every clip of his scissors. He then rested for a moment; expecting his customer would tell him that it was sufficient; but the unconscious Stratton uttered not a word, and the barber, thinking he had not cut the hair close enough, went over the head again. Again did he wait for an answer, little thinking that his patron was asleep. Remembering that Stratton had told him to "cut away, and he would tell him when to stop," the innocent barber went over the head the third time, cutting the hair nearly as close as if he had shaved it with a razor! Having finished, he again waited for orders from his customer, but he uttered not a word. The barber was surprised, and that surprise was increased when he heard a noise which seemed very like a snore coming from the nasal organ of his unconscious victim.

The poor barber saw the error that he had committed, and in dismay, as if by mistake, he hit Stratton on the side of the head with his scissors, and woke him. He started to his feet, looked in the glass, and to his utter horror saw that he was unfit to appear in public without a wig! He swore like a trooper, but he could not swear the hair back on to his head, and putting on his hat, which dropped loosely over his eyes, he started for the hotel. His despair and indignation were so great that it was some time before he could give utterance to words of explanation. His feelings were not allayed by the deafening burst of laughter which ensued. He said it was the first time that he ever went a sight-seeing, and he guessed it would be the last!

Several months subsequent to our visit to Waterloo, I was in Birmingham, and there made the acquaintance of a firm who manufactured to order, and sent to Waterloo, barrels of "relics" every year. At Waterloo these "relics" are planted, and in due time dug up, and sold at large prices as precious remembrances of the great battle. Our Waterloo purchases looked rather cheap after this discovery.

While we were in Brussels, Mrs. Stratton, the mother of the General, tasted some sausages which she declared the best things she had eaten in France or Belgium; in fact, she said "she had found little that was fit to eat in this country, for every thing was so Frenchified and covered in gravy, she dared not eat it; but there was something that tasted natural about these sausages; she had never eaten any as good, even in America." She sent to the landlady to inquire the name of them, for she meant to buy some to take along with her. The answer came that they were called "saucisse de Lyon," (Lyons sausages,) and straightway Mrs. Stratton went out and purchased half a dozen pounds. Mr. Sherman soon came in, and, on learning what she had in her package, he remarked: "Mrs. Stratton, do you know what Lyons sausages are made of?"

"No," she replied; "but I know that they are first-rate!"

"Well," replied Sherman, "they may be good, but they are made from donkeys!" which is said to be the fact. Mrs. Stratton said she was not to be fooled so easily – that she knew better, and that she should stick to the sausages.

Presently Professor Pinte entered the room. "Mr. Pinte," said Sherman, "you are a Frenchman, and know every thing about edibles; pray tell me what Lyons sausages are made of."

"Of asses," replied the inoffensive professor.

Mrs. Stratton seized the package, the street window was open, and, in less than a minute, a large brindle dog was bearing the "Lyons sausages" triumphantly away.

There were many other amusing incidents during our brief stay at Brussels, but I have no space to record them. After a very pleasant and successful week, we returned to London.

## CHAPTER XIV. IN ENGLAND AGAIN

LEVEES IN EGYPTIAN HALL – UNDIMINISHED SUCCESS – OTHER ENGAGEMENTS – “UP IN A BALLOON” – PROVINCIAL TOUR – TRAVELLING BY POST – GOING TO AMERICA – A. T. STEWART – SAMUEL ROGERS – AN EXTRA TRAIN – AN ASTONISHED RAILWAY SUPERINTENDENT – LEFT BEHIND AND LOCKED UP – SUNDAYS IN LONDON – BUSINESS AND PLEASURE – ALBERT SMITH – A DAY WITH HIM AT WARWICK – STRATFORD ON AVON – A POETICAL BARBER – WARWICK CASTLE – OLD GUY’S TRAPS – OFFER TO BUY THE LOT – THREAT TO BURST THE SHOW – ALBERT SMITH AS A SHOWMAN – LEARNING THE BUSINESS FROM BARNUM – THE WARWICK RACES – RIVAL DWARFS – MANUFACTURED GIANTESSES – THE HAPPY FAMILY – THE ROAD FROM WARWICK TO COVENTRY – PEEPING TOM – THE YANKEE GO-AHEAD PRINCIPLE – ALBERT SMITH’S ACCOUNT OF A DAY WITH BARNUM.

