

P.T. BARNUM

P. T. BARNUM'S
MENAGERIE

Phineas Barnum

P. T. Barnum's Menagerie

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Barnum P.

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Содержание

P.T. Barnum's Menagerie	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	7

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MY dear children, unless you have been fortunate enough to be taken to the menagerie by some grown-up friend, somebody who would patiently answer all your questions, and tell you all about the bewitchingly horrible animals in the cages, and into whose arms you might run when they growled and looked fierce, I do not think you can know the joy of Tom, Trixie and Gay as they entered the menagerie with Mr. Barnum.

Trixie hugged his right arm tight, as usual, Gay kept fast hold of his left hand, while Tom was so anxious to miss no part of the show that he did not know that he was walking so clumsily as to put Mr. Barnum's toes in danger; and, notwithstanding they were such old chums, I fancy he was more than once tempted to say to the boy, "Tom, you are as awkward as a grizzly bear!"

At the sight of the zebra, Gay laughed aloud. "He is knitted all in stripes – he is made of garters!" she said; and she thought the gnu looked like a wild bull "in front," but when he turned round she said he was a horse.

And oh! you should have heard the buffalo snort at Gay! "He wants to make a meal of baby," said Tom, but the truth was a man had been teasing him with a cane, and when a buffalo is angry, he is not a very pleasant play-fellow.

"I mean to hunt the buffalo, out West, when I am a man," said Tom.

"Then you must hurry and grow up," said Mr. Barnum, "for the animal, in our own country, is being rapidly exterminated."

"What is the meaning of exterminated?" asked Tom.

"Killed off," said Mr. Barnum; and Tom thought that a much better way of saying it.

"Does a buffalo grow up out of a buffalo bug?" asked Gay. Then they all laughed at her till she pouted, and Trixie thought, "I must remember to tell that to mama."

The reindeer, the antelope, and the moose were all somewhat alike – "cousins," the children called them; and Gay had a very pretty name for two reindeer that she thought especially beautiful – she said they were "Santa Claus's ponies;" and I am sure that even Santa Claus would have been delighted to drive them.

Elephants! Just what Tom had been longing for, and it was strange to see how frisky the great clumsy creatures could be. They stood on one another's backs, they tried to waltz, and then two of them, after much floundering and capering, jumped over a bar; but not even Mr. Barnum himself could say they did it gracefully.

"See those two play see-saw!" cried Trixie, laughing till her little sides shook, "and that little fellow is grinding a hand-organ!"

Others, dressed like clowns, were as full of tricks as so many monkeys. The very largest elephant thrust his trunk forward, and Tom whispered to a boy who stood near, "You pull his front tail, and hear him roar!" But the elephant rolled his eyes toward Tom as if to say, "Better try it yourself, young man," and Tom moved back.

"Mr. Barnum and I remember Jumbo," said he.

"Who was Jumbo?" asked Trixie.

"Oh, a tremendous elephant, as big as six of these rolled into one! He went to Canada, and there a locomotive smashed into his brain, and he turned over and died. But first he wrapped his trunk around the baby elephant and flung him safe off the track."

"Good Jumbo!" said Gay with a smile; but there were tears in Trixie's eyes.

"Yes, baby; and that's the way we would jump for you in any danger," added Tom.

Gay smiled sweetly again, but Trixie squeezed her old friend's hand so hard that he bent down and kissed her, saying, "But there *is* no danger, Toodles!"

The children were now quite ready to leave the elephants to look at the ostriches and the storks. I think that Trixie expected to see the ostriches wholly covered with long, dangling feathers, such as those she wore on her hat; and she was a little disappointed. The storks were old friends of hers, because mama had a screen at home, upon which storks were embroidered; and some of these birds, like those on the screen, were resting upon one foot.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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