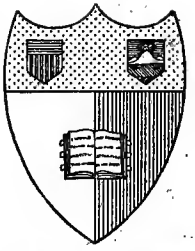


THE CIRCUS

THE CIRCUS

Its Origin and Growth prior to 1835

WITH A SKETCH OF
NEGRO MINSTRELSY

BY

ISAAC J. GREENWOOD

NEW YORK
WILLIAM ABBATT
1909

Edition limited to one hundred copies.

SECOND EDITION

WITH ADDITIONS

Limited to One Hundred Copies

No......

1909

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Circus

"WELL, here we are again!" sunshine and cloud; arbutus sprays and drooping lilies; robins and rabbits; cross-buns and buck-beer; dainty bonnets and pretty dresses; prima donnas skipping away and traveling-vans harnessing up; in short, spring has come, and "the greatest Show on Earth" is on its way once more.

I sing the circus; humble theme and yet divine, since when in dim time past impetuous Phaeton cried:

> "O radiant Sire, grant me
> Without delay,
> To guide the Sun's bright orbit for a day."

From remote antiquity the art of horsemanship has been carried to the highest degree, and through all epochs and by all nations has it ever been considered one of the most brilliant, noble, and useful of sciences.

Seventeen centuries before the Christian era, and four hundred years "before the heroes of the 'Iliad'

and 'Odyssey' appear on the battle-field in their ornamental armour," says Brugsch-Bey, "the kings and 'marinas' of the land of Canaan careered in brazen harness in their war-chariots over the plains of Shinar and Mesopotamia and the valleys of Palestine, to measure themselves in battle with the warriors of Egypt." Can we conceive a more spirited picture of the horse, not yet a beast of burden, but a snorting steed, pawing the ground, and ready for war or the chase, than is given in the Book of Job, the oldest of our inspired writings? And when, in the onward roll of time, metal coinage came into use, how often was the impress of a horse stamped upon its surface? At first free and prancing, rude archaic symbol of freedom, and emblem of the sun-god Apollo, and on through varied types, till in the victorious quadriga of the Syracusan decadrachm we reach the medallist's perfected art.

About the year 750 B. C. Romulus, having established the Roman Senate, chose three hundred stout and noble youths to serve as cavalry, thus founding, with a title derived from their horses, the rank of equites or knights, and in later times we have, in England and France, the offices of lord high constable and earl marshal, and the titles of cavalier and equerry, all derived from the same noble animal.

In mediæval times the art of riding was the noblest and most honorable, and the age of chivalry has received its name from the horse. Unless well acquainted with the management of his powerful steed,

no gentleman could make his appearance at jousts, tournaments, or in the ranks of war; but when, with the invention of gunpowder and the abandonment of heavy armor, beauty, activity, and lightness of movement gained the preference, horsemanship underwent a complete change and revolution. Its best schools were in Italy, and the royal academy established at Naples was the most celebrated.

Here in 1572, under its chief, Jean Baptiste Pignatel, a young Frenchman of seventeen years, named Antoine de Pluvinel, was esteemed the best horseman of the times. The year following made grand equerry by Henry, Duke of Anjou, he accompanied that prince to Cracow, but when, in 1574, the latter abandoned the crown of Poland for the throne of France, the equerry returned to his native country, where he continued in high favor, even enjoying at one time the position of ambassador to Holland. After the accession of Henry IV, in 1589, Pluvinel carried out the idea which he had long entertained of establishing a riding academy in Paris. This was located in the faubourg St. Honoré, near the Royal stable. He was the author of a folio work entitled "L'Instruction du Roy en L'Exercice de Monter à Cheval," published five years after his decease, which took place in August, 1620. The work owes its chief attraction to the numerous plates engraved by Crispin de Pass, who had been sent from Utrecht by Prince Maurice to teach drawing in Pluvinel's Academy, for in almost every one appear the young

king, Louis XIII, M. Pluvinel, the Grand Equerry, the Duke de Bellegarde, and other courtiers as indicated by their engraved titles.

At this time riding, as an accomplishment, could only be properly attained by an Englishman, after a course of instruction on the Continent, and William Compton, first Earl of Northampton, Lord President of Wales, and Lord Lieutenant of the Counties of Worcester, Hereford, Salop, and Warwick, writes, in September, 1618, to the deputy lieutenants and justices of the peace within his lieutenancy, stating that having in mind something that will tend to the particular profit of the gentlemen of these counties, he could not decide upon "anything more excellent than the erecting of an Academy for the instruction of young gentlemen in horsemanship, which is a necessary part of every gentleman's breeding. . . . Our example may happily be an inducement to other parts of this realm to imitate us. The gentlemen of France much excel us in that faculty. I have already given order for the building of a house for riding, within the castle of Ludlow, and have drawn thither a gentleman (of Warwickshire) . . . for the instruction of such young gentlemen as shall repair to him." He then further unfolds his plan, which was to be carried out through subscriptions.

That his lordship's idea was not generally accepted we are quite sure, for Master Harry Peacham, four years later, in his "Compleat Gentleman," speaking of riding, says: "And at this day it is the only exer-

cise of the Italian nobility, especially in Naples, as also of the French; and great pity that it is no more practiced among our English gentry." But how about a score of years later, Master Harry, when King and Parliament unfurled their standards, marshaled their opposing forces, and drew near to the field of Edge Hill; surely there was practice enough for the gentry in those days. Yes, and while the metropolitan Train Bands are raising for a city guard, and wives and maidens, carrying a rampier-basket between each couple, march to the sound of a drum and help build up a twelve-mile line of circumvallation, the commanders hurry Joseph Zinzan from his country residence to town, give him the use of the stables and yard at Winchester House, and set him up as a riding-master for the very people themselves, where lords and gentry an they ride with the orange flag, may practise, too, if they like. This was early in the fall of 1642, and Winchester House, near the Southwark end of the London Bridge, sequestered the preceding year, when the bishops were impeached, was henceforth, in these dangerous and troublesome times, to become a place for the keeping of prisoners, and its gardens to serve as a cavalry *manège*.

For nearly half a century members of the Zinzan family had been attached to the Royal Mews, as instructors, equerries, and yeoman-riders. In 1624, Henry Zinzan, alias Alexander, " in regard of his long services and the extreme hurts he has received by Prince Henry & His Majesty, which now bear griev-

ous upon him, and being frustrate of a pension given him by Prince Henry prevented by his death, and of a gift from Queen Elizabeth for keeping the Little Park at Windsor, desireth something for his future relief." And now Joseph Zinzan, whose conscience had led him to adhere to the Parliament and abandon a grant in reversion of his father's position as one of the King's equerries, petitioned the House of Lords in Nov., 1643, that, as he "rides horses and fits them for service with great saddles for the use of Parliament," the same may he exempt from seizure. The following month he requests that, as winter was approaching, he might build in the Yard a riding-house for his own use and for "the Benefit and Good of the Commonwealth," and that the use of Stables and Yard might be secured to him. His request was granted, and further confirmed in August, 1646. But the school was finally swept away before the iron despotism of war, and for many a weary day, with a Cromwell for leader, if but the man answered promptly to the word of command and stuck firmly to his saddle, he had all the accomplishment in horsemanship that was necessary.

At the Restoration, with equitation at its palmiest period, the English gentleman must needs once more complete his education by making the tour of Europe, and there learning to ride the great horse, and in a few years (1671) Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, much of whose life had been spent on the continent, published in French his "New Method of Training

Horses." 'Tis of him Walpole writes, "Though amorous in poetry and music, he was fitter to break Pegasus for a *manège,* than to mount him on the steps of Parnassus."

Lord Chancellor Clarendon at this time strongly recommended the establishment of riding-schools, both at Oxford and Cambridge, and a few years later, in 1679, Mr. Henry Coventry, the Merry Monarch's secretary of state, received a letter from Paris, dated June 25th, informing him of a recent order of Council, forbidding all Escuyers, Masters of Academies, that are Protestants, to pursue their functions any more, or to allow any of the usual exercises and accomplishments to be taught to young gentlemen in their houses. This order had been communicated last Thursday to the only Protestant master of an academy in Paris, M. Solomon Foubert, whom the writer recommends, thinking there ought to be a similar establishment in England, they having been of great service in France. Two years thereafter the scholarly John Evelyn mentions Foubert, in his Diary, as being desirous of opening an Academy in London "for the education of youth, and to lessen the vast expense the Nation is at yearly by sending children to France to be taught military exercise."

This enterprising Frenchman was soon appointed Equerry Extraordinary to the King, and, assisted by royal patronage, took for his purpose the Military Yard in the rear of Leicester House, formerly used by Henry, Prince of Wales, the elder son of King

James. Evelyn again writes, in December, 1684, of his going "to see the young gallants do their exercise,"—M. Foubert and his son, provost masters of the Academy, and esteemed of the best in Europe, having newly railed in a *manège*, and added it to the establishment. These exercises were running at the ring, flinging a javelin at a Moor's head, firing a pistol at a mark, and taking up a gauntlet with the point of sword, all performed at full speed, and in which the King's son, George Fitz-Roy, Duke of Northumberland, peculiarly excelled. Major Foubert soon after removed his school to a house between Carnaby-Market and Swallow Street, a locality swallowed up since in the great Regent Street, though a passage-way, in the vicinity, still bears his name. He fell in July, 1693, at the battle of Landen, but Henry Foubert, one of the same family, was for many years Equerry of the Crown Stables, under the first two Georges. And to bring these preliminary remarks almost down to our own times, we must not slight the gentleman who rejoiced in the pretty long name of Dominico Angelo Malevolti Tremamondo, an Italian, celebrated both as a rider and a fencer, who established a *manège* and school for these arts in Wardour Street London, and died in 1802, aged 86.

This word *manège*, which I have frequently used, is defined, in the Gentleman's Dictionary of 1705, ss "the ground proper for managing horses, being sometimes a covered place, as in your great academies,

for continuing the exercise in bad weather; while sometimes 't is open in order to give more liberty and pleasure, both to the horse and horseman."

But let us leave the *manège,* to consider a term in which we are at present more interested—the Circus. Surely, you will say, is there a school boy, or a prattling youngster in its mother's arms, who knows not what rollicking, joyous delight is associated with the word; yet, before the close of the eighteenth century, not a single English glossary or dictionary assigns to the word " Circus " any other than the old classic picture of a wall-encircled arena, with its slanting tiers of seats, its gaping multitudes of spectators, its horse, foot, and chariot races, its naval shows, its athletic combats, and its groups of gladiators clashing arms, with mournful greeting, below great Cæsar's throne.

True the Romans were at times amused by certain performers called desultores, who were skilful in leaping from one horse to another, but such an exhibition had certainly become a novelty when, in the 13th century, a troop of rope dancers and horsemen from the East arrived by water at Constantinople. They stretched their ropes for dancing from one ship's mast to another, and in riding stood erect upon their horses, mounting, dismounting, and turning somersaults at full gallop. They journeyed onward through Europe towards Spain, where they could find their fellow-countrymen, for the Byzantine historian Nicephorus Gregoras tells us they came from Egypt,

that land still hot with the fever of the Crusades, where the descendants of Saladin and his brother Malek-Adil had succumbed before their Turkish slaves the Bahree Memlooks.

The Privy Purse expenses of King Henry VIII, show that, on June 2, 1532, there was "paied to one Dompne peter Tremesin that dud Ryde ij horses at ones, by waye of Rewarde, C ewns," i. e., something over £23. Peter's surname is so unusual that I am inclined to think him a Moor, from the then independent kingdom of Tremesin near Algiers. As for the strange prefix to his name, Sir Nicholas H. Nicholas, an antiquarian of note, associates it with the French word *dompter* signifying, as applied to horses, "to break" or "to tame"; and we find in use the term *dompte-vilain,* meaning "a good stout cudgel," which in truth is a very efficient knave-tamer.

Some fifty years later (1581) Montaigne saw at Rome an Italian who went about Europe exhibiting his dexterity on horseback which he had acquired while a slave in Turkey; the year following he was at Paris. Then again, though trick-horses had been known from the time of our Saxon forefathers, as famous a one as any in old times was the chestnut, silver-shod Marocco (or Maraco), owned by one Banks, a Scotchman, who had served with Robert, Earl of Essex, Master of the Horse to Queen Elizabeth. This animal attracted much attention towards the close of the sixteenth century, and is alluded to, among others, by Sir Kenelm Digby, Sir Walter Ra-

Banks' Horse "Maroccus," 1595.

leigh and Sir William Davenant; by the latter in his "Long Vacation in London," in the following lines:

> "And white oat-eater, that does dwell
> In stable small at sign of Bell,
> That lifts up hoof to show the pranks
> Taught by magician styled Banks."

It had been trained to erect itself and leap about on its hind legs, and to perform a variety of tricks, and was exhibited in the yard of the Belle Sauvage Inn, and other places about London. "Signor," said his master, on one occasion, "go fetch me the veriest fool in the company"; whereupon the horse selected Dick Tarlton, the favorite clown, or low comedian of the time, who chanced to be among the spectators. Similar tricks, more especially those in which the number of coin concealed in a glove or purse, or the spots on a pair of dice, were indicated by rapping with the hoof, were regarded with astonishment by the simple people, who at times even thought the beast animated by a diabolic spirit; so that at Orléans, in France, Banks only avoided a disagreeable *dénouement* by having it pay homage to a cross on the bonnet of some one in the crowd.

Will Shakespeare—and what an *omnium gatherum* was his prolific brain—in one of his earliest productions, "Love's Labour Lost," makes the page Moth allude to the animal saying: "How easy it is . . . the dancing horse will tell you."

Banks professed to be able to train any horse in a

similar way within a year's time, and it is probable that he exhibited more than one animal bearing the same name; for Tarlton, the jester, just spoken of, died in 1588, while Louis de Montlyard alludes to Marocco in 1602 as having been recently exhibited at the Silver Lyon, rue Saint Jacques, Paris, and as being then "about twelve years of age." The latter writer, who translated the Golden Ass of Apuleius, in his commentaries on the 10th book, gives a full description of the performances of this trained horse, which were concluded by its dancing the Canaries, a wild *à la sauvage* dance, with extravagant gestures, after the manner, I imagine, of the modern cancan. We get a very good idea of the animal from the coarse woodcut of a satirical pamphlet, entitled "Maroccos Extaticus; or Banks's Bay Horse in a Trance," published in 1595.

Fifty years later, or in 1652, William Stokes issued, in a small illustrated volume at Oxford, his "Art of Vaulting," giving us his portrait and showing how he leaped over one or more stationary horses, landing sometimes erect upon the saddle, and sometimes astride. And Evelyn, under date of January, 1682, mentions his seeing the Morocco Ambassador who "went often to Hyde Park on horseback, where he and his retinue shew'd their extraordinary activity in horsemanship, and in flinging and catching their lances; they rid very short, and could stand upright, managing their spears with incredible agility, and the ambassador himself charging his gun, all at full

speed," which, says Luttrell, drew a great crush of coaches, horsemen, and persons on foot to see them. The next year some venturesome spirits were fain to introduce at the artillery-ground, Red Lyon-fields, the Spanish bull-fight, but the attempt proved unsuccessful and was not encouraged.

Considering the facts here gathered, we are led to conclude that the interest of the English public in such equine amusements as led up to our present circus feats was a progressive one, stimulated through the 16th and 17th centuries by contact with the Moors.

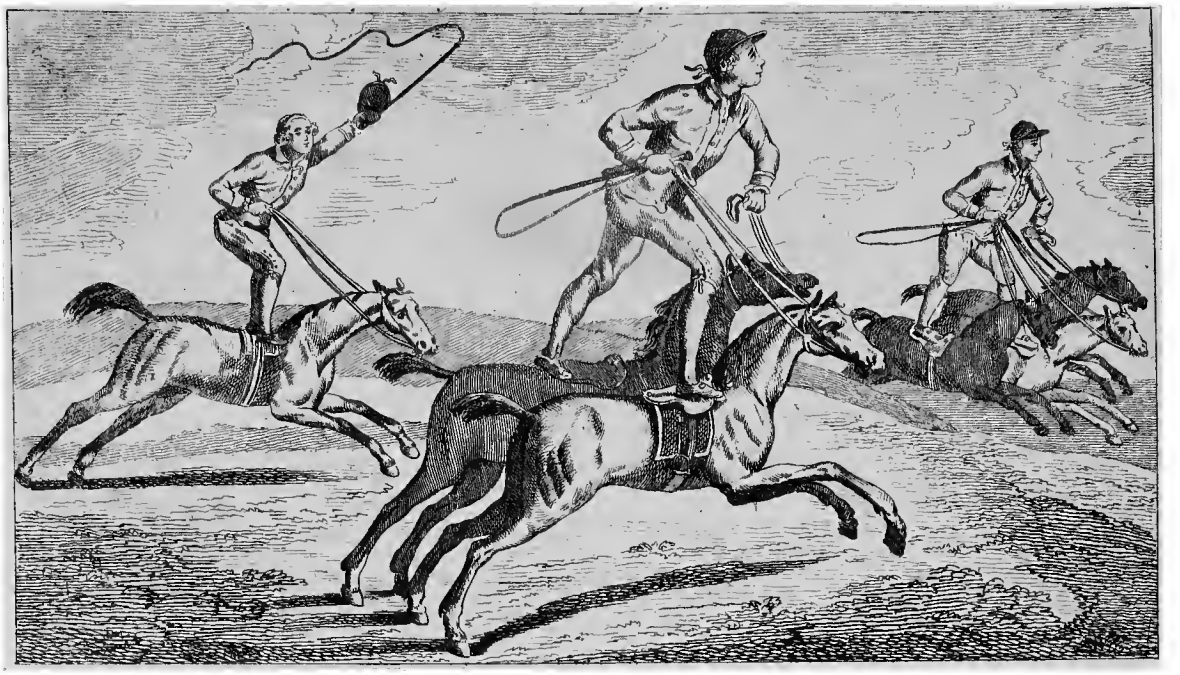
Strutt, in his "Sports and Pastimes of the People of England," which first appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century, observes that modern exhibitions of horsemanship, such as "riding upon two or three horses at once, with leaping, dancing, and performing various exertions of agility upon their backs while they are in full speed," were, he thought, "introduced to public notice about forty years back, by a man named Price"; though we have reason to believe, as will be shown hereafter, that Price was exercising his art in France even ten or fifteen years earlier than the period here assigned him.[1] Be this as it may, toward the year 1758 not only Price, but several others displayed their ability in this line in the grounds of an old established public house in St. John Street, Clerkenwell, called "The Three Hats." *Manworm,* a character in Bickerstaff's comedy of

[1] 1745-50, see page 33.

