

MY MARGUERITE.

I look upon her brow and see
A radiant, crystal purity,
And find within her azure eyes
The loveliness of summer skies;
She is so sweet,
My Marguerite,
I have would kind and kiss her feet!
If she but deign one word to say,
I hold a treasure for the day,
Both she but smile, a halo bright
Encircles all my dreams by night.
The dusty street,
Prest by her feet,
Becomes a royal palace seat!
My life to her dear life has grown,
Till all my being is her own,
And every thought and hope her due
Though I am forty, she but two;
And so sweet
Is Marguerite,
I kneel and kiss her dainty feet!
—[Zitella Cooke, in Youth's Companion.]

Christopher and the Fairy.

BY W. C. MORROW.

Centrepole Tom professed to know everything about all the distinguished people of the "profession" in all parts of Christendom, and likely he did know a great deal; for, in his humble capacity he had served many of them in divers' countries and, though a boastful man, he had never been detected in an inability to give trustworthy information. So, when it was announced with a great show of large type, that "Christopher and the Fairy" had just landed at San Francisco from an Australian steamer, under contract for the remainder of the season, there was much excitement and curiosity among the people of the circus, and Centrepole Tom was at once exploited for knowledge concerning them.

"Hain't you ever heard of Christopher and the Fairy?" he asked, pityingly; "well, that gits me. The Fairy's the purtiest little trick on wheels, an' the way she kin do the flying trapeze is something 'stunning.' No, I hain't never seen her, but I know all about her. Every man-jack under the canvas went dead gone on her, but she never took no notice of any 'em, and didn't seem to care for nobody's society but the women's and that ornery, mealy old Christopher."

"Is Christopher her husband?" asked a long-legged young grouch.

"No!" thundered Tom, with so great vehemence that the young man quailed, and dared not ask any more questions.

"Brother?" inquired one of the ring "supers."

"No!" yelled the veteran master of the centrepole-hoist; "he ain't her husband, nor her brother, nor her uncle, nor her grandfather, nor her cousin."

The head-hostler, as much a veteran as Centrepole Tom, and more modest and less theatrical than he, quietly said:

"No use making a fool of yourself and putting on airs before these here boys. I don't know who Christopher is, an' I ain't ashamed to say so. Now, who is Christopher?" This was the supreme moment for which Centrepole Tom had waited. He squared himself around, and, looking stolidly at the head-hostler, said impressively and with the utmost deliberation:

"Christopher is an elephant."

It was a small speech, but it was sometime after this before the two men became good friends again.

There was a commotion all through the small army of circus people when Christopher and the Fairy arrived. They did not come to the tents for two or three days after landing, as it was rumored that Christopher had been seasick on the voyage across the Pacific and needed a little rest. When they did appear, however, they were cordially welcomed. The women of the circus found the Fairy (who in private life was known as Miss Camilla Armijo) to be a delightful girl, more substantial than a genuine fairy, to be sure, but hardly more so; for, although she was full-grown, she was so small and fragile that her professional name sat well upon her. There was a light touch of sadness in all her conduct, and Centrepole Tom explained this by saying that she had recently lost both her parents. How he discovered this nobody ever could learn. But it was clear, at least, that she was a very sweet and gentle little body, very young, and with no friend in San Francisco except old Christopher.

I say "old Christopher" because it is impossible to associate anything but great age with his enormous proportions and overwhelming dignity. He was an East Indian elephant of prodigious size. A more solemn and self-satisfied elephant it would have been impossible to find.

It was very pretty to see how solicitous was the Fairy of her immense charge. She saw that he had a sufficient allowance of fresh, sweet hay, and, from a bag which she carried, she fed him some dainties which she had for that purpose and which he took in his lithic trunk with manifest tokens of gratitude. She patted his great jaws and said kind things to him, and he took it all as a matter of course, seeming to say, "I see nothing at all strange in the affection and solicitude which this beautiful little Fairy lavishes upon me; for am I not a very large and majestic elephant, and does she not know that I love her better than does any one else in all the world?" And it was pretty to see how gently she bade him good-by until the evening performance, which he would begin in two hours from that time.

There was a far greater crowd than usual at the performance that evening, for the flaming public announcements of Christopher and the Fairy had borne profitable fruit. Not only were the seats packed up all the way to the caves, but rows of extra seats had been provided on the level ground facing the ring. Several acts were done before the manager announced the new performer, which he did in the following graceful manner:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the pleasure to introduce to you the most celebrated performers of Her Majesty's Australian colonies—Christopher and the Fairy. You will see for yourselves that Christopher is the largest and most powerful elephant in captivity, and that the Fairy justly deserves her reputation for being the most graceful and daring flying-trapeze performer in the world. The performances of these two renowned individuals will consist in ground acts in which they both take part, followed by the flying-trapeze act done by the Fairy alone, Christopher meanwhile standing below and looking on, at the same time giving signals to the Fairy and otherwise encouraging her in her daring and perilous performance high in the air."

When he had finished, the elephant came slowly walking out, and thereupon rose a mighty shout of applause and a great clapping of hands. Sitting on the massive shoulders of the enormous brute was Fairy, glittering with spangles. She was so small, and fragile, and dainty, and Christopher was so overwhelming, and majestic, and stern, that the strange

picture caught the audience with sweeping force, and the applause became deafening. Christopher calmly marched into the ring and proceeded deliberately around it. The Fairy meanwhile guiding him with gentle hand-pressure on one side of his neck or the other, while with the other hand she threw kisses to the audience. Her bare, dimpled arms and smiling dimpled cheeks, her rosy mouth, her large black eyes, and curling black hair in which diamonds shone, won every heart for her in that immense crowd; for so much sweetness and grace and daintiness they had never seen all of once in a circus-ring before.

The circuit of the ring completed, the elephant stopped and listened gravely to the sorry jokes of the clown. He had heard them before and was not to be amused. The Fairy bounded to her feet on the great animal's back, and there found room for some entertaining tricks of agility. Then she gave him a tap with her slippers little foot, and, in response, he brought his long trunk around, caught her by the waist, and set her gently on the ground. This made the audience applaud until the Fairy was almost deaf. Other things, some old and some new, were done by the two, such as his walking over her, stepping over so carefully, as she lay on the ground; recovering her handkerchief from the clown, who had stolen it and hidden it in his blouse; throwing her high in the air and stepping forward in time to have her alight nimbly on his back; and things like that. Then came her act on the flying-trapeze.

To prepare for this the clown fetched her a flag, which she gave to Christopher to hold in his trunk. Then the clown threw a tape over a trapeze hung high in the air, and, with a few parting caresses and whispered words to Christopher, she sprang to the tape and climbed it like a squirrel. She sat a moment on the trapeze bar and then glanced down at Christopher, who, sitting back on his haunches, better to look so high, was gravely watching her. The band had stopped playing. A clear, musical voice from above, dropping like pearls on the people below, called out:

"How was that, Christopher?"

The elephant waved the flag and gravely nodded his approval.

Then came the real work of the acrobatic sorts of agile turnings and graceful leaps from the main bar to one hung higher still; and after every one of these feats, each more daring than its predecessor, she would call down in her musical, peary voice:

"Was that all right, Christopher?"

And Christopher would wave the flag and solemnly nod his approval.

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