THE MAIL

A PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE.

TERRE HAUTE, - - AUGUST 18, 1877.

LOAFING AROUND.

They are sitting around upon barrels and chairs,
Discussing their own and their neighbors' affairs.
And the look of content that is seen on each face
Seems to say, I have found my appropriate place,
Sitting around.

In bar rooms and groceries, calmly they sit,
And serenely chew borrowed tobacco and spit,
While the stories they tell and the jokes that they crack
Show that their hearts have grown hard and undoubtedly black—
While sitting around.

The "litter around" is a man of no means,
And his face wouldn't pass for a quart of white beans,
Yet he somehow or other contrives to exist,
And is frequently seen with a drink in his fist—
While sitting around.

The loungers, they toil not nor yet do they spin,
Unless it be yarns while enjoying their gin;
They are people of leisure, yet often 'tis true,
They allude to the work they're intending to do—
While sitting around.

They've a habit of talking of other men's wives,
As they whittle up sticks with their horn-handled knives;
They're a scaly old set, and wherever you go
You will find them in groups, or strung out in a row—
Sitting around.

Saved by a Flash of Lightning.

My name is Hunt. Yes, sir; Anthony Hunt. I am a settler on this Western prairie. Wilds? Yes, sir; it's little else than wilds now, but you should have seen it when I and my wife first moved up here. There was not a house within sight for miles. Even now we have not many neighbors; but those we have are downright good ones. To appreciate your neighbors as you ought, sir, you must live in these lonely places, so far removed from the haunts of man.

What I am about to tell of happened ten years ago. I was going to the distant town, or settlement, to sell some fifty head of cattle—fine creatures, sir, as ever you saw. The journey was a more rare event with me than it is now; and my wife had always plenty of commissions to charge me with in the shape of dry goods and groceries and such like things.

Our youngest child was a sweet little gentle thing, who had been named after her Aunt Dorothy. We called the child Dolly. This time my commissions included one for her—a doll. She had never had a real doll; that is, a bought doll; only the rag bundles her mother made for her. For some days before my departure the child could talk of nothing else—or we, either, for the matter of that—for she was a great pet, the darling of us all. It was to be a big, big doll, with golden hair and blue eyes. I shall never forget the child's words the morning I was starting, as she ran after me to the gate, or the pretty picture she made. There are some children sweeter and prettier than others sir, as you can't but have noticed, and Dolly was one.

'A very great big doll, please, daddy,' she called out after me; 'and please bring it very soon.'

I turned to nod yes to her as she stood in her clean whitey-brown pinafore against the gate, her nut brown hair falling in curls about her neck, and the light breeze stirring them.

'A brave doll,' I answered, 'for my little one—almost as big as Dolly.'

Nobody would believe, I dare say, how full my thoughts were of that promised doll as I rode along, or what a nice one I meant to buy. It was not often I spent money in what my good thrifty wife would have called waste; but Dolly was Dolly, and I meant to do it now.

The cattle sold, I went about my purchases, and soon had no end of parcels to be packed in the saddle bags. Tea, sugar, rice, candles—but I need not weary you, sir, with telling of them, together with the calico for shirts and nightgowns, and the delaine for the children's new frocks. Last of all, I went about the doll—and found a beauty. It was not as big as Dolly, or half as big; but it had flaxen curls and sky blue eyes; and by dint of pulling a wire you could open or shut the eyes at will.

'Do it up carefully,' I said to the storekeeper. 'My little daughter would cry sadly if any harm comes to it.'

The day was pretty well ended before all my work was done; and, just for a moment or two, I hesitated whether I should not stay in the town and start for home in the morning. It would have been the more prudent course. But I thought of poor Dolly's anxiety to get her treasure, and of my own happiness in watching the rapture in her delighted eyes. So with my parcels packed in the best way they could be, I mounted my horse and started. It was as good and steady a horse as you ever rode, sir; but night began to set in before I was well a mile from the town; it seemed as if it were going to be an ugly night, too. Again the thought struck me—should I turn back and wait till morning? I had the price of the cattle, you see, sir, in my breast pocket; and robberies, aye, and murders also, were not quite unknown things on the prairie. But I had my brace of sure pistols with me, and decided to press onward.