"The Hypocrite," mentions this place of resort, saying: "I was always a roving after fantastical delights; I used to go every Sunday evening to The Three Hats of Islington; it's a public house . . . mayhap your Ladyship may know it."

We first hear of a performer at this place named Thomas Johnson, familiarly known as the "Irish Tartar." At this time the Tartar race was regarded as the most adroit horsemen in the world, and Tooke, who was chaplain to the Russian Company at St. Petersburg, observes that the knees of the Kalmucs "always stand outward like a bow, which proceeds from their manner of sitting on their ancles, and their being almost constantly on horseback." Attracting a a visit from his great namesake, Johnson drew forth the following sage remark from the learned Doctor: "Such a man, Sir, should be encouraged; for his performances show the extent of human powers in one instance, and thus tend to raise our opinion of the faculties of man. He shows what may be obtained by persevering application; so that every man may hope, by giving as much application, although, perhaps, he may never ride three horses at a time, or dance upon a wire, yet he may be equally expert in what profession he has chosen to pursue."

A picture of Johnson, by George Bickham, is mentioned in Bromley's "Catalogue of British Portraits," and also in Evans's "Catalogue of Prints," as "riding on one, two and three horses." It also occurs in the *Grand Magazine* for October, 1758, with the following notice: "This Artist has, for some



Thomas Johnson, the "Irish Tartar," 1758.

weeks past, entertained the town with his singular method of riding. He first gallops round the field, standing upon one horse; he next mounts a pair, one foot on each horse, gallops then full speed round the course; and afterwards does the same with three horses. The Tartars have been esteemed the best horsemen, but this ingenious Hibernian bids fair to excel them all. He has even rode the single horse, standing on his head as the phrase is; but this posture giving pain to the spectators he discontinues it. Being asked how he attained his art, he replied, 'It came to him naturally, for he learnt it by eleven years' practice.'" In July, 1762, he exhibited at the Star and Garter tavern, Burton Street, before the three Cherokee chiefs from South Carolina; the daily papers stating that he "rides three horses, and when in full speed tosses his cap and catches it several times; he stands with both feet on the horse whilst it goes three times around the green in full speed, and similar astounding acts."

Price, the man referred to by Strutt, was a contemporary of Johnson, if not his instructor, but I find no mention of him, save that a print was issued, about 1760, representing "his surprising performances in nine compartments."[2] He was drawn away from The Three Hats and engaged by the proprietor of another

[2] This picture is given in Wroth's "London Pleasure Gardens," p. 142, Macmillan & Co., 1896. In the central compartment Price is seen on horseback, ambling about the field, preceded by a drummer and fifer on foot. He is said to have made a fortune of £14,000 by his exhibitions —1758-67.

public house called Dobney's (or D'Aubigné's), near Islington, then a large village contiguous to the north of London. Dobney's was one of those old suburban houses of half rural entertainment, which had stood for a hundred years, having first been known as the "Prospect House," from the vicinity of which, in 1746, the Italian artist, Canaletto, had taken a view of the great metropolis. Fourteen years later its bowling-green had been converted into an exhibition ground for tumbling and rope-dancing, where also, late in the afternoons, Price would appear.

But, in the field back of the Hats, a fresh rival soon started up, in the person of Sampson, of whom Bromley's Catalogue mentions a portrait giving "a representation of his equestrian feats." Of him we fail to find any such pleasing platitude as of Johnson, but the *British Chronicle* of Thursday, July 17, 1766, has the following notice: "Yesterday, his Royal Highness, the Duke of York, was at The Three Hats, Islington, to see the extraordinary feats of horsemanship exhibited there. There were near five hundred spectators."

A year later an announcement, in the *Public Advertiser,* introduces us to the first female equestrian:

HORSEMANSHIP

AT MR. DINGLEY'S, THE THREE HATS, ISLINGTON

Mr. Sampson begs leave to inform the public, that besides the usual feats which he exhibits, Mrs. Sampson, to diversify the entertainment, and prove that the fair sex are by no means inferior to the male, either in Courage

or Agility, will this and every evening during the Summer, perform various exercises in the same art, in which she hopes to acquit herself to the universal approbation of those Ladies and Gentlemen whose curiosity may induce them to honour her attempts with their company.

In May, 1770, Sampson was still giving afternoon performances at The Three Hats; he and "his young German will display alternately on one, two and three horses, various surprising and curious feats of famous horsemanship in like manner as at the Grand (Shakespeare) Jubilee at Stratford-on-Avon" in Sept., 1769. Then having sold his horses to Coningham, the latter person was performing at the same place in 1771-2; he was announced to ride a gallop, standing upright on a single horse, three times around the room without holding; to ride a single horse on full speed, dismounting, firing a pistol, and performing the boasted feat of Hughes, leaping over the horse backwards and forwards forty times without ceasing; also to fly over three horses at full speed, to leap over one and two horses at full speed as they leap the bar, and to play a march on the flute, without holding, upon two horses, and standing upright. Mr. and Mrs. Sampson joined him in "The Tailor and Sailor," upon the "drollest horses in the Kingdom." "Mr. Coningham will engage to fly through a hogshead of fire upon two horses' backs, without touching them, and for a single person will perform activity with any man in the world." Sampson was again at the Riding School at Islington in 1772-73.

That this novel style of riding had attractions even for the gentry, we learn from the *London Magazine* of April, 1761, which informs us that on Monday, the 13th, "Captain Money, an officer of the Norfolk militia, and aide de camp of General Townshend, standing on a horse's back, without a saddle, in full speed, leapt over a five-barr'd gate, and performed several other amazing feats of horsemanship in Hyde Park, before their royal highnesses, the Duke of York, Prince William Henry, and other persons of distinction." "A princely pastime this, my masters," but not carried, in the present instance, to so great an extreme as when, a few years later, Charles, Comte d'Artois, might have been seen, gravely practising, pole in hand, on a tight rope, under the instruction of the famous funambulist, Jean Lalaune.

At Dobney's, called at a later period the Jubilee Gardens, Mr. Daniel Wildman of Plymouth, during the summer evenings of 1772, made exhibition, riding around the ring standing upright on the saddle, his face and hands covered by a swarm of bees, his thorough control over which he had been exhibiting throughout England for the past six years.

Perhaps there were other early equestrians whose names have escaped my research; but to Jacob Bates, who performed on from one to four horses at a time, must be given the palm for making known this novel kind of amusement throughout the length and breadth of Europe. According to his printed announcements, he had enjoyed "the honor of performing before the

G. P. Nusbiegel. ad vivum del. et sc.—

NORIB. 1766.

Emperor Francis of Germany, the Empress Catharine of Russia, George III, King of Great Britain, Louis XVI of France, Frederick the Great of Prussia, Joseph Emmanuel of Portugal, Adolphus of Sweden, Frederick V. of Denmark, Stanislaus of Poland, and William, Prince of Orange; besides appearing at the Courts of Saxony, Bavaria, Brunswick, Mecklenburgh, Saxe Gotha, Hilbourghausen, Anspach, and every other court in Germany; at all of which he received the greatest applause, as can be made manifest by the Certificates from the several Courts now in his possession; and who is allowed by the greatest Judges in the manly Art he professes, to excel any Horseman that ever attempted any Thing of the Kind."

His portrait, drawn from life and engraved at Nuremburg, in 1766, by Nusbiegel, represents him standing by his horse, and shows, in the background, the various feats he performed. Another picture of Bates is by Ridinger of Augsburg, an artist who died in 1769, and excelled in his delineations of animal life. But I fail to gather further definite information as to the career of this celebrated horse-rider, save that, as we shall presently see, he was performing in the American colonies prior to the Revolutionary War.

Meanwhile a name had arisen destined, speedily and totally, to eclipse all other aspirants to equestrian fame and to bring horsemanship to a perfection before unknown; it was that of Philip Astley, commonly regarded as the father of the modern circus. Born in 1742, the son of a cabinet-maker of New-

castle-under-Lyme, he was from his youth fond of horses, and proficient in the management of them, so that when, in 1759, General Eliott was raising a corps of light-armed cavalry, we are little surprised to hear of young Astley's joining it and riding in the *manége* of the Lieutenant-Colonel, the Earl of Pembroke, at Wilton. As soon as the regiment had filled up its complement of six hundred men, it embarked for the Continent, under the orders of Major William Erskine, and joined that body of Hanoverian and Hessian troops, which, on July 16, 1760, attacked a detachment of the enemy at Emsdorf, in Hesse, and where, after a warm action, five battalions of Bavaria and Anhalt, with their commander-in-chief, Major-General Glaubitz, were made prisoners of war, and nine pair of colors captured. On this occasion Eliott's dragoons, who had never been in the field before, particularly distinguished themselves by charging and breaking the enemy's line five times, and "this exploit of a regiment which in its origin was chiefly composed of *taylors*," astonished the army, and was honored with the warmest thanks of the Hereditary Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who had led them in person. Three years later, on the return of peace, they obtained the title of the Fifteenth or King's Royal Regiment of Light Dragoons.

Astley's capture of a French standard on this occasion had made him a favorite, and becoming well known as a regimental rough rider and instructor, he

rose to the rank of sergeant-major. He is said, while in service, to have learned some feats in horsemanship from an itinerant showman by the name of Johnson, probably the party already mentioned. Practicing by himself, or for the amusement of his comrades, he was seized with the desire of turning his abilities to account, with which end in view, he obtained his discharge from the army at Derby, in 1766.

After two years tramping through the country, he located himself in a field near the Halfpenny Hatch, Lambeth, where a small swivel-bridge over a ditch connected the narrow pathway leading from Blackfriars' to Westminster Bridge, and with two horses, one of which had been presented to him by his commander, General Eliott, the future gallant defender of Gibraltar, he began his first exhibition near the metropolis. The performances were in an open ring enclosed by a rope and stakes; for musical accompaniment, one or two fifers stood in the middle on a small platform, where his own wife beat time on a bass-drum, and after each performance passed a hat around to collect such gratuity as the crowd might be pleased to bestow.

The place was soon improved by raising, over one part of the ring, a shed which enabled performances to be given as well in wet as in dry weather; a select retreat, to which the admission was one shilling. In 1770, by a curious combination of success and good luck, he was enabled to open on the same ground his new British Riding School, or Amphitheatre Riding

House, where the seats around the ring were all covered with a pent roof, while toward the road, a two-story wooden structure served as an entrance, with stables on either side, and galleries overhead for the gentry. The outside of the building was decorated with large pictorial show-bills, and along the edges of the roof were small wooden equestrian figures.

In full uniform, mounted on his white charger near the end of the bridge, Astley would point out with his sword the way to his exhibition and riding-school, where, with the spirit of our modern Rarey, he would offer, by a system peculiarly his own, to break the most vicious horses that could be brought him, and to impart the method for a half-guinea.

One of his first bills issued reads as follows: "Activity on horseback of Mr. Astley, Sergeant-major in his Majesty's Royal Regiment of Light Dragoons. Nearly twenty different attitudes will be performed on one, two and three horses, every evening during the summer, at his riding-school. Doors to be open at four, and he will mount at five. Seats, one shilling; standing-places sixpence." About this time the manager also announces that he "exhibits, at full speed, the different cuts and guards made use of by Eliott's, the Prussian, and the Hessian Hussars. Also the manner of Eliott's charging the French troops in Germany, in the year 1760, when it was said the regiment were all tailors." We have seen with what dash the "Tailors' Own" charged the enemy on that eventful day, and one would have thought the

prestige of such display of valor had redeemed the Knights of the Thimble, restored them to their full quota of man's estate, and released them from the shafts of witticism and satire so ruthlessly aimed, ever since old father Adam sat cross-legged in Eden stitching his grass-green breeches.

Sixteen, seventeen Tailors go to make a pound;
If they don't weigh that much, the tailors are not sound;

says an old German rhyme, and in English verse their value is still further reduced, for even Robin Hood's men knew that "it takes nine tailors to make a man."[3] Samuel Foote too, in the summer of 1767, had produced at the Haymarket, his "Tailors, a Tragedy for Warm Weather," a piece which, some years later, put the Knights to their mettle, brought out the Horse Guards, and almost led to a riot. And now Astley himself caters to the public humor, and holding up this fractional part of humanity to further ridicule, brings out that amusing sketch entitled "Billy Button, or the Tailor's Ride to Brentford."

This time-honored production has been mentioned by no less a distinguished author than Geoffrey Gambado, Grand Equerry to the Doge of Venice, in his "Academy for Grown Horsemen."[4] Geoffrey's father, they say, was a tailor, and, as his customers all lived at a considerable distance, a prodigious horse-

[3] Old song in De Koven & Smith's comic opera of "Robin Hood."

[4] By H. Bunbury, London, 1787.

man, and so "it was in allusion to him," suggests his editor, "that the term riding like a taylor took its rise . . . highly complimentary and honorable to that valuable body of men," for, he continues, "was not the flying highwayman a taylor and was not he who made that dangerous excursion to Brentford a taylor?" Gambado concludes his preface by saying, "if the reader is not a compleat horseman in ten or a dozen summers, I will be bold to foretell that neither the skill of Mr. Astley, nor the experience of Mr. John Gilpin[5] will ever make him one."

At the British Riding School, as early as 1772, feats were exhibited on from one to four horses, the proprietor being assisted by Mr. Taylor, Signor Markutchy, Cosmethopila, Mrs. Griffiths, Miss Vangabel and "other transcendent performers," and Mr. Astley riding at full speed, at the rate of twelve miles an hour, standing on a single horse, one foot on the saddle the other on its head, brandishing a broad sword, or galloping around "with his head on a common pint pot." It was also announced that "the new French piece" would be added, the characters dressed and mounted on droll horses, and that Mrs. Astley would also "perform with two horses in the same manner as she did before their majesties of England and France, being the only one of her sex that ever had that honor. The doors to be opened at five, and begin at six o'clock. A commodious gallery, 120 feet long, is fitted up in an elegant manner. Admittance

[5] Cowper's famous verses first appeared in 1782.

there as usual. . . . Ask for a bill at the door, and see that the number of fifty feats are performed, Mr. Astley having placed them in acts as the performance is exhibited."

It was about this period that Astley visited every principal *manége* in France and Germany, subsequently publishing as a result of his journey a series of maps for the benefit of travelers. In 1775 he advertised "the last new feats of horsemanship," "four persons on three horses, or a journey to Paris," also "the pyramida at full speed" by himself, Griffen and Master Phillips, and says, "Perhaps such another exhibition is not to be found in Europe."

Some twelve months after Astley had opened his British Riding School, on the Surrey side of Westminster Bridge, that is, towards the close of April, 1772, Charles Hughes, also a noted riding-master, started another open-air exhibition, called the British Horse Academy, on the same side of Blackfriars' Bridge, and some of his advertisements, written in a spirit of rivalry and opposition, are sufficiently humorous to be quoted.

He humbly thanks the Nobility, &c., for their patronage, informing them that he has for their accommodation a room eighty feet long, and "that he has no intention of setting out every day to France for three following seasons, his ambition being fully satisfied by the applause he has received from foreign gentlemen who come over the Sea to See him"; and that as "his antagonist (meaning Astley) has catched

a bad cold so near Westminster Bridge, and for his recovery has gone to a warmer Climate," he, Hughes, is therefore unrivaled. He announces the celebrated Sobieska Clementina, " as the only one of her Sex that ever performed on one, two, and three horses," though she was accompanied later by a Miss Huntly in similar acts; mention is also made of a little Lady only eight years old, who rides two horses at full gallop, &c, " enough to put any one in fits to see her," and " an astonishing young Gentleman (son of a Person of Quality), who leaps over a Horse forty times without stopping between the springs; and leaps the Bar, standing on the saddle, with his Back to the Horse's tail, and Vice-Versa, and rides at full speed, with his right foot on the saddle, and his left toe in his mouth, two surprising Feet " (!) Mrs. Hughes, too, rides at full speed " standing on Pint Pots, and mounts pot by pot higher still, to the terror of all who see her." Doors opened at four, the performances commencing in half-an-hour; but, being unlicensed, the Horse Academy was soon closed up, not to be revived through the following decade.

By the year 1780 Astley had roofed over the whole of his ring, now called the Amphitheatre Riding House, and in it evening entertainments were given by artificial light; but that this might not seem too much of an innovation, to such of his patrons as were accustomed to the open air, he soon painted the roof inside to represent foliage, and changed the name to that of the " Royal Grove." His company, too,

having increased, he now added a stage with scenery, and between the acts of horsemanship by Messrs. Griffin, Jones, Miller, and himself, introduced interludes of tumbling by Messrs. Nevit, Porter, Dawson, and Gormon, with rope-dancing and Chinese shadows; and besides Porter, his first clown, there was another clown for the ring, named Burt. Eventually all kinds of phenomena, such as at the present day are called "freaks," were, from time to time, brought before the public, and we are told of a certain fair one, from the south of France, who walked around the ring, gravely attended by Mr. Astley bearing lighted candles, the better to display her wealth of golden tresses which trailed several feet upon the ground. One performance, which, since 1776, had become quite popular, was styled in the bills, "le force d'Hercule, or the Egyptian Pyramids, an amusing performance of men piled on men," being a group of ten men standing on each others' shoulders, with four at the base, and one at the apex of the triangle. In 1788 Miss Vangabel was still at Astley's, with Messrs. Jenkins, Lonsdale, J. Taylor, Master Crossman, and an equestrian clown, Mr. John Miller, and in 1791, James Lawrence, announced as "the Great Devil," was throwing a somersault over twelve horses, in an act called "le grand sault du Trampolin."