IN London the General again opened his levees in Egyptian Hall with undiminished success. His unbounded popularity on the Continent and his receptions by King Louis Philippe, of France, and King Leopold, of Belgium, had added greatly to his prestige and fame. Those who had seen him when he was in London months before came to see him again, and new visitors crowded by thousands to the General’s levees.

Besides giving these daily entertainments, the General appeared occasionally for an hour, during the intermissions, at some place in the suburbs; and for a long time he appeared every day at the Surrey Zoölogical Gardens, under the direction of the proprietor, my particular friend Mr. W. Tyler. This place subsequently became celebrated for its great music hall, in which Spurgeon, the sensational preacher, first attained his notoriety. The place was always crowded, and when the General had gone through with his performances on the little stage, in order that all might see him he was put into a balloon which, secured by ropes, was then passed around the ground just above the people’s heads. Some forty men managed the ropes and prevented the balloon from rising; but, one day, a sudden gust of wind took the balloon fairly out of the hands of half the men who had hold of the ropes, while others were lifted from the ground, and had not an alarm been instantly given which called at least two hundred to the rescue the little General would have been lost.

In addition to other engagements, the General frequently performed in Douglass’s Standard Theatre, in the city, in the play “Hop o’ my Thumb,” which was written for him by my friend, Albert Smith, whom I met soon after my first arrival in London and with whom I became very intimate. After my arrival in Paris, seeing the decided success of “Petit Poucet,” it occurred to me that I should want such a play when I returned to England and the United States. So I wrote to Mr. Albert Smith, inviting him to make me a visit in Paris, intending to have him see this play and either translate or adapt it, or write a new one in English. He came and stayed with me a week, visiting the Vaudeville Theatre to see “Petit Poucet” nearly every night, and we compared notes and settled upon a plan for “Hop o’ my Thumb.” He went back to London and wrote the play and it was very popular indeed.

During our stay of three months, at this time, in Egyptian Hall, we made occasional excursions and gave exhibitions at Brighton, Bath, Cheltenham, Leamington and other watering places and fashionable resorts. It was at the height of the season in these places, and our houses were very large and our profits in proportion.

In October, 1844, I made my first return visit to the United States, leaving General Tom Thumb in England, in the hands of an accomplished and faithful agent, who continued the exhibitions during my absence. One of the principal reasons for my return at this time, was my anxiety to renew the Museum building lease, although my first lease of five years had still three years longer to run. I told Mr. Olmsted that if he would not renew my lease on the same terms, for at least five years more, I would immediately put up a new building, remove my Museum, close his building during the last year of my lease, and cover it from top to bottom with placards, stating where my new Museum was to be found. Pending an arrangement, I went to Mr. A. T. Stewart, who had just purchased the Washington Hall property, at the corner of Broadway and Chambers Street, intending to erect a store on the site, and proposed to join him in building, he to take the lower floor of the new store for his business, and I to own and occupy the upper stories for my Museum. He said he would give me an answer in the course of a week. Meanwhile, Mr. Olmsted gave me the additional five years lease I asked, and I so notified Mr. Stewart. Seeing the kind of building that Mr. Stewart erected on his lots, I do not know if he seriously entertained my proposition to join him in the enterprise; but he was by no means the great merchant then he afterwards became, and neither of us then thought, probably, of the gigantic enterprises we were subsequently to undertake, and the great things we were to accomplish. Having completed my business arrangements in New York, I returned to England with my wife and daughters, and hired a house in London. My house was the scene of constant hospitality which I extended to my numerous friends in return for the many attentions shown to me. It seemed then as if I had more and stronger friends in London than in New York. I had met and had been introduced to “almost everybody who was anybody,” and among them all, some of the best soon became to me much more than mere acquaintances.

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