The night came on as dark as pitch, and part of the way my road would be pitch dark besides. But on that score I had no fear; I knew the road well, every inch of it, though I could not ride so fast as I should have done in the light. I was about six miles from home, I suppose, and I knew the time must be close upon midnight, when the storm which had been brewing broke. The thunder roared, the rain fell in torrents; the best I could do was to press onward in it.

All at once, as I rode on a cry startled me; a faint wailing sound like the cry of a child. Reining up, I sat still and listened. Had I been mistaken? No, there it was again. But in what direction I could not tell. I couldn't see a thing. It was, as I have said, as dark as pitch. Getting off my horse, I felt about but could find nothing. And while I was seeking, the cry came again—the faint moan of a child in pain. Then I began to wonder. I am not superstitious, but I asked myself how it was possible that a child could be out on the prairie at such an hour and in such a night. No; real child it could not be. Upon that came another thought, one less welcome: Was it a trap to hinder me on my way and ensnare me? There might be midnight robbers who would easily hear of my almost certain ride home that night and of the money I should have about me.

I don't think, sir, that I am more timid than other people, or as much so, perhaps as some, but I confess the idea made me uneasy. My best plan was to ride on as fast as I could and get out of the mystery into safe quarters. Just here was about the darkest bit of a road in all the route. Mounting my horse, I was about to urge him on, when the cry came again. It did sound like a child's; the plaintive wailing of a child nearly exhausted.

'God guide me!' I said, undecided what to do. As I sat another moment listening I once more heard the cry fainter and more faint. I threw myself off my horse with an exclamation.

'Be it a ghost or be it a robber, Anthony Hunt is not the one to abandon a child to die without trying to save it.'

But how was I to save?—how find it? The more I searched about, the less could my hands light on anything, save the sloppy earth. The voice had quite ceased now, so I had no guide from that. While I stood trying to peer into the darkness, all my ears alert, a flood of sheet lightning illuminated the plain. At a little distance just beyond a kind of gentle ridge or hill, I caught a glimpse of something white. It was dark again in a moment, but I made my way with unerring instinct. Sure enough, there lay a poor little child. Whether boy or girl I could not tell. It seemed to be three parts insensible now, as I took it up, dripping with wet from the sloppy earth.

'My poor little thing!' I said, as I hushed it to me. 'We'll go and find mammy. You are safe now.'

And, in answer, the child just put out its feeble hand, moaned once, and nestled close to me.

With the child hushed to my breast I rode on. Its perfect silence soon showed me that it slept. And, sir, I thanked God that He had let me save it, and I thought how grateful some poor mother would be! But I was full of wonder for all that, wondering what extraordinary fate had taken any young child to that solitary spot.

Getting in sight of home, I saw all the windows alight. Deborah had done it for me, I thought, to guide me home in safety through the darkness. But presently I knew that something must be the matter for the very few neighbors we had were gathered there. My heart stood still with fear. I thought of some calamity to one or other of the children. I had saved a like one from perishing, but what might not have happened to my own.

Hardly daring to lift the latch, while my poor tired horse stood still and mute outside, I went slowly in, the child in my arms covered over with the flap of my long coat. My wife was weeping bitterly.

'What's amiss?' I asked in a faint voice. And it seemed that a whole chorus of voices answered me:

'Dolly's lost!'

Dolly lost! Just for a moment my heart turned sick. Then some instinct, like a ray of light and hope, seized upon me. Pulling the coat off the face of the child I held, I lifted the little sleeping thing to the light, and saw Dolly!

'Yes, sir. The child I had raved was no other than my own—my little Dolly. And I knew that God's good angels had guided me to save her, and that the first flash of the summer lightning had shone just at the right moment to show me where she lay. It was her white sunbonnet that had caught my eye. My darling it was, and none other, that I had picked up on that drenched road.