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1782, Hughes, already alluded to, entering into partnership with Charles Dibdin, senior, the celebrated lyric poet, and

other interested parties, had built a handsome amphitheatre in St. George's Fields, near his former location. Attached to the establishment was a troop of some sixty juveniles of both sexes, of from six to fourteen years of age, who had a schoolmaster and mistress to attend them, and were trained, under a Genoese ballet-master, Signor Grimaldi, nicknamed "Iron Legs," to take part in the performance with music, dancing and oratory. When, on October 9th, application was made at the Kingston General Quarter Sessions for a license, this new feature came out upon examination. The license was refused, it being regarded that horsemanship was but a cover for the exhibition of drolls, interludes, pantomimes, operas, and medleys; moreover, letters had been received from the Secretary of State, advising that it would be very improper, "when the police wanted a general reform, to license any new place of public diversion." Still the place was advertised to open on the evening of November 7th, as the "Royal Circus and Equestrian Philharmonic Academy," though the term "philharmonic" was dropped at the very outset. Subsequently it was announced to open on December 19th, under the direction of Hughes, but a week later, on Saturday, the 27th, says the *Gentleman's Magazine*, both Hughes and Astley, "famous for their feats of horsemanship," were committed to the Bridewell, in St. George's Fields, for their contempt of magistracy, having introduced music and drolls in defiance of the law. After a fortnight's detention, promising never

to exhibit anything more of the kind on the stages of their amphitheatres, they were released. One of the children here under training was a Miss de Camp, who in 1786 made her first appearance at Drury Lane when still but twelve years of age, and who afterwards marrying Charles Kemble, was the mother of the late Mrs. Frances A. Butler.[6] A letter of May 21, 1786, which appeared two months later in the *N. Y. Independent Journal,* alluding to the Royal Circus, says: "The surprising feat of jumping through the hogshead, performed by Hughes's pupils whilst the horses are on full speed, is remarked by every spectator to be the most undaunted piece of horsemanship ever exhibited in this kingdom."

Soon after the destruction by the mob, in July, 1789, of the famous Parisian fortress, both Hughes and Astley brought out pieces entitled, "The Bastile." At this period theatrical scenery, taken at its best, did not amount to much, and indeed, owing to the imperfect lighting[7] of the houses, but little was required, for at times it was entirely shaded in with black and white, and where groupings of the human form were required, as for crowds, processions, soldiers, and the like, paste-board figures were even employed in the background. Something, however, in

[6] Fanny Kemble.

[7] Prior to the winter season of 1765, when side-lights behind the scenes were introduced, Drury Lane play-house was illuminated by hundreds of tallow candles on suspended hoops, obstructing the view, and choking the spectators with noxious smoke. "Annual Register," 1765.

"The Bastile," supereminently crude or primitive, aroused public criticism, and caricatures of the performance appeared in the magazines, with men bearing banners inscribed, "this is a drawbridge," or "this is a castle," as the case might be.[8]

Owing to dissension among the proprietors, the Royal Circus met with indifferent success, and a playbill for Easter Monday, 1793, announces its re-opening "for the first time these four years." Crossman and Porter, both formerly with Astley, were now at the Royal, the former vaulting over a horse backwards and forwards, with his legs tied, and the latter jumping over a garter[9] fifteen feet from the ground, and firing two pistols; Crossman would also leap from a horse over two garters, twelve feet high, while playing on the violin, and alight on the saddle. Other equestrians who appeared here were Messrs. Franklin, Smith, Ingham, Ducrow, Meredith, Allers, Jones, Benge, Quin, and Francis. Various amusing novelties usually wound up the performances, which at one

[8] John St. John, Surveyor General of the Land Revenues, in the fall of 1789 wrote the verses for a musical production entitled the "Masque de Fer," or, "Destruction of the Bastile." George A. Selwyn writing to Lady Carlisle, Nov. 6, 1789, says: "To speak the truth all these representations of the miseries of the French nation do not seem to me proper subject for our evening spectacles, and it is not, in my apprehension, quite decent that Mr. Hughes, Mr. Astley, or Mr. St. John should be making a profit by Iron Masques and Toupies stuck upon poles."

[9] A long woven, narrow strap subsequently called a ribbon.

time closed with "The Windsor Hunt," a stag chase with twelve couple of hounds.

A London letter, appearing in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of July 16, 1795, says: "The Royal Circus, remarkable for some of the most novel and pleasing entertainments ever presented to the public, which has long been called the seminary for the nurture of theatrical, athletic, and equestrian abilities of all sorts, has now the addition to its title of the school of Ærostation, Miss Simonet, who accompanied Mr. Blanchard in his aërial voyage (May 3d), being an 'Elève'[10] of that place, which they may boast of, having given to the world the first female adventurer in the air." This statement is incorrect, as Mme. Thiblé had ascended with Fleurant on June 28, 1784, eleven years earlier, and in connection it may be here stated that, within two months after the ascent of the Montgolfier balloon at Lyons, that is, on March 12th, of the year last mentioned, Astley sent up a balloon from St. George's Fields, probably the first ever attempted in England.

In 1799 the "Royal" was rebuilt, as to the interior, under the management of Mr. James Jones and his son-in-law, Mr. J. C. Cross. The latter wrote a variety of melodramas, pantomimes, spectacular pieces, and ballets for the place, in some of which appeared the late J. Lester Wallack's grandfather, Mr. William Wallack, who has been alluded to as "the Kemble of

[10] Simonet's portrait as *Skirmish* in Dibdin's operatic drama of "The Deserter," was published in 1796.

the Minor Theatres of that day," and "as an excellent performer for such a house." He and his wife had been at Astley's as early as 1788, in pantomime and musical pieces, and were with the troop at Dublin, in February, 1803, when Mr. Wallack appeared with a new song "Whack! Honey, Whack!" Now, with their daughters and son, Master James W. Wallack,[11] they from time to time took parts at the "Royal"; Master Wallack appearing, June 30, 1806, as *Benigno*, the Guardian Spirit, in the "Cloud King."

At the time of the re-opening Laurent, who had also performed at the other establishment, was clown to the ring; this was the same Laurent who, in 1805, conducted the Lyceum on the Strand, as the "Theatre of Mirth"; an effort which ended in bankruptcy. Finally, by the year 1810, a change having been made in the style of performances, the Royal Circus became the Surrey Theatre. But to Astley, throughout its entire career, there had been little to fear from the rival circus.

The Lyceum, just alluded to, formerly known as the "Great Room, Exeter 'Change," where the Society of Artists, the predecessors of the Royal Academy, had held their exhibitions, was opened in February, 1795, by Handy, a professor of horsemanship, and, with the addition of a ring, was called the New Circus; the place was immediately engaged by Astley, whose own amphitheatre, or Royal Grove, had been

[11] Born Aug. 24, 1794.

PHILIP ASTLEY.

destroyed by fire during the preceding summer. Here, in the spring of 1817, Walker's "Eidouranion" was exhibited, and the heavenly constellations thrown on a mammoth sheet by the Magic Lantern, a professor explaining their revolutions and phenomena; not so elaborately produced, perhaps, as our present "Urania," lately witnessed at the Carnegie Music Hall in New York, but a forerunner of that kind of amusement.

Astley's Circus, rebuilt and opened on Easter Monday, 1795, was again burned out in September, 1803; but, phœnix-like, from its ashes there arose, the next year, the Royal Amphitheatre of Arts, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. It was closed yearly from Michaelmas to Passion Week, and, during the interval, for several years, the proprietor opened another ring on Newcastle street, Strand, called the Olympic Pavilion, where he had all kinds of exhibitions, including horses, dogs, tumblers, jumpers and flyers. Though the proprietor conducted several other establishments, this was *par excellence* "Astley's,"—a name which has become historic; and we all know how Col. Newcome delighted to take the children there, enjoying not only their amusement, but actually entering into the spirit of the fun and spectacle himself.

A fine colored interior view of the building by Pugin and Rowlandson is given in Ackermann's "Microcosm of London," 1808. It was built much like a modern theatre, with a stage, orchestra, side-boxes,

galleries and a pit surrounding the ring. The view represents a female riding on three white horses, while a clown acts as riding master. The building, erected on a lot 300 feet deep, was the largest of the metropolitan minor theatres, and is said to have accommodated 3,000 persons. It was of irregular form, substantially built, and elaborately decorated inside, somewhat after the gorgeous French style; while the large stage was strong enough for a troop of horse to gallop over it.

To speak of the wandering or traveling circuses, which, during the first decade of the present century, sprang into existence, both in England and on the Continent, is beyond the province of the present sketch; suffice it to say that the principal ones were Holloway's, Milton's, Wild's, and Bannister's for the northern and midland counties and Scotland; and Saunders', Cook's and Clarke's for the eastern, southern and western counties. Some years later William Henry Wallet was a clown for Holloway; as the "Shakesperian Jester" he was well known to the American public, and died in 1891, aged 84 years. Moreover, this sort of life, with its alluring attractions, nearly deprived us of a great histrionic light, for Edmund Kean, joining, when a youngster, the traveling-circus of Abram Saunders, fell from his horse at Bristol, breaking both his legs; an accident which, happily, quenched his equestrian ardor completely.

Many an amusing anecdote is related of the elder

Astley, and as his æsthetic nature was entirely undeveloped, the best of these originated in the stubborn contact of his crude ideas with the more cultured tastes of those about him,—notably his orchestra-leader and his scene-painter. We read of one occasion when the old Scotch scenic artist, Majoribanks, was about at his wits' end, from Astley's insisting that a drum, which had been depicted lying beside a tent, should show *both heads*, if it was not intended for a kettledrum. Finally, after consultation with the son and manager, the stump of a tree was introduced, from which hung a bannered trumpet, the drapery falling over one end of the drum. At the rehearsal next morning, old Astley's quick eye marked the change, and he demanded sharply, "Where's the other head, sir? where's the other head?" "Behind the banner of the trumpet, sir," coolly replied Majoribanks. "Oh, aye, aye; I see—I understand. The drum has got two heads, but one of them is out of sight. Ah, it will do capitally. Majoribanks, you see I was right. I like you, because you are willing to take advice. Your salary shall be raised next week. Johnny! Johnny!" he continued, calling to his son, "that's a d——d clever fellow, he owns his fault;—raise his salary; raise his salary."

As for music, though he always kept an excellent band in his circus, he evidently looked back with regret to the days of his early career, when drums and fifes afforded all the rhythmic noise that was deemed necessary. "Any fool," he would say, "can handle

a fiddle, but it takes a man to manage a horse; and yet I have to pay a fellow that plays upon one fiddle as much salary as a man that rides upon three horses."

Before taking leave of the old veteran, it will be necessary to follow his career across the Channel, and briefly glance at the rise and progress of his art there.

Horace Walpole, writing to Lord Strafford in September, 1783, mentions his having, in a fit of *ennui*, been to Astley's, "which, indeed, was much beyond my expectation. I do not wonder any longer that Darius was chosen King by the instructions he gave to his horse; nor that Caligula made his, Consul. Astley can make his dance minuets and hornpipes. But I shall not have even Astley now; her Majesty, the Queen of France, who has as much taste as Caligula, has sent for the whole of the *dramatis personæ* to Paris."

As we have seen, however, Astley was giving exhibitions in Paris as early as 1772, if not earlier, using a *manège* on the rue des Vieilles Tuileries, belonging to the Sieur Rozade, equerry to the King of Sardinia, and before he was permanently established, Benoist, Guerre, and Balp, the latter at Lyons, were amusing the French people in a similar manner. Dulaure, in his "Curiosités de Paris," 1761, states that some twelve or fifteen years before that date, the Englishman Price, of whom mention has already been made, had given, with much grace and address, equestrian performances through the French provinces, and that such exhibitions were to be seen in the capital even

during the reigns of Louis XIII and Henry III. He might have gone farther and stated that the name *Clos d'Arènes,* "the arena-enclosure," which comes down to us from the end of the thirteenth century, seems to confirm the words of Gregory, Bishop of Tours, who, in his "Historia Francorum," tells us that his cotemporary King Chilpéric, had ordered a Circus, on the Roman plan, to be built at Paris in the year 577.

No vestige, however, of such a structure remained in the French capital, when, in the fall of 1783, at the invitation of the French Queen, Philip Astley again arrived in Paris, and soon acquiring a piece of ground in the Faubourg du Temple, put up on the street of the same name a building suitable for his purpose. It was circular in shape, some sixty-four feet in diameter, with two tiers of boxes, and lighted by two thousand lamps; while, to evade the law, a curiously constructed platform, which could be hastily put together and supported on the backs of sixteen horses, answered at first as a stage for acrobatic displays. His son John, already rising to fame, having ridden on two horses as early as 1770, when but five years of age, was made stage-manager, or, as his father chose to call him, "Commander-in-Chief of the Stage-department," and the place was eventually known as the "Amphithéâtre de Sr. Astley, fils."

Thereafter, at the close of the London season, father and son visited Paris periodically, though when the novelty of ballooning seized upon the populace,

Walpole writes: "I doubt not it has put young Astley's nose out of joint, who went to Paris lately under their Queen's protection, and expected to be Prime Minister, though he only ventured his neck by dancing a minuet on three horses at full gallop, and really in that attitude has as much grace as Apollo Belvedere." We might here mention, *par parenthèse,* that the real *poses plastiques,* or studies of classical statuary on horseback, originated in 1828 with Andrew Ducrow, then about thirty-five years of age, and who had made himself famous just before in his six-horse act as the "Courier of Moscow." But to return: Young Astley was frequently invited to perform before the Court at Versailles, and was presented by the unfortunate Marie-Antoinette with a gold medal studded round with diamonds. Looking over the *Journal de Paris* for 1788, I see an announcement of their opening for the season on October 29th, with "Exercises d'Equitation, Tours de Force et de Souplesse de Sr. Astley, et de sa Troupe Anglaise, Ecossaise, et Irlandaise; dans les intervalles, on donnera les grandes Ombres anglaises, et le Chant des Oiseaux par le Rossignol anglais, &c.; terminé par le Cheval anglais entouré de feu." On Sunday, November 30th, we have the début of Sr. Franconi and his Equestrian Troop; and a month later a new piece was presented, entitled "la Bataille et la Mort du Général Marlborough, par la Troupe Equestre de Srs. Astley et Franconi," a burlesque pantomime *à cheval,* I fancy, in unison with the then popular song:

Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
Ne sait quand reviendra.

"Old father Bassin" (*le vieux père Bassin*), as he got to be called, who had married a sister of Franconi's wife, took part in "Marlborough," and he it was who always assisted Astley in the time-honored *jeu du cirque* of "Rognolet et Passe-Carreau," equivalent to the "Tailor's Ride to Brentford."

The following July the French Revolution commenced with the destruction of the Bastile, an historical event which, as we have seen, was immediately produced in spectacular form in London. Still, Astley continued his performances in the French capital, and Dulaure's "Curiosités de Paris" (third edition of 1791) mentions the "Amphithéâtre equestre d'Astley, père et fils, grande rue du faubourg du Temple," as open at different times through the year, with its curious and varied shows of horses, trained dogs, and other animals, English shadows, leaping, tumbling, and tight-rope dancing. Finally the declaration of war with England, in February, 1793, cut off further intercourse between the two countries.

Perhaps it were best just at this point to say a few words of the man destined thenceforth to take lead and found a veritable dynasty in French equestrian amusements. Escaping at the age of twenty from Udine, his native city, to avoid the consequences of a fatal duel in which he had engaged, Antoine Franconi arrived in Lyons in the year 1758. Footsore, weary,

and pressed with hunger, he there offered his services at a wild-beast show, boldly engaging to enter the cages, a novelty which fortunately proved successful, though he was soon upon the road again with a number of trained birds, wandering through the principal cities of the kingdom. Finally, under the patronage of the Duc de Duras, he established himself at Rouen, and introduced bull-fights, after the Spanish fashion; and it was here his eldest son, Laurent Antoine, was born in March, 1776. After spending two years at the Norman capital he returned to Lyons, where his second son, Jean-Gerard-Henri, usually called *Minette,* was born in November, 1779. Subsequently he endeavored to fill up the intervals between Astley's season at Paris, only to find that the good citizens were more interested in equestrian shows than in learned birds. Returning to Lyons with aroused ambition, he bought horses, trained them, and established a rival circus to that of Balp, who is said to have been an Englishman. He succeeded so well as to be able presently to erect a building of stone, which, however, during the summer of 1793 was involved in the general destruction of the city by the republican forces.

This was the year in which Astley was obliged to leave France on account of the hostile position of the two countries; but under some arrangement his Amphithéâtre was opened March 21, 1793, by Citizen Franconi, who, on the 9th Thermidor (28th July), announces that he will present that day the "Fête

Civique," with all the display possible, concluding, after various acts of horsemanship, feats of agility, dancing on horseback, and several amusing *entr' actes,* with the entry of the National Flag on an illuminated car drawn by four richly caparisoned horses. He concludes with a notice that riding lessons would be given every morning for either sex. After indifferent success, owing to the troublous times, Franconi abandoned Paris, traveled through the provinces, and did not return to the old place until toward the close of November, 1795.

About this period there was another building in Paris called Le Cirque du Palais Royal, built in 1787, an elongated parallelogram, 300 feet in length, with rounded ends, and surrounded with galleries. It was to have been adorned with water-jets and busts of the distinguished men of France, and was intended to serve for public meetings, etc. It was never finished, and burned down in November, 1798.

The peace of Amiens, in March, 1802, brought Astley again to France, where he obtained compensation from the First Consul, for the occupation of his building as a barrack by the Revolutionary government, and made some arrangement with the French manager for the further and legitimate use of it. A traveling English clergyman,* who visited Paris at the time, says, under the date of Wednesday, June 30th, " In the evening we went to a kind of amphitheatre erected on the Boulevards, where we saw

* Shepherd's " Paris," 1802-14.

divers feats of horsemanship performed by a company of equestrians. As I had never attended at Astley's exhibition of a similar nature, I could not institute a comparison between the Parisian and London equitation; and I can only say that I was astonished by the dexterity with which most of these performers, and especially a young woman, daughter to the manager, executed a variety of difficult manœuvres."

The same party, leaving Calais by packet, on the night of July 12th, writes: "Our fellow-voyagers were not numerous, and consisted principally of a troop of comedians, whom Mr. Astley had engaged in Paris to give additional attraction to his amphitheatre. Each of these sons of Thespis was accompanied by his dog. I asked one of them whether they had procured passports for their canine associates. 'Oui, monsieur,' answered he, 'bien visés et signés, avec une description exacte de leurs visages.'"

But the English manager was not so fortunate as his clerical fellow-countryman, for failing to make good his departure from the Gallic shores, when Napoleon, in May, 1803, again declared war against England, he was listed among the "détenus." Eventually effecting his escape over the frontier disguised as an invalid French officer, he returned to London, only to find his wife dead and his establishment, as we have seen, burned down.