Dolly, anxious for her doll, had wandered out unseen to meet me in the afternoon. For some hours she was not missed. It chanced that my two elder girls had gone to our nearest neighbor's, and my wife, missing the child just afterward, took it for granted she was with them. The little one had come on and on, until night and the storm overtook her, when she fell down frightened and utterly exhausted. I thanked Heaven aloud before them all, sir, as I said that none but God and His holy angels had guided me to her. It's not much of a story to listen to, sir. I am aware of that. But I often think of it in the long nights, lying awake; and asked myself how could I bear to live on now, had I run away from the poor little cry in the road, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp, and left my child to die.

Yes, sir, you are right; that is Dolly out yonder with her mother, picking fruit; the little trim, light figure in pink—with just the same sort of white sunbonnet on her head that she wore that night ten years ago. She is a girl that was just worth saving, sir, though I say it, and God knows that as long as my life lasts I shall be thankful that I came on home that night instead of staying in the town.

Sawdust Seminaries.

Are Circus Men Brutal and Cruel to Their Apprentices?—The Daily Routine—Precautions—"The Mechanic"—Punishment.

[New York Sun.]

"Cruelty to children apprenticed in the circus business?' Yes, I've heard that talk many a time from people who wanted to get up a reputation for philanthropy on a mighty slim capital of truth and good feeling. But there's no truth in it. Why, sir, you've been about circuses a good deal, and known a good many circus men, as I know, and you can tell better than that. I've been in the profession a good many years, and I'll take my oath I never yet knew of an instance of wanton cruelty practiced upon an apprentice by a real circus man.'

He was right in saying he had been in 'the profession' a good many years. In fact, his connection with it ante-dates the memory of the oldest inhabitant. It was Frank Whittaker who was speaking. Nobody knows how old he is, though to see him flourishing his long ring-master's whip in Barnum's sawdust arena, or blowing the froth from his beer in his own cosy little hostelrie on Fourth avenue, just below the Hippodrome, one might easily take him to be a ruddy, hearty, well preserved man of forty-five. There are rumors, however, that he was ring-master with a circus in Spain before Columbus discovered America; that he even knew Jim Nixon in the days of his youth. Slaking his thirst with a long draught, he went on:

'Let them look to where children are really abused—apprenticed to trades that stunt their growth and deform them—employed in occupations that give them but a pittance to starve and grow despairing and vicious upon. Let them reform those abuses and leave us alone. When they do so it will be better for us, better for many a poor boy, and better for society at large. A circus man and his family live as well as any family in the land, and his apprentice lives as he does himself. As for punishment, it is never given unless it is really deserved, and even then there is not one case in a thousand where the error is not on mercy's side. As for hard work and accidents, the work is but little more than organized play for the boys; every possible precaution is taken to avoid accidents, and serious hurts seldom, I might say never, occur. Certainly there it not one boy injured in learning the circus business to a hundred crippled or marked for life in employments where they have to work about machinery.

'There is one clause that must be in every indenture apprenticing a boy to the circus business, and without which it will not hold. Col. James Page, of Pennsylvania, invented it, and its point is in the phrase 'to learn the arts and sciences of the equestrian or circus profession.' If that is in, the apprentice can be held, but not without it. There is no specified age for beginning to learn. Some begin at four or five years old, others not until they are twenty, but it is best to start young. My wife began to ride in the ring when she was only two years old. She was carried in a two-horse act. As there is no fixed time for starting in, so there is no certain time of coming out. At first a boy is taught to walk on his hands, to bend, to stand on his head, and 'the split.' The latter is very little taught nowadays to boys who are intended to be riders or general performers. It consists in getting their hip joints so raised and limbered that they can sit on the floor with their legs straight out on each side, and is very difficult; much more so than many of the other things, all of which, except this, a smart boy ought to learn in two or three weeks so as to do them passably. Still vaulting comes much later. A boy has to be twelve or fourteen years old before he can hope to do two or three somersaults in that way at a time. To train him in that we have a strong belt made to fasten about his waist, with a ring fixed on each side, and to these rings are fastened inch ropes, which are firmly held by two men. The ropes hold the boy high enough so that he can not land on his head or strike it as he goes over, so it is impossible for him to break his neck or otherwise injure himself. After he becomes proficient and has confidence in himself, the ropes are slackened, and finally taken off altogether, but never, until it is perfectly safe, is the vigilance of the men holding the ropes for one instant relaxed when the boy is practicing.

'As for riding, boys are put at that any time, according to their smartness and fitness for it, and you may say that in that line their education never ends, for there is no rider, however good, who, if he loves his profession and has a pride in himself, is not always trying and practicing for some new thing. Nowadays, to prevent accidents in training children, the 'mechanic' is generally employed. That is a machine fixed on the center pole and turning lightly, so as to swing a long wooden arm around the ring. A rope passes over a pulley at the extremity of that arm. One end of it is held by the trainer, the other is fastened by a snap catch to a ring at the back of the pupil's belt. Of course a boy can not fall from a horse when swung up there in that way. If he loses his balance, the trainer holds him up, and the thing can be arranged so that all the practice of turning, somersaulting, etc., can be had without the rope getting in the way. Some old riders, however, object to it on the ground that it is liable to beget a confidence while it is on that is never afterward enjoyed when it is taken off, and also that it does not impress the pupil with the necessity of learning to depend on his feet for the preservance of his balance. S. Q. Stokes, the inventor of the 'mechanic,' used it successfully in training Ella Zoyara, one of the finest riders in the world; but the Zoyara, some think, was an exception. I know numbers of fine riders who persist in preferring the old device of a rope run through a ring at the pommel of the pad, one end fastened to the boy's waist belt in front, and the other to the trainer's hand. The tendency of a person standing on a horse in motion about a ring is to lean over on the outside, further and further, until he pitches off, and to lean back until his balance is gone. If the trainer sees his boy getting off on the outside, he tautens his rope; same if he sees him getting back too far. If he tumbles, instead of going headlong to the ground, the rope, sharply pulled, brings him sprawling safely on the pad. There is no danger of falling inside.

'Of course there must be falls, and occasionally bruises and sprains, but the boys are taught to fall so as not to hurt themselves. When they are good enough riders to be trusted alone without either the 'mechanic' or the rope, they learn how to manage themselves in case of a tumble; for, you know, the oldest and best rider may tumble off sometimes, through a horse breaking his gait, or a slip of his foot, or a slight error of calculation in performing a feat. But a fall amounts to nothing when you are trained to be always ready for it, to think as you go where you are going to and what you had better do, and to act as quickly as you think. One way a boy is likely to fall, he will be taught to roll out of a horse's way; another way, he will be shown how, if he is falling right in front of the horse, to coil up in a ball, tight as he can, so as to run the least risk of being stepped on and auffer least hurt if he is touched by the horse's hoof. With all these precautions it is very rare that a boy is seriously hurt; and I'm sure I don't know of any trade a boy can learn where he is not likely to meet with some accident, unless he studies for the ministry. Then his troubles are liable to come later in life.

'The physical education is not all the circus apprentice gets. Care is taken to give him a common school education—reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and so forth. As for bad morals, the boy has no chance of learning wickedness; he is too busy with study and earnest practice. If there is ever any likelihood of bad talk among the older members of a company, without it may be a little swearing, which too many of them have a habit of—not that they really mean anything bad, but that it is just a habit with them and a sort of safety valve when they are excited—but if any bad talk is started that a boy shouldn't hear, you will see that the apprentices are sent out of the way mighty quick. Go among the boys or stand near them, as I have thousands of times, when they don't know anybody overhears them, and listen to what they say. You will find that their thoughts and conversation are much more innocent than you will be likely to find among boys of their age who have been running about the streets or attending the common schools in a big city. Why, just look at the routine of a circus boy's life and tell me what chance he has to be bad. He is called up at six, or half-past, in the morning, practices with his master an hour or an hour and a half, and is then well washed and rubbed all over. About eight he takes breakfast, and you may bet he will have appetite enough to eat a crowbar almost, and will get plenty of good healthful food to satisfy it. Circus folks feed well. After breakfast time is allowed for him to go about easy and amuse himself, say an hour. Then he puts on his practicing clothes, works an hour or an hour and a half, is rubbed down, changes to his ordinary clothes, and is sent back to his master's house to learn his book lesson, whatever it may be. When the master comes in to dinner he hears the boy recite his lesson, and sets him another for the next day. Perhaps the little fellow may go to sleep instead of studying. Then he will probably have his ear pulled lightly, or his cheek slapped to waken him up—no blows with a fist or a whip, mind you, and no bats over the ear to deafen him, or may be hurt his brain, but just a smart wipe along his plump cheeks, which can do no harm. After a good, hearty dinner, a rest until time for afternoon performance, then dress and do what he can in the ring as he is called upon. After supper, the evening performance. As soon as it is over he goes straight to bed, and is tired enough to sleep soundly. After each turn of exercises he is rubbed down and puts on dry clothes.