During the devastating wars which now ensued, Astley's French property was sequestered, and Fran-

coni established himself in a new place within the ancient enclosure of the Capucines, and this, in 1805, he transferred to his sons, though it had but a brief existence. As early as 1790 the National Assembly, after ordering the municipality of Paris to have the building vacated, had established various bureaus in the Convent des Capucines near the Place Vendome. Torn down in 1804, various streets were, two years later, laid out through the district, and the Rue Napoléon (known after 1814 as the Rue de la Paix), traversing the Place Vendôme, wiped out the Franconi establishment. Over part of the neighboring ground, however, between the Rue du Mont Thabor and the Rue Saint Honoré, was now erected a new "salle de spectacle" (where at the present day is the Salle Valentino), first opened December 28, 1807, as the "Cirque Olympique," or "Cirque du Mont Thabor." Blauvillain's "Pariséum" describes it as the "Amphithéâtre Franconi, aux ci-devant Capucins." Built, under the direction of the architect Guinet, partly from material obtained on taking down the structure in the Jardin des Capucines, it was two hundred feet in length and one hundred in breadth, in shape a regular polygon of eighteen sides. The arena, of the same size as that in the Rue de Temple, was surrounded with two ranges of fourteen slender columns, with three galleries, the fronts of which were decorated with draperies and crowns. There was also a lightly constructed theatre and stable attached to the *manège*. Here the old man, stricken in his later years

with blindness, but taking an active interest in all that was going on, might have been seen, night after night, occupying the same armchair in front of the pit, his two sons, both skilful riding masters, their wives, and mademoiselle their sister, who danced on a horse with much grace, all uniting their talents and energies to ameliorate the lot of their father. Carle Vernet has given us a charming picture of Mlle. Franconi posing as "La Fille de l'Air," at one of the private performances then so fashionable, and we read of the whole troop's having been brought up to the Palais de Trianon in the middle of August, 1810, and paid an enormous sum for exhibiting before their Imperial Majesties. Great was then the rage for horse and circus, but in skill and dexterity as riders, as well as in fantastic display of dress, the accomplished equestrians had a powerful rival in the dashing cavalry officer, Joachim Murat. The latter's gaudy mixture of Swedish, Spanish, Roman, Turkish and Neapolitan fashions, so minutely described by Baron von Odeleben, justly drew upon him at times the raillery of his brother-in-law, the Emperor, who would tell Murat he looked far less a king than like the favorite ring-master; indeed, the public, with a keen eye for the humorous, had, from the first, dubbed his Majesty of Naples "King Franconi."

Some local historiettes tell of a dispute arising, in consequence of which the "Cirque Olympique" was closed in December, 1810, though continuing in the hands of Antonio Franconi, while in February, 1812,

Mlle. Franconi, as "la Fille de l'Air," Paris.

his sons opened the old place of Astley, Faubourg du Temple, with "Don Quixote and Sancho Panza." An adjustment of their differences having been arrived at, amusements were resumed at the "Mont Thabor," and there continued till May, 1816, when, owing to the contemplated erection of the Public Treasury, the place was abandoned, and a return again made to the original starting-point, the old circus on the Rue du Temple, henceforth known as the "Cirque Olympique"; this they continued to occupy until its destruction by fire in March, 1826. A new arrangement had evidently been made with the English proprietor, for with the retirement to Elba of the "Grand Empereur," for a breathing spell, and the occupation of Paris, in April, 1814, by the allied forces, Philip Astley, now almost 73 years of age, was once more in France looking after his property. Recovering this, he died, in his own house, Rue du Temple, just at the beginning of the following winter, leaving his son John as his heir and successor.

A spacious stage, joining the arena by an easy slope, had meanwhile been added to the building, which was itself fifty-seven feet in diameter, surrounded by sixteen slender columns, thirty-five feet in height, supporting the ceiling. Behind these was a spacious gallery, above which were three other galleries, and a range of *baignoires*. The decoration of the house consisted of combats and military trophies, and the ceiling was a *vela*,[12] the sides forming lances,

12 *Vela*, the awnings drawn over a Roman amphitheatre.

the intervals occupied alternately by trophies and figures of warriors of the Middle Ages.

The Franconi brothers, who, in 1816, had returned to the old circus, were still located there, when in the fall of 1821, in the same house, the same room, the same bed, as his father before him, "young Astley," as he was always called, though 56 years of age, passed away, to be laid beside the old man in the cemetery of Père la Chaise; and so we bid adieu to these originators of the modern Circus. In the Astor Library, New York, I find a thin duodecimo, printed and sold in 1776 at the price of 18d., by Robert Aitken, Philadelphia, entitled "The Modern Riding-Master; &c., with several Necessary Rules for young Horsemen," by Philip Astley, Riding Master, late of his Majesty's Royal Light Dragoons, embellished with sixteen woodcuts, and dedicated to the king, before whom had been exhibited, says the author, "Those manly Feats of Horsemanship, which after much Labor and Study, I have brought to great Perfection." The copy in question, with an heraldic bookplate of Abercromby, was "The gift of Jacob Duché to his grandson, Thomas Spence Duché, 1776," recalling the name of our Continental Congress's first chaplain. With the English edition of the book appeared a black silhouette portrait of the author by J. Smith.

Soon after the destruction of the old place by fire, in March, 1826, a new Cirque Olympique de Franconi was opened by the two brothers, Laurent and

Henri. It was erected on ground adjoining the "Ambigu Comique," on the Boulevard du Temple, a locality known, sixty odd years since, from its numerous theatres, open-air spectacles, restaurants and cafés, as the very center of Parisian gaiety. The building, used during the day as a riding-school, had its façade appropriately decorated with columns, statues, and copies of the two fiery steeds by Couston, which had been taken from Marly-le-Roi, to adorn the entrance of the Champs Elysées. In a few months, however, the proprietors ceded all their rights and interest to Henri-Adolphe,[13] the son of the elder Henri, with whom it continued some eight years. This date brings us quite down to the death of the old grandfather Antonio, who died December 6, 1836, having almost rounded out his full century.

The two brothers, Laurent and Henri, both died in 1849; the former for a long time riding master to the Orleans family, and continuing, after giving up his interest in the Cirque Olympique, to perform at times through England, Belgium and Germany. His son Victor, whose equestrian education he had himself conducted, was the founder, in 1845, of the Hippodrome at the entrance of the Bois du Boulogne, and not far from the Arc de l'Etoile. This place, open to the skies and with performances given by daylight, was famous for the sumptuous manner in which was produced "The Field of the Cloth of Gold." Years after, in 1872, Victor was appointed Director of the

[13] He died in Nov., 1855, aged about 54.

Deux Cirques, and is still (1898), though an octogenarian, as fresh and young as ever. Thus, introduced to the Parisian public by Philip Astley, at the outbreak of the French Revolution, the prestige of the Franconi family has continued through succeeding generations to the present day.

It were impossible to enumerate all who, from an early period in the present century, following in the footsteps of this Italian family, made for themselves a name in the equestrian ring, and it will suffice briefly to mention a few.

Jacques Tourniaire, one of Franconi's best pupils, raising an excellent troupe, traveled through Germany until his death, in January, 1829, and his widow, *Phillipine,* afterwards Madam Mayne of Königsberg, a celebrated and charming horsewoman, died in 1852, aged 72. Her sons, Benoit and François Tourniaire, established themselves, in the same line as their father, in America. Then came Paul Cuzent, who traveled all over Europe and died in Russia, and Baptiste Loisset, successor of the Tourniaires, who died in 1863. Jacques Foureaux founded a very successful circus in 1805; his son and successor, Louis, marrying a daughter of Tourniaire with a dowry of 150,000 francs, carried a choice troupe and 75 horses into Italy, and entered into successful competition with Alessandra Guerra, with whom were Ciniselli, Chiarini, and Fillipuzzi, all artists of merit. After this, from about 1820 to '60, there was an excellent troupe, the Didier-Gautier family, which appeared every-

where, and this brings us to the more famous troupe of the Russo-Germanic Christoph de Bach, known through all the capitals of Europe. He died at Vienna in 1834, aged 66, and his widow married, in 1842, Louis Soullier. The latter, who died at Toulouse in 1886, traveled with his troupe in Russia, Siberia and China, bringing back in 1876 a number of Japanese acrobats, to the great delight of Paris. With the name of Ernest Rentz, who established circuses at Berlin, Hamburg, Breslau, and Copenhagen, we conclude these remarks. He outlived his son François and his son-in-law, Herr Kager, both famous riders, and died April 3, 1892, aged 78, having but a few years before yielded to Paul Busch the position he had so long held as the leading circus-manager in Germany.

Now that we have viewed our subject from either side of the British Channel, let us sweep across the broad expanse of ocean, and take our stand on Plymouth Rock.

Over a century has passed by since the horse was introduced, by Columbus, to a so-called "New World,"—the very land of its origin and evolution,—and a bride is about to ride in state to her new home. But what steed does the thoughtful John Alden bring forth for his fair Priscilla, even

> "his snow white bull, obeying the hand of its master,
> Led by a cord that was tied to an iron ring in its nostrils,
> Covered with a crimson cloth, and a cushion placed for a saddle."

As yet there was little wealth in the Puritan community for so great a luxury as horses, but in a few years a goodly supply having been brought across the seas, they were to be found in all the English and Dutch settlements along the coast, and for a long period no other means of journeying inland was available. Physicians, lawyers, and magistrates,—all whose professional duties called them hither and thither,—were *ex-necessitate* horsemen, good, bad or indifferent, and in the winter of 1647, the Magistrate of Pequot Plantation (New London), having been called upon to perform a distant marriage ceremony, pleaded the deep snow-drifts, and would ride no further than half way to meet the loving couple from Saybrook. With saddle and pillion and warm hearts, can it be questioned but that Jonathan Rudd and his bride-elect would have traveled the whole distance and back, had it been necessary?

Still later on, when dire war called out our Colonial horse and foot against the dusky, lurking foe, I doubt not some of the former did good service, when, as Dr. Mather grimly observes, so many "Pequot Souls were brought down to Hell." Nor can we pass unmentioned the Deacons' picket-guard, ready with wiry nags, to chase delinquent churchgoers stealing a journey on the Sabbath day, contrary to the "Cerulean" Code.

Presently, under royal governors, colonies westward and southward of New England introduced the sports of hunting and racing; and when, too, later

on, circus-riding came in vogue, we had all of us our share in viewing its earliest efforts, ever keeping pace, neck and neck in equestrian novelties, with our English brethren at home, till, during the Revolution, sundry of our churches having been turned into cavalry riding-schools, by these same brethren, we *drew the line.*

The first notice as to feats on horseback in America which I have met with occurs in the *Essex Gazette* of Salem, Mass., and reads as follows:

"Horsemanship, John Sharp, High-Rider and Performer in Horsemanship, late from England, but last from Boston, where he has been performing for some time past, intends to ride for the Entertainment of the People of Salem, &c., in the Street by the Upper Burying Ground, near the Alms-House, this Day, if the Weather will permit; if not, he will perform To-Morrow.—He rides two Horses, standing upon the Tops of the Saddles, with one foot upon each, in full Speed:—Also three Horses standing with one Foot upon each of the outside ones, and in full Speed:—Likewise one Horse, and dismounts and mounts many Times when in full Speed.

"To begin precisely at Three o'Clock, Afternoon, Nov. 19, 1771."

I fail to find anything farther about Sharp either in the newspapers or the town records of Boston, and the next mention of a rider is in Gaine's *New York Gazette* of Monday, December 16, of the same year. Though the equestrian performer had already exhibited in Philadelphia, I have preferred in this,

as in succeeding cases, to draw most of my information from the early periodicals of New York; primarily, as that source was more conveniently at hand for reference, then again as feeling confident that whatever amusement appeared elsewhere was to be exhibited, sooner or later, in this leading city.

The announcement reads as follows:

MR. FOULKS,

THE NOTED PERFORMER IN HORSEMANSHIP,

Who had the Honor of performing before their Majesties, and most of the Nobility in England, Ireland and Scotland, has got a convenient Place to exhibit in belonging to Mr. Joseph Bogart, near the Windmill above the Slaughter House, in the Bowery, and intends performing this Day, Friday the 20th, Monday the 23d, Wednesday the 25th, and Friday the 27th Instant.

1. He mounts a single Horse, standing upon the Saddle, and rides him, playing on the French Horn.

2. He mounts two Horses, with one Foot in each Horse's Stirrup, putting them into full Speed, and mounts out of them to the Tops of the Saddles, at the same Pace.

3. He mounts two Horses upon the Saddles, and will, in full Speed, throw himself upon his Back, managing them in the same Manner as though he had the Advantage of the common Seat, and rises again, all on the same speed.

4. He mounts three Horses upon the Saddles, and rides them in full Speed, vaulting from one to the other.

5. He concludes his Performance by riding a single Horse in full Speed, dismounting and mounting many times, and will on that Stretch dismount fairly, with both Feet on the Ground, vault clear over the Horse, back again, and mount on the near side.

N.B. If the Weather should be bad, the Performance will be postponed to the next fair Day.

The Doors to be opened at 2 o'clock, and to mount at three.

We should call this a Matinée, but Mr. Foulks, having been informed that 3 o'clock was not convenient for some of the Ladies and Gentlemen to attend his Performances, states his intention, on Friday the 20th Instant, to have the Doors opened at 11 o'clock and to mount at Twelve.

Tickets were to be had at 4s. each, at Mr. Rivington's and Mr. Gaine's, the two newspaper editors of the city.

The Windmill referred to in the announcement was on the westerly side of the Bowery, midway between Hester street, on the north, and St. Nicholas, or Pump, street (subsequently Walker), on the south. This wintry, open-air exhibition, which continued into the month of January, 1772, was given within an enclosure, and at the time no other entertainment was in progress in the city, save an evening show of Legerdemain, with Cups, Balls and Cards, by M. Peter Sourville, at Mr. de Lamontagne's.

During the following year, 1773, Jacob Bates made his appearance in the western world; the same person whom we have mentioned as visiting so many of the Christian courts of the Eastern hemisphere, and whose portrait was engraved as early as 1766. His card of Monday, May 31, in the *New York Gazette,* is as follows:

Mr. Bates,
Who has finished a Tour of Europe,
Is arrived in New York,
And intends to perform
Different Feats of Horsemanship,
On One, Two, and Three Horses,[14]
At the Bull's Head, in the Bowery-Lane,
On Wednesday next, the second of June.
The Doors will be opened at Four o'Clock, and he will mount precisely at Five.
The Seats are made proper for Ladies and Gentlemen.
He will take it as a particular Favour, if Gentlemen will not suffer any Dogs to come with them.
Tickets for the first Place, at One Dollar;
And for the second Place, Four Shillings each, to be had at the Bar of the Coffee-House; and at Mr. Rivington's; and at the Place of Performance.
*** No Money will be taken at the Doors, nor Admittance without a Ticket.

On the following Monday his announcement is headed:

Horsemanship,
By Mr. (Jacob) Bates
The Original Performer,

settling at once the great historical question as to who was the "*original Jacobs*"; while in announcing for Tuesday, June 29th,

A Burlesque on Horsemanship;
or
The Taylor riding to Brentford,

[14] Increased at times to four horses.

ANTOINE.

HENRI.

LAURENT.

MINETTE.

THE FRANCONI FAMILY.

we see that, in catering to the public amusement, he kept fully abreast of Astley, to whom, in fact, he seems to claim priority.

The place selected by Mr. Bates was on the block below the Windmill, some 200 feet north of Bayard street, on the westerly side of the Bowery lane. Here, in 1826, was erected the New York or American Theatre, better known to the present generation as the "Old Bowery." Bates's last appearance was on August 3, prior to which time the boards, forming the "Riding Yard" or "Manage," were offered for sale. He then proceeded to Boston, but his application, some three weeks later, to the Selectmen of that town, for permission to fence in 160 feet of ground on the Common, "to show his feats of Horsemanship," was denied.

During this summer of '73 the old American Company was in New York, performing at the John Street Theatre, where, on July 19, was given Shakespeare's comedy of "The Merchant of Venice" and Dodsley's "Miller of Mansfield," with a Harlequin Dance by Mr. Francis. The real name of this gentleman, a Hollander by birth, was Menzuis, or Philip Mentges; he entered the state service of Pennsylvania, rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Southern campaign, was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, and took his oath of allegiance October 10, 1783. Whether Jacob Bates also remained in this country and joined in our struggle for independence I fail to learn, though he is said to have

been conducting a riding-school in Philadelphia after 1786.

A late popular tale [15] for American youth informs the juvenile Sons and Daughters of the Revolution that an English Circus arrived in New York in 1783, just after the cessation of hostilities, setting up its canvas tent in the fields beyond the town, with a troop of riders and tumblers, a clown, and the attractive side-shows of a monkey-cage and trick-elephant. Alas for historic truth! In face of the laws which Congress had passed, forbidding all theatrical and similar amusements, what manager would have brought out any show at that time, even if such a combination were not in advance of the age?

It is true some small exhibitions were tolerated during the contest, and that, too, right under the eyes of the big-wigs at Philadelphia; for we read in the spring of 1780 that a Mr. Templeman, of Virginia, lately from Europe, was giving surprising performances of balancing on the slack-wire at the Southwark Theatre. But we know also, by his whacking charges, that with him it was "make hay while the sun shines," for the Boxes were $40, Pit $30, Gallery $20, and children, from five to twelve, $15. A modern collector would doubtless think more of the pile of Continental currency which came in at the ticket-office window than did "Mr. Templeman of Virginia, lately from Europe."

[15] A Loyal Little Red-Coat," by Ruth Ogden; New York, 1890.

But when the Bird of Freedom was pluming himself after a hard fight, and Miss Columbia setting her house to rights at the end of the "earlie trouble," little attention was given to public amusements, and gentlemen of the sock and buskin, saltimbancos, funambulists, prestidigitators and circus-riders were, for a while, at a discount. The nearest approach, just then, to anything amusing in the equestrian line occurs in Loudon's *New York Packet* of February 26, 1784. Skillman's "New (weekly) Flying Machine, or Stage Wagon," had been established in April, 1771, between Powle's Hook [16] (*i.e.*, Jersey City) and Philadelphia, when passengers were requested to take the Ferry over night so as to get an early start. With this in view, the humorous writer proceeds as follows: "We are informed from good authority that a gentleman, no less noted for his attachment to the fine arts than desirous of promoting everything useful to the community he lives in, astonished to find, that by a coalition of parties, the expense of traveling in the Stage from Elizabeth Town, Newark, &c., to Philadelphia is raised, intends to set up an Aërial Conveyance from New York to that city on the new invented system of Messrs. Montgolfier; a mode of travel which, tho' novel, may be recommended as the easiest, pleasantest, and most expeditious of any yet put in practice, and though it may, with perfect propriety, be termed a Flying Machine, yet desirous of preserving as

[16] Paulus Hook.

much of antiquity as possible, will be called *Pacolet's Horse Revived.* He having greatly improved on the original invention, will undertake to insure not only a safe but certain passage to those who honour him with their favours.

It will set out from the City Hall on the second of April next, and those who wish for a passage must engage their passage the day before";—what day that would be it is needless to explain.

Not until the summer of 1785 did the United Colonies rise to the dignity of a full-blown Circus, an announcement for the first performance of which in Philadelphia on Saturday, August 20th, appears in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of the 15th. A very good idea of the affair can be obtained by reading the notice of the following week in full:

By Permission
Mr. Pool,
The first American that ever exhibited the following
Equestrian Feats of Horsemanship,
On the Continent.

Intends performing To-morrow, the 24th instant, near the Centre House, where he has erected a MENAGE, at a very considerable expense, with Seats convenient for those Ladies and Gentlemen who may please to honor him with their Company.

1. Mounts a single horse in full speed, standing on the saddle, throws up an orange and catches it on the point of a fork.

2. Mounts a single horse in half speed, dismounting and mounting many times, and will on that stretch, vault over the horse, back again, and mount on the near side.

3. Mounts a single horse in full speed, with his right foot in the near stirrup, and his left leg extended at a considerable distance from the horse, and in that position leaps a bar.

4. Mounts two horses in full speed, with a foot in the stirrup of each saddle, and in that position leaps a bar, and from that to the top of the saddles at the same speed.

5. Mounts three horses in full speed, standing on the saddles, and in that position leaps a bar.

6. Mounts a single horse in full speed and fires a pistol, and falls backward, with his head to the ground, hanging by his right leg, and, while hanging, fires another pistol under the horse's belly, and rises again to his seat on the saddle; and—

Lastly, will be exhibited "The Taylor humourously riding to New York."

At the conclusion of the performances Mr. Pool will introduce three horses, who will lay themselves down as if dead. One will groan apparently through extreme sickness and pain, afterwards rise and make his manners to the Ladies and Gentlemen. Another, having laid down for a considerable time, will rise and set up like a Lady's lap-dog.

Every time of performance there will be new feats. Mr. Pool flatters himself the Ladies and Gentlemen who may be pleased to honor him with their company, will have no reason to go away dissatisfied; he even hopes to merit their approbation.

The Performance will begin at 5 o'clock in the Afternoon precisely.

TICKETS, for the First Seats, at Five Shillings, and for the Second Three Shillings & Nine Pence each, may be had at the two Coffee Houses, at Major Nichol's at the Connestoga Wagon, Mr. Thomson's, at the Old Indian Queen, and at the place of performances.

No tickets to be given out at the doors.

*** Mr. Pool beseeches the Ladies and Gentlemen who honor him with their presence to bring no Dogs with them to the place of performance.

☞The Exhibition, in future, to be held on Wednesday and Saturday.

As in his mounted acts Pool apparently repeats those feats represented in the background groups of Bates's picture, twenty years earlier, so in the rest of his performance he closely follows the initiative of Astley. We can almost imagine his using, in the closing exhibition of trained horses, the very doggerel rhyme of his great prototype, which, slightly changed to suit an American audience, would run as follows:

> My horse lies dead apparent in your sight,
> But I'm the man can set the thing to right:
> Speak when you please, I'm ready to obey—
> My faithful horse knows what I want to say;
> But first just give me leave to move his foot.
> [Moves the horse's feet.
>
> That he is dead is quite beyond dispute.
> This shows how brutes by Heaven were designed
> To be in full subjection to mankind.
> Arise, now Billy; stop your sham and fun;
> Salute our Nation's Hero, Washington.

"Between the different parts a Clown" was announced for Saturday, August 27th, to "amuse the spectators," and on the Wednesday following the doors were opened at four o'clock, so that, after the

performances, there might be time for an exhibition of brilliant Fire Works in the Ménage.

In our mind's eye we have a very good idea of the whole affair; its small ring, with seats arranged around, open to the air; its solitary performer, two or three pieces of music, and a *funny-man* who joined in the last humorous piece of "Billy Button, the Tailor." Whether the dreaded dog eventually found its way into the ring we know not, but at the close of August notice appeared that: "* * * Mr. Pool having in the course of his last Exercises, met with an unfortunate accident, is at present unable to comply with his engagement of performing every Wednesday and Saturday, as heretofore; but he will, as soon as possible, continue his Equestrian Feats, of which notice will be given in the Newspapers, &c., &c." He never resumed performances, however, in Philadelphia, and the place he had occupied is said to have been subsequently hired by Bates for a riding-school.

In the Selectmen's Records of Boston, June 26, 1786, we have the following entry: "Upon the Petition of a number of the respectable Inhabitants that Mr. Thomas Pool may be permitted to perform his Feats of Horsemanship in the Town, among other reasons, on account of his services & Sufferings in the public service—The Town Clerk is directed to acquaint Mr. Pool that the Selectmen have no objection to his performing said Feats provided the same be done in a proper inclosure."

He accordingly made his first appearance in the town on Friday, July 8, 1786.

All his advertisements, lengthy and similar, differed but as regards location; thus, in Boston the Ménage, for the term Circus was not yet in general use, was "near the Mall." We notice, too, that the closing droll scene resumed its legitimate title—"The Taylor's ride to Brentford," instead of to "New York." Performances began at 5 o'clock on Tuesdays and Fridays, and tickets at three and two shillings, and one shilling for children, were to be procured at Jones's American Coffee House, Col. Marston's "Bunch of Grapes" Tavern, or Brackett's Tavern in School street, where Mr. Pool lodged.

Towards the middle of the month he opened a Riding School, in connection with his ring, for instruction in the manly art of horsemanship; lessons every other day, from 5 to 7 A. M., at a subscription price of $10 for three weeks.

Think of it, ye beaux and belles of the modern school; five to seven in the morning, when the birds were caroling their matins—no evening classes with electric lights and music in those days.

The season was short, terminating on the 16th of August, and we may well imagine that it was not quite the gaudy, noisy, riotous show of the present day, or no privilege to hold it could have been obtained from Boston's grave body of selectmen; perchance, however, the name of Pool, in good old Col-

ony times, that of a lusty Cornet in the famed "Three County Cavalry Troop," carried a prestige with it.

Nothing in the advertisements of this Circus in Boston points to its location, save that it was "near the Mall." I think, however, that a new wooden structure, called the Pantheon, was used. It had been built the preceding year as a "Musick-house" at the foot of the Common, and was opened by subscription on Thursday evening, July 28, 1785, with music by the band from 7 to 10. Many ladies and gentlemen were present in the gallery and on the green around the building. The place was in an unfinished condition, but Mr. J. Eaton, the proprietor, stated that, "as the fleeting season was so far advanced, he had been advised to open under the present dishabille rather than lose the improvement of these fine evenings." It never was finished up after the manner announced in the brilliant prospectus, and the undertaking met with such ridicule and scoffing at the hands of the town-wits that, instead of remaining open till the close of October, entertainments ceased before the end of August. The *Massachusetts Centinel* of September 7th says: "Last evening a wag coming by our deserted Pantheon, perhaps prophetically, wrote on some parts of the structure 'good stabling for horses.'—How are the mighty fallen." The same paper states that within the month the place was sold at Auction for 400 dollars, and adds: "We hear this Chamber of

the Gods will be converted into a receptacle for quadrupeds."

After this attempt nothing more in the way of a Circus occurs in Boston town for some years; indeed, strong opposition was there evinced to the introduction of any kind of amusement, especially the drama. For a long time there had been a Concert Hall, and even a Dancing-master was tolerated, so that occasionally, after an early vocal or instrumental performance, there might follow a dance, all very orderly and decorous, the ladies and gentlemen dispersing by eleven o'clock; and when the two so-called "Hancock regiments" arrived in 1768, we read of Concerts for the benefit of their respective Fife-majors. The fife, an instrument of recent introduction in the British Army, was certainly a novelty to the Bostonians, and the writer's grandfather, a lad of eight years, fascinated by their sound and the pomp and glitter of a military parade, was soon far astray in the crowd that followed the troops at their landing, so that the town-crier, with his bell, had to go round and look him up. It was not long, however, before the youngster was himself whistling music for the Boston Artillery Company of Captain William Heath, and when the latter, as Major-General, took the field in '75, the little fifer, with other Colonial boys, was right ready to blow a Yankee Doodle march for the patriots gathering about "the Hub."

On Monday, March 8, 1713-14, during the admin-

istration of Governor Dudley, and while General Francis Nicholson and others of like kin, were in Boston, it was proposed to have a play enacted in the Council Chamber. The rumor of it reached the ears of Chief Justice Samuel Sewall, who sent a letter of protest, March 2nd, to the Hon. Isaac Addington, secretary for the Governor and Council, expressing his surprise and stating that "as much as in me lies, I do forbid it." [17]

Over fifty-five years later a timid attempt to set forth something like a play occurred on Monday evening, October 2, 1769, when Bickerstaff's opera of "Love in a Village" was read and sung in the large room in Brattle street, formerly Green & Walker's store. The person giving the entertainment, who had appeared in most of the great towns of America, "personated all the Characters, entering into the different Humours or Passions, as they change from one to another throughout the Opera." The admission price was "Half-a-Dollar," showing that that term was long in Colonial use before its adoption into the currency of the United States. Years afterward, in the fall of 1788, a Mr. Smith was giving "Moral Lectures or Readings" in the Concert Hall, it being still necessary thus to disguise the delivery of a popular play or comedy. Finally, on August 10, 1792, the New England Exhibition Room, or Amphitheatre, was opened on Board Alley,[18] with tight and

[17] *Magazine of American History*, XXI., p. 59.

[18] Formerly Bishop's Alley, and afterwards Hawley Street.

slack-rope performances, vaultings and somersaults, singing and dancing; though presently plays, still disguised as Moral Lectures, were enacted. This structure was taken down the following June, but meanwhile a brick building was being erected on the northwest corner of Long Lane (or Federal street) and Franklin Place, which opened February 3, 1794, as the Boston Theatre, and was the first regular place for dramatic amusement in town. Subsequently, in April, 1796, proposals were started by Charles S. Powell for a larger and more convenient building, to be called "the Haymarket Theatre"; ground was broken on Monday, May 16, near the southeast corner of the Mall, or Common, now Tremont street, and the place was opened the night after Christmas.

These are well-known facts, mentioned only to show that Boston was a little behind her sister cities of the Union in the encouragement of popular amusement.

From this place Pool came to New York, where he erected a *Manège,* "on the Hill, near the Jews' Burial Ground," which would be eastward of the present Chatham Square, and about on the line of Oliver street.

Between the feats, a band of music or a clown entertained the ladies and gentlemen, who were, as before, particularly requested not to bring any dogs. The programme was precisely the same as that which

he had given in Philadelphia, though on October 21 he introduced some new features, among them the riding on four horses and "a specimen of the Coross and Jostlar at New Market."[19] He also gave riding lessons, twice a day, and four times a week, at the same rate as before, and continued his entertainments till the first week in November.

In Watson's "Annals of New York" we have the reminiscences of a citizen, who says: "I remember the first troop of circus riders that ever favored the good people of New York with their flip-flaps and somersets; their leaps over any indefinite number of horses, and marvellous exhibitions of ground and lofty tumbling. I was a boy then and went to school just on the outskirts of the city, in Broome street. . . . I remember the very spot (on a high hill called Bunker's Hill, that towered above the few neighboring houses) where I was standing with some ten or a dozen of my schoolfellows, when the tidings were brought by one of our scouting explorers 'that something was going on down at the Collect.'"

Off they started in a bee-line, at full speed, for the waste ground lying back of the scanty line of

[19] To relieve the etymologist of a long and tedious search for these two words, I quote from an announcement, during the previous summer, of the "Maidenhead Races" at the course in the Bowery Lane.

"No crossing, jostling, nor any kind of foul Play, will be countenanced; which detected, the Rider will be pronounced distanced."

houses on the easterly side of the main road, now Broadway, and stretching from Anthony street up to Grand, where at a point not far, the writer says, from where the line of Leonard street joins the road, they found carpenters just finishing a small platform, some ten feet wide by sixty feet long, and raised a short distance above the ground. In the midst of boyish curiosity as to what it was designed for, the writer continues, "We were struck dumb with amazement by the approach of a band of splendidly clad horsemen, in the midst of whom rode a princess, as we supposed, gaily attired in habits of very unclean satin, bedizened with tinsel; a tiara of damaged plumes upon her head, and her cheeks glowing with rouge of the most brilliant intensity. We had heard of the glories of circus-riding; suspicions of the delightful truth therefore flashed on our minds, which was soon heightened to certainty by the appearance of one of the horsemen, whose striped garments, fool's cap, and antic manœuvres, proclaimed him the Clown of the company." A performance was immediately given, and a tambourine handed around. In a few weeks, the writer proceeds to say, they moved up to the northeast corner of Prince street and Broadway, where they aspired to a full band of three drums, a trumpet and two fifes, "and a precious disturbance they kicked up every afternoon," from four o'clock till dusk, inside of their high fence, with not a knot-hole to peep through, and the gate on Prince street furnished with "a vil-

lainous row of sharp spikes extending along the top, to the utter discomfiture of every ambitious climber."

When Watson's "Annals" were compiled, a schoolboy of 1786 could hardly have been seventy years of age, and possibly Pool's circus is above described, though much I doubt it, and I find no confirmation of its removal to Prince street; yet, misled by the plausible retrospection, old Father Valentine continues the account,[20] telling us that the Prince street circus, called the "Stadium," was, after the War of 1812, used as a drill-ground, and that the ring was still remaining in 1828, when Mr. Niblo commenced to improve the grounds. I do not deny that there ever was a circus in the locality, but it was not quite so early as Watson would lead us to infer.

Undoubtedly America's great equestrian manager, one hundred years ago, was John Bill Ricketts, who in 1792 erected a riding-school in Philadelphia on the southwest corner of Twelfth and Market streets. He was a pupil of Charles Hughes, that rival of Astley who, as we have seen, opened the "Royal" in 1782, and had performed at the circus of James and George Jones, on Union street, Whitechapel, being, says Decastro,[21] "the first rider of real eminence that had then appeared," for his fame "excelled all his predecessors, and it is said he has never been surpassed." Ricketts met with such success as warranted his soon putting up a much larger

[20] "City Manual," 1865, p. 631.

[21] "Memoirs," London, 1824.

building for a circus,[22] where he was at first assisted by Masters Ricketts and Strobel, and by Mr. McDonald, the Clown. Eventually he engaged Signor and Mme. Spinacuta; the former a tight-rope performer,[23] appeared the following summer at Newport, R. I., in pantomime and ballet, while his wife, quite an expert rider, was on the stage at Charleston, S. C., in 1795.

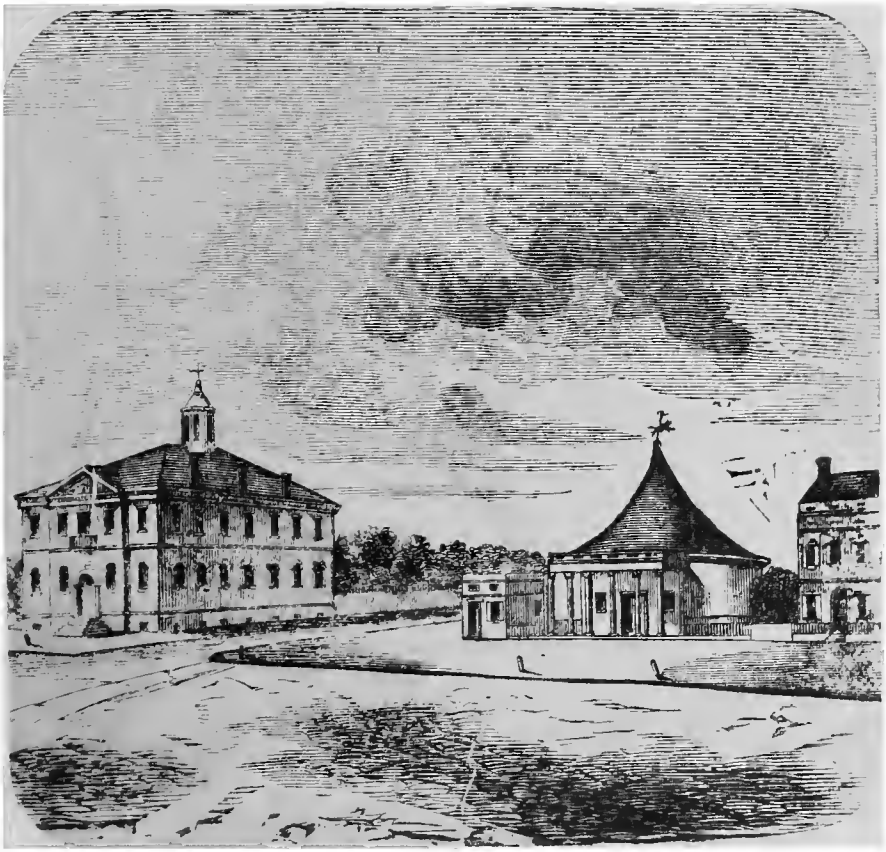
Himself an excellent horseman and fond of such exercises, we read of President Washington's attending this exhibition on April 22, 1793, the very day on which he had issued his famous proclamation of neutrality. What Ricketts[24] thought of the great Commander-in-Chief, we learn from the "Recollections" of G. W. P. Custis, his adopted son: "Ricketts . . . used to say, 'I delight to see the general ride, and make it a point to fall in with him when I hear that he is abroad on horseback—his seat is so firm, his management so easy and graceful, that I, who am a professor of horsemanship, would go to him and learn to ride.'"

Mr. Ricketts was undoubtedly modest as to his

[22] Boxes, 7s. 6d.; Pit, 3s. 9d.

[23] Tight and slack rope dancing by male and female performers, at the New Booth on Society Hill, is announced in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, of 1724.

[24] *Massachusetts Mercury*, (Boston), Vol. I., No. LXI, Monday, May 20, 1793: "Monsieur Ricketts, Equestrian Performer, who has built a circus at Philadelphia, contemplates a visit to this town, and the erection of a Cirque for the amusement of its inhabitants."



Ricketts Circus, Philadelphia, 1795.

own abilities, since a Philadelphia writer of 1794 says: "It may without exaggeration be said, that he is perhaps the most graceful, neat, and expert public performer on horseback, that ever appeared in any part of the world; at least the Amateurs, who have seen the best equestrians in Europe, are of this opinion." Among other feats, are mentioned his leaping over ten horses; riding with a boy on his shoulder in the attitude of a Mercury; going through the manual exercise with a firelock, and dancing a hornpipe on the saddle, the horse at full speed, &c. This circus is spoken of as "being esteemed amongst the first amusements met with in this truly astonishing Metropolis, as a place to dispel the gloom of the thoughtful, exercise the lively activity of the young and gay, or to relax the mind of the sedentary and industrious trader."