'In winter, when he is not on the road the boy goes to some public school, his mental training, for the time, taking precedence of his physical education, though the latter is not altogether neglected. Now, what hardship is there in all that for a boy, and what chance is there for his learning evil and laziness, and forming bad associations?

'Riding, still-vaulting, running, vaulting and tumbling, cover all the branches of the circus business, which must not be confused with the acrobat business. We do not teach boys trapeze tricks and rope walking and such dangerous feats. The fact is that our profession has suffered a great deal in public estimation, in this matter of training children, from being confounded with those acrobats and gymnasts. They are often cruel to children; that I know. They come into the circus in hope of making a big sensation, growing famous and getting fortunes. When they make a failure, as they pretty much always do, then they strike out some new plan for getting money. To that end they train children, and are often brutal in their treatment of them; for you understand they have no love for the children and no pride in their profession; all they are after is money, and they want to get the little ones to such proficiency as to be paying property as speedily as possible. But with circus people it is very different. They generally have no apprentices outside of their own families or relatives; but when they do take others they treat them as their own. Old as I am in the profession, I have never known a man who had himself been brought up in it to be cruel and brutal to an apprentice. If they ever whip it is for some grave offence, and only as a parent would punish his own boy—for the boy's good. Take it all in all, boys in a circus are treated more considerately and kindly than nine out of every ten outside the profession.'

Charles W. Fish, who is to-day recognized as one of the finest riders in the world, if not indeed the finest, said:

'I was apprenticed at the age of seven. The first year I was under James McFarland, and then, from the spring of 1857 to the 23d of November, 1864, with C. J. Rogers, of Spalding & Rogers, I went through just such a course as Mr. Whittaker has described, training, study, and everything else. In all that time I was only whipped three times—once for going fishing when I had been positively ordered not to, once for firing off fire crackers on a steamboat, and the third time for going off to dinner with a friend, not letting Rogers know I was going, and staying away so long that he got anxious and worried about me. I deserved my whipping each time, and I did not get as much as I deserved. I never saw an instance, or heard of one, of a boy's being kicked, struck with a fist, pounded, or otherwise treated with cruelty by any one in the profession. Loud talk and ridiculous threats constitute the main punishment apprentices get. Old John Robinson got the name of being cruel by his way of talking to the boys; but the truth was, he was kind. He would set an apprentice to do something, tell him exactly how to do it, show him, and promise him a cane, or a watch, or a suit of clothes as soon as he got to do it well—a promise which he did not fail to keep if the boy deserved it. But suppose the boy was mulish or stupid, and failed over and over again through not minding what he was told, Robinson's patience would give out and he would swear and roar: 'Will somebody lend me a pistol to shoot this boy; or a knife or a cross-cut saw to cut him in two; or a club to beat his head in?' But he didn't want anything of the sort, any more than he wanted a knife and fork to eat the boy with. Even when he had to punish a boy for serious misbehavior he never went too far. Yet, to listen to him, you would think he was going to slay the boy. He trained Jim Robinson and young Hernandez, both first-class riders. Ordinarily, it is slow work for a boy to learn to ride well, however willing he may be and however good his master. In fact, a rider who desires to excel in his profession is never done practicing, never considers that he has learned all his business. So there is no fixed point when the education of the apprentice can be deemed complete. But it should be, for good practical service, in the time commonly set for an apprenticeship, which is seven years.