By giving some benefits, Ricketts established this year (1794) a fuel fund for the poor of the city which still exists. During the following winter he appeared in the neighboring city of New York, but, before following him thither, I would state that after Pool's exhibition of 1786, in that city, no further information as to that performer can be found.

In the summer of 1787, saving the legitimate drama, the only amusement in the good city of Gotham was that of Mr. John Brenon [Brennan] from Dublin, who danced on the slack wire without a pole, his schedule being as follows:

I. He balances a Straw or a Single Tobacco Pipe, on the wire.

II. Balances a Sword on the edge of a Wine Glass, on the wire.

III. Goes through a Hoop on the Wire.

IV. Beats the Drum on the Wire.

V. Walks the Wire in full Swing.

VI. Goes through the Manual Exercise of the Firelock, loads and fires while on the Wire.

This performance, given at first in Corré's Assembly Room, at the City Tavern on Broadway, afterwards in Mr. Vandewater's Long Room, opposite the Brick Meeting House on Nassau street, began at 8 o'clock and concluded with singing and Dexterity of Hand by Mrs. Brenon; any gentleman being allowed to cut off the head of a Fowl, which would be restored to life in a surprising manner. Each announcement concludes: "Said Brenon cures the Tooth Ache without drawing.—No Cure, no Pay. For the Poor Gratis." A sketch from the pen of a humorous writer, caricaturing the whole performance, appeared in the *Daily Advertiser* of July 24. Towards the end of August, Brenon added a Pantomime, with Mr. Smith as Clown, and two years later, in April, 1789, we hear of him at the Assembly Room in Salem, Mass., where he "concludes with tumbling on the slack-rope, as performed at Astley's Riding School, London." Signor Falconi also appeared at Corré's Room, in New York, during the month of

July, 1787, giving a variety of experiments in Natural Philosophy; making Salad grow two inches high in five minutes, and Magnetizing people at a distance of twelve feet; nor must we forget the very instructive show of the two Camels, lately imported from Madeira in the brigantine *Olive Branch,* which were to be seen at Mr. Stephens' stables, adjoining the snuff and tobacco manufactory of Wm. Maxwell, Esq., on Wall street.

Passing over a period of five years, we find, in the spring of 1792, a M. Alex. Placide [25] at the John Street Theatre, conducting the pantomime in connection with the Old American company of actors. He had been with Astley in London, and Dunlap, the American dramatist, states that he had seen him in 1785 at Sadler's Wells, " where he went by the name, from his feats as a tumbler, of the Great Devil." [26] He would balance a peacock's feather in various ways, or with Simonet and another party, whom he had named " the Little Devil," would give feats of tumbling, with dancing on the tight-rope or slack-wire; or he would, in company with his wife, dance a Minuet de la Cour and a Gavotte. Madame Placide was also good at a hornpipe, and, on occasions, the *diminutive demon* turned somersets through a hogshead, with both ends stopped or covered with paper.

[25] Father of the well-known comedians Henry and Thomas Placide.

[26] Subsequently, in 1791, James Lawrence, the Vaulter at Astley's, bore this title.

During the spring of this same year Bennet, a noted rope-dancer from London, gave an exhibition on the wire, at Mr. Waldron's Long Room in St. George's Street; danced a hornpipe on his head; sang a humorous song; and showed up the whole art of Animal Magnetism, or Mesmerism, or, as we should now call it, Hypnotism.

In the fall there was at Capt. Baldwin's Long Room, in Cortlandt street, a mixed performance of tumbling, dancing, and singing, with a clown, for the benefit of "the two surprising youth" from London, Masters Manly and Hearn; one of whom could balance his body upright, his head resting on the edge of a wineglass, the other performing the same feat, with his head on the edge of a dollar; Don Pedro Clones also performed on the wire and rope, and the whole concluded with a solo-concerto on the broom-stick, and the "Spanish Pantomime."

Nor can we be silent as to the Speaking Wax Figure, at the corner of Beekman and Gold streets, which, suspended by ribbons beneath a canopy, gave answers, to the fair one prying into the dim and mystic future, quite as truthfully as did any of Bennet the rope-dancer's clairvoyant subjects.

But all minor attractions paled before the coming of Ricketts, who, in the winter of 1794, established himself on the west side of Broadway, at the southwest corner of "Oyster Pasty" or Exchange Alley, upon some vacant lots belonging to Col. Wm. Smith,[27]

[27] William S. Smith?

and just north of Alex. McComb's residence. In the *Gazette* of January 1, 1795, he announces that, having, at considerable expense, engaged the services of Mons. Ambroise, a celebrated artist in Italian Fire Works, "a specimen of his ability, superior to anything of the kind ever exhibited in the city," would be given at the "New Amphitheatre," after the Equestrian Exercises on Saturday the 3d, and that no danger need be apprehended, "as the materials are of such a nature as will entirely counteract it."

There was at this time an excellent dramatic troop in Philadelphia, under the direction of Messrs. Wignell and Reinagle; the same Alex. Reinagle who had composed the "Federal March" for the Fourth of July procession of 1788 in that city. His partner Mr. Wignell, though not so much of a musician, made overtures to Ricketts that the Amphitheatre in New York should be opened as a summer theatre. The offer was declined and the *Daily Advertiser* of March 14, 1795, censured the refusal as having deprived our citizens of seeing "some of the best actors on the continent." As the Old American Company, already in the city, also had its admirers, a wordy war ensued, and "to keep the good will of Ricketts," says Dunlap,[28] Mr. Hodgkinson, the manager, a few nights subsequent, put off a play, rather than interfere with a performance at the Circus. This was wormwood and gall for our "profuse" dramatic

[28] "American Stage," I., 268.

author, and in holy horror he bursts out: "Sheridan and 'The School for Scandal' gave way for Ricketts and Clown."

Closing his winter season, Mr. Ricketts now proceeded to Boston, where in May he advertised a Grand Display of Equestrian Exercises at the Amphitheatre, three times a week; doors open at 5; performances at ¼ before 6; Boxes, One Dollar; Pit, Half a Dollar. Having made some alterations, he reopened what he calls his "Equestrian Pantheon" on Wednesday, July 1, and appeared himself in the "Metamorphosis, or Peasant's Frolic on Horseback," and also in "John Gilpin's Ride"; his son Francis and Master Long, and especially Mr. Sully, Clown to the horsemanship, assisting him. Some provision for lighting must have been made, for occasionally performances were given as late as 8 o'clock.

In the *Columbian Centinel* of July 25, 1795, occur the following lines:

ON THE EQUESTRIAN PANTHEON

"Egypt of old, the Crocodile ador'd,
Reptiles held sacred and the Bull implor'd;
Rome's Pantheon still could boast a nobler line,
Whose images of Men were deem'd divine;
But Boston claims the highest right by odds,
Whose Horses fill the place of—All the Gods."

After the last representation, on Friday, July 24, a Card appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* expressing the proprietor's thanks for the liberal patronage

he had received, and mentioning his intention to visit the town again during the next spring. That promise failed, owing, doubtless, to the fact that Lailson, a French equestrian, was performing in Boston during the following year.

With the same troop, on Tuesday, September 15, Ricketts reopened his New York Amphitheatre on Broadway, the place having "undergone a thorough alteration, with scenery, machinery, decoration, &c., incident to stage performances." Ground and lofty tumbling was given by the company, to whom was added Signor Reano, a slack-rope performer, and Mr. Sully, as it was his first appearance in New York, gave an Address and a Comic Song, entitled the "Four and Twenty Perriwigs," in imitation of the "Four and Twenty Fiddlers." Doors opened one hour before the performances, which began at 7 o'clock, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday; prices for Boxes and Pit, 8 and 4 shillings.

The clown, Mr. William Sully, who had been a tumbler and singer at Sadler's Wells, London, came to America in 1792 at the invitation of his brother-in-law, Mr. James West, whose theatrical troop in the South he joined. His interesting and talented family of several daughters and four sons accompanied him, of whom the youngest son, Thomas Sully, was the well-known artist of Philadelphia, while the second son, Matthew, took to the stage, and was father of the artist Robert M. Sully.

Returning to Philadelphia, Ricketts now opened,

October 19, 1795, at the southwest corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets, a new and larger Circus,[29] called the "Art Pantheon and Amphitheatre"; a circular building of 97 feet diameter, with an outer wall 18 feet high, surmounted by a conical roof, the apex of which, 50 feet from the ground, bore on the top a flying Mercury, while inside, from the centre-point, hung a large chandelier. His troop had not changed save with the addition again of Sig. Spinacuta, whose wife rode two horses at full gallop, and the Polander Dwarf, or "Warsaw Wonder," who darted through a blazing sun. A trained horse, named for the old Seneca chief, "Cornplanter," which would jump over another horse 14 hands (56 inches) high, was also introduced, and several pantomimes were brought out successfully. Among Mr. Ricketts' various feats at this time were his throwing a somersault over 30 men's heads and over five horses with their mounted riders; he would also ride two horses at full gallop and leap over a garter or ribbon 12 feet high, or ride the same horses, each foot on a quart-mug standing loose on the saddles, and at times would mount on the shoulders of two riders, each standing on a separate horse, "forming a Pyramid 15 feet high," a feat never before attempted by any equestrian. Young Ricketts, emulating his father, would leap over a spiked bar or ride around the ring, his head balanced on a pint-mug

[29] See plate, page 64. On the N. W. corner was Wignell's "New Theatre."

resting on the saddle; he would also dismount blindfolded, pick up a watch and remount. The acrobatic display we have seen as given at Astley's, viz., "The Egyptian Pyramids," was also introduced, only it is referred to in the play-bills "as described by Addison in Travels through Egypt."

Early in March, 1797, Mr. Ricketts thanks the public of New York for past encouragement, and announces as nearly ready his New Amphitheatre, erected on an entire new plan and at a great expense, on the easterly side of Greenwich street, about in the rear of his former location. It opened March 16 with Horsemanship by the two Ricketts, father and son, assisted by the two Masters Franklin and Hutchins, and the Clown, Mr. Thomas Franklin, whose "inimitable performances with the Child of Promise, in various attitudes," were to be seen a few years earlier at the Royal Circus, London. A new Comic Dance, called "The Peasant of the Alps," and the Pantomime of "The Old Soldiers or the Two Thieves," were also given, with songs and duets by Miss Sully and Mr. and Mrs. Chambers. This couple, from the Royalty and Haymarket Theatres, London, had already appeared at the south, and Miss Sully, who had withdrawn from the Boston troop of players the year before, had made her *début* with them in July, 1796, at Baltimore, as the *Girl* in Morton's "Children in the Wood." Performances at the Circus began at an early hour, ¼ before 6, and tickets could be procured in advance from 10

to 3, at 8, 6 and 4 shillings for the upper and lower tiers of Boxes and the Pit. In the announcement for April 25 the manager alludes to "several forged tickets as having been offered to the doorkeeper."

On the date last mentioned we have the Pony Races, a String of Flip-flaps by the manager, and the Harvest Home pantomime: but the most interesting feature of the evening was an exhibition of the "Grand Transparency" recently painted by Charles Wilson Peale. On the evening of March 4, 1797, as our first President withdrew from public life, a splendid entertainment was tendered him by the merchants of Philadelphia in Ricketts' Amphitheatre. Here this transparency had been displayed, representing Washington taking leave of the nation and pointing to his home on the banks of the Potomac. Lossing, in his "Mount Vernon," quoting from a newspaper of the day, gives a full description of the painting.

On the 4th of May we have, for the first time, "the Pyramids of Egypt, by eleven Persons, forming a pleasing sight of—Men pil'd on Men, who with active leaps arise, building the breathing Fabric to the Skies; a little Boy on the Topmost Row, points the tall Pyramid, and crowns the Show"; a rhyming jingle savoring much the style of old Astley, who, as we have shown, courted the Muse in his earlier performances, even aspiring, in 1790, it has been said, to a musical piece called "The Monster," a


Whatever shall look upon his like again
The celebrated Complanter taking a flying leap over Silva a Horse of his own height
BY

M^r RICKETTS .

title derived from the notoriety of the day who was terrorizing London's female population.

The grand Historic Pantomime of the "Western Expedition, or the Whiskey-Boys' Liberty-Pole," given in July, referred to the riot and insurrection, in western Pennsylvania, during the fall of 1794, when the Moonshiners of that period scattered before an armed force under Col. Alexander Hamilton.

The Amphitheatre was now, upon a second application, given up to the Philadelphia Dramatic-troop, and with the assistance of Mr. John J. Holland, a skilful scene-painter, was soon converted into a handsome summer-theatre, which Wignell and Reinagle proposed to open on Monday, August 21. That event, however, was postponed to the 23d, when "Venice Preserved," a pantomime and ballet, and the farce of "Who's the Dupe?" were given, and boxes were to be secured at the Circus Coffee House. The last theatrical performance was on Saturday, November 25th, and on the Monday following there was a Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music, for the benefit of Mrs. Oldmixon; the leader of the band being Mr. Gillingham, and the Conductor of the Piano Forte, Mr. Alex. Reinagle.

Ricketts extended the field of his operations as far north as Albany,[30] but we last hear of him in New York, when, in announcing an opening for Thursday, Dec. 6, 1798, he states that "stoves are erected in different parts of the Circus to render it

[30] Munsell.

comfortably warm"; mention of his amphitheatre, however, continues in the City Directory for two years later. Not to pursue further the career of this old-time manager, I will refer only to the close of his efforts in this country, an event brought about through the destruction, by fire, of his establishment in Philadelphia, on the evening of Tuesday, Dec. 17, 1799, when fortunately, though the disaster occurred during a performance, no lives were lost. The pantomime of "Don Juan" was on the stage, at the close of which is represented the gaping jaws of hell, with a suitable posse of grinning demons, ready to receive the gay deceiver in a sea of fire, and some pious souls thought the actual burning was a judgment on the place for trying to depict such a scene. The fact was forgotten that, seven years earlier, Hodgkinson had given them something of the same kind at the old Southwark, in the pantomime ballet of "Don Juan, or the Libertine Destroyed," a piece which had enjoyed quite a run, in 1787, at the Royalty Theatre, London. At any rate, the Amphitheatre burned down, and a loss of over $20,000 so depressed the manager's spirits that he started soon after for England in a vessel which foundered at sea.[31]

Meanwhile a M. Lailson, who had been in Boston,

[31] The author has a copper token in his possession, inscribed on one side between floral festoons and olive branches, "Ricketts's Circus," and bearing on the other side the arms and crest of the Ricketts family. These arms are those of Colonel Thomas Rickards, a Royalist,

brought to Philadelphia, in 1797, a French troop, the largest and best equipped of any that had visited the United States. He erected a splendid amphitheatre on the corner of Fifth and Prune streets, which opened April 8th with equestrian performances, and the pantomime of "Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon," or the "Four Valiant Brothers." That exponent of the tragic muse, Dunlap, was in the City of Brotherly Love the next month, attending an Abolition Convention; in his Diary he says: "We leave the Library to see the Circus and exhibitions of a French equestrian. The *coup d'œil* of the house, lights and company, were pleasing, but a pleasure fleeting in the extreme. Compare the pleasure of yesterday [a day the writer had passed in the place of his nativity, Perth Amboy, N. J.], rambling over meadows and clover fields, amid orchards whose blossoms filled the air with fragrance, while birds of every kind warbled or whistled their expressions of happiness. To-day encircled in a huge enclosure,

whose son, Captain John Rickards, was an officer in Cromwell's army and participated in the capture of Jamaica, W. I., in 1655, and there settled. As his name was written "Ricketts" in his commission, he and his descendants have continued the name. His son, William, removed to the Province of New Jersey, but his son George remained on the island, and was known as Major-General George Ricketts of Canaan, and died in 1760. He was grandfather of Edmund Jervis-Ricketts, Viscount St. Vincent. The latter assumed his mother's family name of Jervis, she being the sister of Admiral Sir John Jervis, the Earl of St. Vincent.

from which the light of air and heaven is excluded, surrounded by beings like myself, pretending to rationality, yet setting hour after hour, to see men and women, in fools' coats, display the gambols of the monkey, as the highest attainment of their persevering industry. We did not stay the show over." Verily faint praise condemns; Dunlap was no mascot for Circus managers, and before a year had rolled over his head Lailson, with his name on the bankrupt list, departs for the West Indies, is heard of no more, and his building, while it lasts, serves as a drill-room.

Nothing farther was done in Philadelphia, in the circus line, before 1803, when an amphitheatre was put up at the corner of Market and Thirteenth streets, where we read of a Mrs. Scott giving broadsword exercises in the ring. The name of the proprietor was, I think, Thomas Savona, who died a few years later.

In 1797 our French manager, Lailson, had, in a spirit of rivalry to Ricketts, built a similar establishment on the opposite side of the same street in New York. An old deed [32] locates its exact position as 100 feet south from the southwest corner of Rector and Greenwich streets, with a frontage of 81 feet and a depth of 175 feet, running down to high-water line, where is now Washington street: it was called the Pantheon.

Another enterprising Frenchman of the city, find-

[32] Lib. LXIII. f. 465, N. Y. Deeds.

ing the place vacant after its proprietor's failure, engaged it in the fall of 1798 and fitted it up as the "Merchants' Assembly," where twelve subscription balls were to be given each season, the scenery and decorations to be changed each time. Single admissions, to parties introduced by a subscriber, were fixed at ten shillings.

Accordingly it opened on November 25 with a Concert at six o'clock, followed by a Ball which continued till two hours past midnight, the spectators occupying boxes. The end of the hall represented the lower part of Broadway, with a transparency-background of the "Evacuation," as appropriate for the day, and when the old fort fired a salute on the arrival of "our beloved Washington," the scene changed to a group of the General, President Adams and Governor Jay.

Jacques Madeline Joseph Delacroix, the promoter of the enterprise, a confectioner and distiller, had, in June of the preceding year, instituted a place of entertainment called Vauxhall Garden or Ice House, at No. 112, on the easterly side of Broadway, just above Pine Street. The admission ticket of 18d. entitled the purchaser to a glass of ice-cream or a punch. The next year Delacroix engaged the house and grounds of Alderman Nicholas Bayard lying eastward of the main road, or continuation of Broadway, near Bunker's Hill, about where Grand Street now is. The place bore the same name as the first establishment, and with music and other entertainments,

and a gracious dispensation of delectable delicacies by Mrs. Delacroix and her fair daughters, became quite popular. The public were informed that two carriages were running between the upper and lower gardens, but that the large barn fronting on the road could be used for the carriages of those who drove up; and, to prevent disappointment, when Fire Works were to be exhibited, a large lanthorn, to be seen through all Broadway, would be raised to the top of the barn.

"N. B. No Lanthorn, No Exhibition."

Crowded out by the advancing growth of the city, the garden was again removed, about 1803, to ground further up the street, near "the 2 mile stone," and running through to the Bowery-road. The place included a small summer-garden in one corner, where Thwaites, the comedian, was acting in 1806. Through these grounds Lafayette Place was eventually cut, and what remained of Vauxhall Garden,[33] with its entrance on the Bowery, is still fresh in the memory of some of our older citizens.

The city could boast, in those early days, of several other Ball-Rooms and Gardens, where our grandsires and granddames went actively into the enjoyment of life. On the block now (1898) occupied by the Boreel Building, Broadway, there was the Tontine City Hotel, offered for sale in May, 1800, which had its Ball, Card and Tea Rooms, used by the City As-

[33] Mentioned in the humorous novel of "Tom Stapleton." Delacroix died February 22, 1838.

sembly, and another Assembly Room was on William Street. Sherwood's Ranelagh Gardens were west of Broadway, about on a line with Duane Street, or, as it was formerly called, "Anthony, late Barley Street," the gardens being on the estate of Capt. Anthony A. Rutgers of New York and Newark. This place was gay every evening with colored lights, music and song. Another place on Broadway, presided over by Joseph Corré, was the Mount Vernon Garden, formerly the White Conduit House, at the corner of Leonard Street, where, in May and June of 1800, concerts were given in which Mr. and Mrs. Hodgkinson and others took part, appearing the subsequent two months in such light pieces and pantomimes as were suitable for a summer theatre. Corré was also the proprietor of the Columbia Garden, opposite the Battery, where the voice of Mrs. Bates was to be heard in 1799 ringing out the patriotic verses of "Hail Columbia." With France in disfavor, something was needed to supplant the Carmagnole, the "*Ca ira*" and Marseillaise, so, during the preceding spring of 1798, Joseph Hopkinson, of Philadelphia, had written the new song for the benefit, on Wednesday, April 25, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, of a classmate, Gilbert Fox, and Prof. Philip Roth had arranged the notes of the "President's March" to suit the verses. Fox was a young engineer who, taking to the stage, had made his debut as *George Barnwell* in July, 1796, at the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, while Roth's name,

as a "musitian," appears in March, 1779, on the list of those who took the oath of allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania, and his widow, by the City Directory, was still living in 1808. Whether he composed the March is uncertain, since it has been ascribed to a party by the name of Feyles (or Philes), and is said to have been performed for the first time on April 21, 1789, when Washington crossed the bridge at Trenton on his way to his Inauguration at New York. Custis, in his "Recollections" of the great man, says it was always played when the President entered his box at the theatre, and must not be confounded with the Revolutionary piece entitled "Washington's March." Now we know from the President's *Diary* that he attended the John Street Theatre on the evening of Wignell's benefit, November 24, 1790, when O'Keefe's "Tag" and Sheridan's "Critic" were performed; Lossing, who edited the *Diary*,[34] asserts, on what authority does not appear, that the orchestra greeted the advent of Washington and his party with the "President's March," composed for the occasion by their leader, a German, named Feyles.[35]

It was during the summer of this year that the

[34] 1789-91, edited by B. J. Lossing, New York, 1860.

[35] See *Hist. Mag.*, 1859, p. 23. Alex. Reinagle, beforementioned, "an eminent professor of music," arrived at New York on the ship *Edward*, Capt. Coupar, towards the end of May, 1786. At a Grand Concert which he gave July 18, at the Assembly Room on Broadway, he was assisted by Mr. Philes on the violin.

Sons of Tammany, or Columbian Society started a Museum in the city for the collection and preservation of everything relating to the history of the country, though, a few years later, the Society gave up its right and title to the custodian, Mr. Gardner Baker. The collection had first been exhibited in a room of the City Hall, on Broad Street, but was soon removed to the Exchange, Broad Street, and it was here in March, 1799, prior to its "embarcation for Europe,"—so reads the advertisement,—that Stuart's full-length portrait of Washington, painted in 1796, could be seen, representing him delivering his farewell address to Congress. Mr. Baker died soon after, and his widow announces the opening on June 20 of the Tammany Museum and Wax Work at No. 222 Greenwich Street, whither it had been removed. This was the same building in which the Panorama of London might lately have been seen, though exhibited as early as 1795, further up the same street, near Barclay, next door to the store of Frederick and William Rhinelander, and close to the dwelling of Ibrahim Adam ben Ali. The Panorama was owned by a Mr. Winston, and could be seen from 9 to 2 and from 3 to 6, at an admission price of half a dollar; a circular painting on 2400 square feet of canvas; we should like much to learn the artist's name. Only a few years before, namely, in 1788, this kind of exhibition had been introduced to the public at Edinburgh by Robert Barker, and not till nine years later was the first panorama pro-

jected in Paris by our own countryman, Robert Fulton, who, apart from his fame as connected with steam navigation, was an artist of no little merit.

As mention has been made of Mrs. Baker's Wax Work, it may be well to state that there was life-size wax-work in New York as early as 1785, at the upper end of Queen Street, No. 100, the subject being the "Story of Bel and the Dragon." In 1788 and '89 Mr. Bowen had a much more extensive exhibit at No. 74 Water Street, opposite Crane Wharf, with which he had come up from the Carolinas; it included the Royal Family, several of the prominent clergy of the city, some scriptural and humorous subjects, and the President, with a flying figure overhead crowning him with laurel. Much about this time, or to speak more correctly in 1791, an ingenious Swiss in the Jardin du Palais Royal, Paris, was conducting an exhibition of wax work in what was known as the "Salon de Curtins," or "Cabinet de Sieur Curtins," he being the uncle and instructor, in the ceroplastic art, of the better-known, indeed we might say "world-known," Mme. Tussaud.

We left Delacroix giving a grand ball, on Evacuation Day, '98, in the Greenwich Street Pantheon, or Lailson's New Circus Building. Another ball was announced for Friday, Dec. 6th, but was given up for lack of encouragement, and on Feb. 12th Equestrian Exercises were again renewed in the ring by Mr. Franklin, who had been Ricketts' Clown, two

years earlier, and who was assisted by Mr. Johnson, an actor from Hodgkinson's theatrical troop. A pantomimical ballet dance, called the "Peasant of the Alps or the Backwoods Cutter," concluded the performance, but Franklin and Johnson's success was temporary and the place soon closed.

In April James Fennell, having purchased the building, was here giving recitations, interspersed with music, assisted by Mrs. Danvers; admission was fixed at half a dollar, and gentlemen were requested not to smoke in the Boxes or Pit. Tuesday, April 23, was enacted Dr. Young's tragedy of "Revenge," in which appeared Messrs. Martin, Hallam, Jr., Hogg, Miller and Fennell, Mrs. Danvers and Miss White, and the price was raised to eight shillings for Boxes and Pit. Soon after this subscribers were informed that the recitations had been discontinued, prior to the arrangement of the place for a summer theatre.

Mr. Fennell was a man of education and an excellent actor, but visionary in the extreme; he had from 1794 to '96 been endeavoring to interest others in his schemes for the establishment of salt-works along the coast. In October, '96, having exhausted his means, he had again appeared at Baltimore in his favorite character of *Othello,* and we now find him in '99 endeavoring to run the Pantheon for a summer theatre with such actors as he had been able to engage from the Park Theatre troop. That place of amusement extending its term beyond the announced

re-opening time of the Pantheon, Fennell on June 18th, published a Card, threatening those who were engaged to him with legal proceedings. Finally, he got his troop together and opened on the 28th with the tragedy of "Douglas," he taking the character of *Glenalvon,* and also reciting "Clarence's Dream," Collins's "Ode to the Passions," and "Alexander's Feast." Various performances were announced in the daily papers till July 17th, but, says Dunlap, "nobody came to see them," so the house was again shut up, and Fennell began again to collect subscribers for another salt manufactory, to be put in operation within the circus-building, the back part of which rested on the water. With this end in view he commenced alterations, buying up lumber from any North River dealer credulous enough to accept promses in payment. He was accustomed at this time to dress his lofty and handsome person in a plain black suit, with silk stockings and gilt shoe-buckles, and his cocked hat was ornamented with a gold button and loop. The result of his new enterprise "was a residence in the debtor's prison in New York." With generosity of heart, Mr. Dunlap allowed him a benefit, Nov. 3, 1800, at the "Park." when he appeared in "Venice Preserved," followed by the "Waterman," and on Friday, June 1, 1804, he performed "Richard III" at the same theatre, and was in a two-act farce of his own, entitled "The Advertisement," or a "New Way to get Married"; one week later this erratic genius made his last appear-

ance on the stage as *Zanga* in "Revenge," and delivered a farewell address to[36] the public.

Again returning to the original subject, I find the Pantheon opened about 1803 for the public exhibition of a number of antique casts, which had been sent out for the American, or New York Academy of Fine Arts, by their president, Robert R. Livingston, our Ambassador at Paris, and this is the last I gather as to the circus building on Greenwich Street.

After the several departures of Lailson and Ricketts, the equestrian business was apparently for some years at a low ebb throughout the States. In New York at the Mount Vernon Garden, or Theatre, in July, 1802, with the stage arranged as a Temple of Independence, Mr. Gideon of Philadelphia appeared on horseback, giving the different Trumpet Duty Calls, and going through the cavalry sword-exercise; Mr. and Mrs. Hodgkinson were there, at the time, in Bickerstaff's "Hypocrite," and we read of a musical piece being given, composed by Dr. G. K. Jackson, who is remembered by all our grandmothers as the great pianoforte instructor of their earlier days.

A Mr. Robertson (or Robinson), from the Amphitheatre, London, who had displayed his peculiar and varied gifts on Christmas Eve, 1800, at the Federal Theatre, Boston, was on the following Fourth of July, in New York, and in the following September at the Southwark, Philadelphia. He gave imitations

[36] In 1814 he published "An Apology for his Life."

of the English robin, thrush, skylark, and nightingale; whistled an overture, accompanied by the band; danced an egg-hornpipe blindfolded, displayed feats of ground and lofty tumbling, threw somersaults backward and forward; and leaped through a balloon of fire fourteen feet above the stage, or over the heads of twenty soldiers with guns and fixed bayonets. He would also, in his "Antipodean Whirligig," whirl round on his head, without using his hands, at the rate of two hundred and fifty times in a minute, with fireworks attached to his body.

Towards the middle of September (1802) Mr. Robertson announced that, having erected a temporary Circus at Delacroix's Vauxhall Garden, in New York, "Feats of Horsemanship would be performed in the same style as at Astley's, in London." he being assisted by Mr. Franklin,[37] whom we have before met with, and Mr. Latin; admission was four shillings. Robertson, who did not aspire to grammatical accuracy, "informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of the city, that he and his company is arrived for the express purpose of offering to their patronage a species of Amusement which has not been presented for many years, and when performed, met

[37] During the seasons of 1794-95 in London, Thomas Franklin and Benjamin Handy, managers of a very good equestrian company (with whom were the celebrated rider George Smith, "the inimitable clown," John Porter, and others of first-rate talent in their various lines), took the Royal Circus, where Franklin had previously performed; he died in America.

with the highest approbation." He himself was Clown to the equestrian part, and Mr. Latin to the Tumbling and Still Vaulting; the whole concluded with the "Humours of the Sack, or The Clown Deceived by a Woman," and the "Fricassee Dance," both of which pieces had appeared in 1793 in London at the Royal Circus, where the dance was performed by young Mr. Crossman and Mr. Porter, the clown. No performances were given on Friday on account of the fireworks. The manager eventually died in the South, having dislocated his neck, as might have been expected.

The troop with which he had been connected was probably one of the first that traveled about the country, and we find them advertising to perform, in the fall of 1808, at the circus on Broad Street in Salem, Massachusetts. They began, weather permitting, at 6 o'clock, with a "Grand Scene of Horsemanship," consisting principally of hornpipes danced on the saddle, interspersed with feats of agility; Mr. Franklin riding standing, with his toe in his mouth, and leaping from the ground to his horse in various ways; Mr. Crandel jumping a whip; Mr. Stewart throwing himself into a variety of attitudes; and Peter, the young African, riding backwards and erect upon his toes or leaping through hoops, &c. There was also a trained horse "Phenix"; vaulting by the united talent, and a comic piece entitled the "Brother Millers." Mr. Stewart, above mentioned, may have been in the country for some years, since Munsell, in his

" Collections," tells of a Mr. and Mrs. Stewart from England, riders in the first circus show witnessed in Albany, and which was given in an open lot near old Fort Orange (now the steamboat landing); where the performers were enclosed within a rope barrier, and collections were made by the clown.

After another long interval, a very brilliant train appeared in the city, conducted by Messrs. Pepin and Breschard; the latter, John Breschard, was a native Frenchman, but Victor Pepin, though descended from a French neutral of Acadia, was born in Philadelphia.

They came, during the winter of 1807-08, at the invitation of the Spanish minister Don Louis de Onis; and had been well received to the eastward. Clapp, in his " Records of the Boston Stage," says, " The number and splendor and training of their stud, were a perpetual source of admiration and wonder," and as to their leader, Pepin, " whether on foot or on horseback, he showed the part of a king. No Pepin of France that ever rode into Paris with his doughty Austrasians, could have claimed greater homage than our martial equestrian as he brought up the rear of his glittering troop, he himself in the costume of a Gallic field-marshal." In French and English, *L'Oracle and Daily Advertiser* of May 28, 1808, announces that these " First Professors of the Art of Riding and Agility on Horseback, who have had the honor of performing before the principal courts of Europe, would open their Circus in New

York, weather permitting, on Monday, May 30th, for which seats could be procured from them in person at No. 40 Magazine Street," and the newspapers of the latter date styles their place the "New Circus, corner Broadway and Magazine Street"; but as the weather *did not permit*, the opening was postponed for a few days. June 7th the audience were requested not to whistle, as the horses were accustomed to it as a signal to stop, and several accidents had occurred in consequence. Two nights later Mr. Pepin appeared, for the first time, as clown, and the comic scene of the "Brother Millers" gave way to the old favorite "The English Taylor"; performances began three quarters before five in the afternoon, and box tickets were to be had of Mr. Delamater at the office of the circus in Anthony Street. From these announcements and other sources, we gather that the circus was at first an open-air one, on the easterly side of Broadway, at the corner of Magazine (now Pearl) Street, but that it was soon removed to a new wooden octagonal building on the street above, where it occupied five lots, on the northerly side of Catharine, or Anthony, street, just west of Broadway. On the southeast corner of Broadway and Anthony Street lived Anthony Steenbach, brewer, who had married the young widow of Henry Snyder, whose brewery, there located, had been purchased in 1792 from Anthony Barclay, whose mother was a daughter of Anthony Rutgers. One would think such an array of Anthonies might have

secured to the Street its name *in perpetuo,* but it is now known as Worth Street.

The circus re-opened in July, 1809, newly decorated in the most elegant and modern style; the proprietors also establishing, the same year, in Philadelphia, on the northeast corner of Ninth and Walnut Streets, their "Circus and Equestrian Theatre," a circular building of seventy-five feet diameter, with a ring of fifty-four feet diameter, and supplied with pit, boxes, and galleries. Fitted up afterward with a stage beyond the ring, it was called the "Olympic Theatre," and, with Pepin as manager, was continued for several years.

The circus in New York continued through the season of 1810, and an advertisement, in the *Columbian* of July, 1811, announces its opening with "Don Juan"; stating also that a stage had been erected. The "Taylor's Ride" was still a favorite, but Breschard also appeared as *Don Quixote,* with Pepin as *Sancho Panza.*

At this time Messrs. Cayetano, Codet, Menial, and Redon, had a circus in Boston on Hay Market Place, at the bottom of the Mall; the next year, according to the *New York Gazette and General Advertiser* of May 28, 1812, they opened for the summer season on Thursday, June 11th, a place called the "New York Circus," on the easterly side of Broadway, at the corner of White Street, some three blocks above Pepin's place, on the lot where the "Boston Panorama" had lately been exhibited.

At Mr. Redon's benefit was given the "Military Manœuvre," with feats on horseback, ground and lofty tumbling, and *Don Quixote* on horse and foot. One of the hand-bills of this establishment, for Thursday, June 25th, preserved in the collections of the New York Historical Society, is headed with a large rough woodcut of an elephant, bearing on its back a platform with four or five posture-makers. Various equestrian feats were to be given, and Mrs. Redon was to make her third appearance on horseback; the managers also announce that the elephant had been engaged for that evening, and that Messrs. Menial, Codet, Duffie, and Tatnal, were to appear on her back in Pyramids, Groups, etc., something "never before attempted on an elephant" [38]; the whole was to conclude with "The Uncombustible Horse surrounded with Fire Works." Prices: Box, $1; Green Box, 75 cents; Pit, 50 cents; children under eight, half-price in Box and Pit only. Performances commenced at 8 o'clock; no smoking was allowed; and season-tickets could be procured of Messrs. Cayetano or Redon at the circus, or at their residence, No. 405 Broadway, nearly opposite.

The same New York paper that had announced the

[38] The *N. Y. Journal* of April 19, 1796, notes the arrival of the first elephant seen in America, and before the year had passed it appeared on the stage in Philadelphia; but it was not till 1811 that the elephant was introduced in the spectacular drama "Bluebeard" at Covent Garden, London, and in 1828 one from Cross's menagerie appeared in the arena at Astley's.

opening of the circus on the corner of Broadway and White Street, states, in its issue of Thursday, May 21st, that on the following evening "The Olympic Theatre (late Circus)," meaning Pepin and Breschard's place on Anthony Street, would be thrown open to the public by Messrs. Dwyer and McKenzie with Sheridan's "Rivals"; Mr. Collins taking the part of *Sir Anthony*. The piece was changed, however, for Morton's comedy, "The Way to Get Married," followed by Breschard in feats of horsemanship, etc. Ireland's "Records of the N. Y. Stage" errs in making the White Street Circus the scene of Dwyer and McKenzie's theatrical effort in May, 1812, for the place was not yet open, as we have seen. From June 24 to July 4 the Anthony Street, or Olympic Theatre, was closed, when it re-opened with the "Taking of Yorktown"; September 18th we have the "Foundling of the Forest"; October 2d, Horsemanship, a Hornpipe, etc., and the appearance of Master W. Whale; and as time rolled on Master Whale became a popular dancing-master, and conducted some of our fashionable balls. In July, 1813, the two circus troops under Pepin and Breschard, and Messrs. Cayetano & Co., were united on the occasion of Breschard's benefit, at the White Street establishment, and here, until January, 1814, an association, under Mr. Thwaites, known as the "Theatrical Commonwealth," were performing. Dunlap says the Association then removed to Philadelphia, and a second attempt, according to Ireland, was made in April

following, by Thwaites and Holland in Anthony Street.