'All the feats performed on horseback are first tried and thoroughly practised on the ground; and few persons outside the profession have any idea of the difficulty attending even the simplest of them, or of the time required for preliminary practice. I worked once for ten years, practicing on the ground, to get one feat, and when I did succeed in it only did it ten days, for the reason that it was not appreciated by the audience, and I could not see any benefit in risking my neck at every performance in doing something that didn't take. But it was the most difficult and dangerous thing I ever attempted. It was a twisting somersault. Standing with my back toward the horse's head I would turn a back somersault, and twisting around while in the air, would land with my face toward the horse's head. When I was in the air I could not tell how I was coming down, whether on my head or my feet, or how I was going to face. That was the difficulty in learning it, but it came to me after awhile. And that suggests a curious thing—the way a feat comes to one, boy or man. In practicing on the ground for something you want to do on the pad, you must get it exactly right—not 'pretty near.' 'Pretty near' may break your neck. Say it is a somersault. You want to land at a certain spot, not a couple of inches from it, but precisely there. You may work at it months without success. Then, all of a sudden, without your knowing how or why, it comes to you just as natural as if you had known it all your life, and so easy that you can not tell to save your soul why you hadn't done it from the start. After it comes that way you have no more trouble in doing it.'

The C. J. Rogers mentioned as Mr. Fish's former master trained four boys and a girl for the circus, all of whom turned out well. Sam P. Stickney, a famous old-timer who has passed away, educated all his large family in what Col. Page happily characterized as 'the arts and sciences.' James Melville trained his own children and one other boy—to whom he gave the family name, however—and that boy is now widely known as Sam Melville, rider, tumbler and clown. The old man is still a resident of New York and quite 'comfortably fixed,' being worth at least $100,000. John Robinson was a famous trainer, and turned out a number of ornaments to the profession. S. Q. Stokes, the inventor of 'the mechanic,' was at one period a famous and highly successful circus manager. During his years of active service in the ring and his managerial career, he fitted a number of apprentices for the toils and triumphs of the equestrian arena. Now he lives in Philadelphia in retirement. Two of his daughters, educated by him, are excellent riders. Ella Zoyara, his most famous protege, was, when last heard from, riding in his proper male attire with John Wilson's circus in New Zealand.

The laws of New York and Massachusetts forbid the appearance in circus performances in those States of children under the age of sixteen years; consequently there is little disposition now among circus men in the east to take apprentices. Training boys and girls for the profession is mainly confined to persons already in it, as the occupation of their lives, bringing up their offspring to succeed them. Then there are private establishments in different parts of the country where the children of non-professionals are instructed into these peculiar 'arts and sciences.' Of these establishments the following is believed to be a correct list:

Jas. E. Cooke's, Newton, L. I.
Eaton Stone's, Franklin Station, N. J.
B. W. Carroll's, Westchester, N. Y.
Martino Lowande's, Frankfort, Philadelphia.
John O'Brien's, Frankfort, Philadelphia.
John Robinson's, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Sebastian Guagliani's, Middlebush, N. J.

All these names it will be noticed, belong to famous circus men. The last mentioned is best known to the public simply as 'Sebastian.' It was from him that a child was recently taken in San Francisco, on the application of its father here, through the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Those who know well Sebastian's disposition and the facts of this particular case, affirm that he is a very kind man, that the reclaiming of the little child was simply a speculative proceeding, and that, since the custody of the little one was awarded to its father, efforts have been unavailingly made to induce its former master to again take it into his keeping.

The weight of testimony in the matter of circus folks' treatment of their apprentices seems to sustain their claim that they are kind and not cruel; which can not be truthfully said, it is to be feared, of the acrobats and gymnasts. Indeed, all well regulated circus men, from the 'star' rider down to the canvas wrestler, give especial thanks that they are not acrobats and gymnasts.

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