The *Columbian* announces that the New Theatre on Anthony Street would open for the season on the evening of August 29th, with a drop-curtain designed and painted by Mr. Christopher Catlin, representing the Reception of the Muses and their Followers in this country, and giving, in life-size, portraits of great dramatists, and groups of the principal characters from Shakespeare. "The Managers risk nothing in asserting that this is the most beautiful and correct painting of this kind in America." The first piece represented was the "School of Reform," after which the "Battle of Bunker Hill" was put on the stage. It was re-opened Wednesday, August 21, 1815, as the "Commonwealth Theatre," with light farces, pantomimes and musical pieces, songs, dances, and imitations of celebrated American actors. Early in the spring of 1818 Mr. Stanislaus was here giving legerdemain entertainments, with Mr. Mestayer as interpreter, and on July 3, altered, improved and embellished by Johnny Parker (afterwards ballet-master of the Chatham Theatre), it took the new name of the Pavilion Theatre. Miss McBride, nine years of age, spoke the Address written by Counsellor Phillips for John Howard Payne, the American Roscius, at his first appearance in Dublin. The performance was a mixed one; the ballet of the "Jolly Millers"; a song by Mr. Keen, "Loves she like me?" composed by Samuel Woodworth, Esq.; slack-

rope dancing by Mr. Blackmore; and the melodramatic spectacle of "Sidney and his Dogs, or the Treacherous Indian."

The place was again opened by Messrs. Price and Simpson, four nights after the burning-down of the Park Theatre, that is, on May 29, 1820, with the comedy of "Man and Wife," and the farce of "Too Late for Dinner"; Simpson, Barnes, Miss Johnson, etc., also appeared, and the place was well attended for the balance of the season. The "Park" was soon rebuilt and performances were there resumed on Saturday, September 1st, 1821, but it was on the boards of the Old Circus or Theatre in Anthony Street that Edmund Kean first presented himself to an American audience, on November 29, 1820, in the character of *Richard III*, and here also on May 16, of the following year, Henry Wallack appeared as *Rob Roy*. Two years later, in January, 1822, the whole affair, with its frontage of 125 feet, was sold by its owner, for the sum of $15,000, to the Episcopal Congregation of Christ Church.[39]

Meanwhile the circus at White Street had been given up, and Mr. James West, an English equestrian manager, who had exhibited in Boston and Philadelphia,[40] erected in New York another large wooden

[39] No. 81 Anthony Street; City Directory.

[40] James West, whose "superior stud of horses" was noted even before his arrival in America, was at the Royal Circus about 1805. In the winter of 1816, during a course of twenty-seven nights at Philadelphia, he took in $21,800; the largest receipts being on Mr. Campbell's benefit.

building on Broadway, on the easterly side, near the Stone Bridge, that is, just above Canal Street. Goodrich, in his "Picture of New York," says, "It is called the New Circus, there having been former attempts to establish a place of amusement of this description, but without effect. The present is under the guidance of Mr. West, who, if he does not meet with better success than his predecessors, will not have to blame himself for want of variety of entertainments." It opened August 21, 1817, with the same fine troop and beautiful horses, which had drawn crowded houses in England. Among the performers were Mr. Williams on tight-rope; Mr. Campbell, the Clown, who would leap over five horses, and throw somersaults through a balloon of fire, and Mr. Blackmore, who a youngster in 1803, at the Royal Circus, now balanced on the slack-wire, or rode around the ring, his head on the neck of a quart bottle, and at times appeared with the clown in a "Fricassee Dance." Mrs. Williams, also a slack-wire dancer, and Miss Saxton, a native of New York, were both riders, while Master George Yeamans, the "Flying Horseman," would, with other feats, leap through the body of a Mail Coach and light on the saddle of a horse in full speed. There was also a Pony thirty-five inches high, the "Egyptian Pyramid, or Men piled on Men"; and Mr. Parker in the "Hunted Taylor"; he and Campbell also appeared in "Mr. Button's Journey, to vote at his Friend Johnny Wilkes' Election." Just before the end of the season towards the close of

September, West introduced the "Roman Attitudes, never before performed in America"; this was after the style of the *poses plastiques*, a new equestrian feature of the same season at Astley's, and originating with young Andrew Ducrow.

Mrs. William West, who, I believe, was a Miss Cook, and late of the Opera House, London, gave private lessons at this time, in all the late new and fashionable dances, and both Messrs. J. and W. West had a school for Ladies and Gentlemen in the Polite Art of Riding.

In June of the following year, Mr. Pepin announces his return to the city, after an absence of many years, at the Circus on Broadway, between Hester (now Howard) and Broome Streets, "an airy, elegant and convenient" establishment, erected at considerable expense; the locality is afterwards given as "between Hester and Grand Streets." Here we have Sam Tatnall and Miss Wheland in an *Allemande* on two horses; Mr. Maybie on the slack rope and Madam Cossin, second only to the celebrated Sacqui, ascending on the tight rope from the stage to the gallery. There was quite a troop of vaulters; Mr. Campbell was the Clown, as he had been for West; a trained horse Mentor did the fireworks act, and the Spanish horse Romeo leapt through a hogshead placed on the back of another horse. In September Pepin and Mrs. Williams danced the *Allemande* on two horses; this was his second performance in five years. At Campbell's benefit was produced, for the first time in New

York, a piece designed and prepared by himself, being "an engagement between an American 74 and two frigates, the latter being blown up after several rounds"; and Mr. Buller on this occasion leaped his horse over a dining-table set for twenty-five persons. The pantomime of *Don Quixote* was also given during the season, which closed with Pepin's benefit on Monday, Oct. 5th, after which the Circus was fitted up and furnished with a stage, for a theatrical troop which was being engaged in Europe.

It was re-opened by Mr. Pepin about the middle of May, 1819, enlarged with an additional tier of boxes, and with windows cut in for ventilation. A grand entry of eight elegantly mounted equestrians was given; Masters Thomas, Coty and Miss Wheland performed on single horse; Mr. Begodis juggled with balls on two horses; Master McCarn of ten years, rode at full speed on his head; and Sam Tatnall, the flying horseman, who stood preëminent for his feats on single horse, leaped over garters, boards of lights, and through a balloon, at full speed. Mr. Maybie was "the wonderful Grotesquerian"; Campbell was the clown; Madam Cossin was still in the troop; and a trained horse, Othello, was exhibited by Mr. Pepin. The advertisements state that "no smoking of segars will be permitted, and persons are respectfully requested not to enter the ring." During the following season, among the many attractions was a "Mameluke Entry"; a ballet of ten dancers on stilts, in the costume of the Landes,

France; and the spectacle of *Malbrook*, with the battle, assault, and death of the General, as performed at the Anthony Street Circus, in 1808, under Pepin and Breschard; while on the last night, Aug. 11th, was given the "Battle of New Orleans." After this the place was advertised to let, as was also Pepin and Campbell's Amphitheatre, in the Washington Gardens, Boston, which seated 2000 people, had a handsome stage, with scenery by John Warrell, and was well lighted by patent lamps. The next year their Olympic Theatre and Circus in Philadelphia was engaged by Messrs. Warren and Wood after the destruction by fire of the Chestnut Street Theatre.

Between the years 1818 and '20 there was evidently a circus at the northeast corner of Broadway and Prince Street, as we learn from some remarks on Niblo's Garden in Morris's *New York Mirror* of July 3, 1830. In connection, he says that "within his remembrance it was a square of unoccupied ground, within a board fence, taken possession of, some ten or twelve years since, by a troop of vagabond equestrians and rope-dancers, who in time became a regular company, when a real permanent circus was established." These remarks appear to be the foundation of Watson's account, already alluded to, of the first New York circus in this location. Here were the Columbian or Pavilion Gardens, running through to Crosby Street, conducted by T. Patrick, where the opening of the doors at six o'clock, in September,

1821, was announced by the firing of signal cannons. The entertainments were fireworks, concerts, etc., and in one corner was a three-story house, fifty feet square, for the accommodation of the guests. The price of admission was fifty cents.

In the fall of 1820 Mr. James West was again in the city with his equestrian troop, among whom were Mr. Yeamans, the flying horseman; Carnes, the American hero; Rodgers, the galloping vaulter; Williams, the whimsical clown, with some tight-rope celebrities. Towards the close of October at his benefit, Mr. West appeared, the first time in seven years, giving feats of sleight-of-hand on horseback, and Mr. Yeamans and Mrs. West gave a performance on the double tight-rope, the lady singing several songs and accompanying herself on the pianoforte, "a feat never attempted by any other person." This was her first appearance in the city since the production of "Timour the Tartar," [41] at the Park Theatre with Mr. West's renowned horses.

In the summer of 1823 there was an Amphitheatre and Circus in the Richmond Hill Garden at the corner of Charlton and Varick Streets, and through the winter a grand caravan of living animals, among them the lion, "Old Napoleon," was to be seen at No. 13 Bowery, while in March of the following year we read of a "New Circus," probably a temporary affair, on Canal Street, between Broadway and Elm

[41] *Cf.* Mr. Crummles' useful pony in the same play—*vide* "Nicholas Nickleby."

Street, where, at his benefit, a Mr. La Conta threw a somersault through a rice tierce, the whole troop assisting in "Sports of the Ring," and a Master Spencer performing on horseback.

In August, 1825, the glories of the old Circus on Broadway were dimmed before the superior attractions of the Lafayette Circus, which was thrown open to the public early during the preceding month, on Laurens Street (or West Broadway), near Canal Street, and on which occasion an address written by the poet, Samuel Woodworth, was delivered by Mr. Dinnell. Watkins Burrough was the theatrical manager; Hunter, the equestrian manager, was succeeded by Mr. Stimpson; Tatnall appeared on two horses; Master La Forrest rode on his head without saddle or bridle and leaped over a canvas ten feet wide, and Mrs. Tatnall took the part of *Priscilla Tomboy* in "The Romp." There were eight choice steeds in the ring and a trick horse, "Napoleon," and among the performers, besides Tatnall and Hunter, appear the names of James W. Banker, Alex. Downie, Herbert, Hughes, Madden, Stimpson, Master Lawson, and the Clown, Mr. Williams. Mr. Bogardus, from Mexico, also gave a two-horse act, leaped over garters and a pyramid of men, and threw a somersault over ten horses. William Harrington did the Clown Act of Horsemanship, and had a pupil, Master Bacon, nine years old, and about the middle of August George Yeamans appeared as the running and vaulting Clown. Among the laughable scenes produced were

the "Officer and His Recruits," and occasionally the "Hunted Tailor" and "The Brother Millers, or the Return of Grandpa and Grandma from the Mill"; there was a Dwarf dance by Mr. Richards, and a balancing upon the chin of a boy seated on a pole by the young Greek, Rhigas. At the performance of Tuesday, July 12, General Lafayette was present.

Just after the completion of the Erie Canal, connecting Lake Erie with the Bay of New York, and at the close of the celebration, on November 4, an appropriate transparency was exhibited in front of the Lafayette Circus and Theatre, and a similar display was made on the following Washington's Birthday (1826), about which time also the elephant Tippoo Sultan appeared in the spectacular piece of "El Hyder," the scenery for which was painted by Reinagle and Huggins. Equestrian performances at the Lafayette terminated with this season, during which another novelty, introduced by Eugene Robertson, the aëronaut, was Maezel's mechanical trumpeter.

In May, 1826, the Broadway Circus re-opened with several of the troop that had appeared during the preceding summer, under the management of Joseph Cowell, with George Blyth, Riding Master; John Hallam, Stage Director, and McDonald and Stoker, Clowns. The entry was made by a Cavalcade of twenty Polish Lancers, with horsemanship by Masters Collet, Menier and Sweet, dancing by Miss Aspinall, juggling by M. and Mme. Robert, vaulting and tight-

rope by Mr. Wilkinson, from Astley's, &c. On Monday, June 12, Mr. Buckley, a well-known clown, also from Astley's, gave his first performance in America, and on July 19 Mr. Hunter appeared for the first time as the "Drunken Hussar," without saddle or bridle. In the fall following, farces were here being enacted under the direction of Messrs. Barnes and Hilson.

Meanwhile a spacious and commodious building had been erected, quite out of the city, on Grand Street, just opposite to Harmon Street, or, as it was afterwards called, East Broadway. This, the "Mount Pitt Circus," opened in November, 1826, with the same company that had first exhibited at the Lafayette, and, like some of its predecessors, boasted of "the finest stud of horses in the United States." Announcements for the opening nights begin with the quotation, "To witch the world with noble Horsemanship," and conclude: "A strong Police is engaged, and strict order and decorum will be enforced"; we can almost hear the sharp rap, rap, rap of their rattans when too exuberant a demonstration from the peanut-gallery seemed likely to disturb the performance. In the entrée act were 24 horses; there were also feats of horsemanship by Mr. Stickney and Masters Whittaker and La Forrest, and Mr. Madden, the Clown, gave imitations of the celebrated Greek, Rhigas, while the Arab mare "Blanch" dances to the tune of "Paddy Carey," and Mr. Tatnall appeared as *Billy Button* in the "Hunted Tailor."

Henry Franconi and his horse Bayard, New York Hippodrome, 1833.

One notable feature at the "Mount Pitt Circus" on Saturday, November 11, was a song commemorative of the Battle of Plattsburg, in September, 1814, commencing:

"Back side Albany, stan' Lake Champlain,"

sung by Mr. Tatnall, in the character of a negro. This darkey-jingle, arranged to the tune of "Boyne Water," had been sung as early as 1815 by Andrew Jackson Allen, as a *Black Sailor*, at the Green Street Theatre, Albany, and the words are given in full in the supplement of *Niles' Weekly Register*, Vol. IX.

Mungo, a character in Bickerstaff's comic opera of "The Padlock," brought out at Drury Lane in 1768 was undoubtedly the first real representation of African life produced upon the English stage. The music for the piece was written and the part itself assumed by the same Charles Dibdin who was afterwards associated with Hughes in the Royal Circus. The following year (1769) *Mungo* was introduced to the American public, at the John Street Theatre, New York, with a by-far-more faithful rendering of the negro character, by Lewis Hallam, the younger. But the negro seldom rose to the dignity of the stage,[42] though from the very first he was a prominent attraction of the arena.

[42] In May, 1828, Mr. John Povey took the part of *Sib* "the nigger," in Cooper's "Red Rover" at the Park Theatre, and made, says the *Mirror*, "a gigantic stride

John Nicoll, mariner, in his "Life and Adventures," [43] gives us a pleasing picture of the slaves' amusements at Grenada, W. I., in 1783, where on Saturday and Sunday evenings he had listened to their songs and witnessed their fantastic dancing, to the sound of the benji and the calabash-rattle. One of their extempore productions he gives as follows:

"My Massa a bad man,
My Missis cry—Honey,
Is this the d—n nigger,
You buy wi' my money;
Ting a ring (*bis*), tarro.

"Missis cry—Nigger man
Do no work, but eattee:
She boil three eggs in pan,
And gi' the broth to me.
Ting a ring (*bis*), tarro."

Another song, equally as simple, begins:

"I lost my shoe in an old canoe,
Johnnie! come Winum so."

in his profession." Five years prior to this event, the embryo tragedian, Edwin Forrest, was taking the part of the negro *Cuffee,* at Louisville, Ky., in Sol Smith's farce "The Tailor in Distress"; but the company failing, he joined Pepin and Breschard's Circus, and for a while took kindly to jumping and tumbling in the ring. Soon drifting back, however, to the legitimate drama, he reached New York, *via* Albany, in the spring of 1826, and after playing "Othello" at the Park, on May 26, was offered an engagement at the Bowery by Manager Gilfert.

[43] "Blackwood," London, 1823.

In 1788 a New Comic Dance, called the "Ethiopian Festival," was introduced at Astley's, wherein its composer, Mons. Vermigli, Elève de l'Opéra, Mr. Marqui, and Mr. J. Taylor, danced a Pas de Trois, "representing the whimsical actions and attitudes made use of by the Negroes." A little later on, the musical piece of the "Black and White Milliners" was announced. At the Royal Circus in 1793, "the famous African (who is not to be equalled)" went through "the tilts and tournaments, and military exercises, as performed on horseback, in the field and manège"; and we have also what sounds quite African in its title, the "Fricassee Dance" by Messrs. Crossman and Porter, which afterwards, as we have seen, found its way to America. In some of J. C. Cross's pieces produced at the Royal Circus, negro characters were frequently introduced, especially in the pantomime of "Blackbeard," in which we have *Caesar,* the Pirate's faithful slave, by Mr. d'Egville; a *Negro Boy* with songs, by Master Blackmore, and a group of slaves with dances: this piece, in 1798, ran for 100 nights after the Easter holidays. Similar characters appeared in the naval spectacle of "Sir Francis Drake," produced in August, 1800, in which we have *Pedro,* a Symeron Chief, or free negro, by Mr. Male, and his son *Francis,* by Miss Fisher; while the summer of 1806 brought out a piece, much like our more modern "Beauty and the Beast," called after "Monk" M. G. Lewis's poetic tale, "The Cloud King, or Magic Rose," with song and

dance, by Mr. Sladen, in the humorous character of *Cymballo,* a slave. As to the advent of Negro Minstrelsy in America, François Blanchard,[44] in *Columbian Centinel,* Boston, July 22, 1795, states that "having been informed that the music performed by men of colour had been disagreeable to some Ladies," he had changed it; this is the first Negro Minstrel Band we read of. The next year, on his benefit night, January 11, 1796, at the Boston Theatre, Mr. Joseph Tyler[45] sang "the admired song of the Poor Negro Boy." It was probably the same production which appeared in the "Columbian Songster," published at New York in 1797.

[44] Blanchard, after traveling through Europe, visited Charleston, New York and Philadelphia, where he made his 45th balloon ascension. He finally arrived at Boston about the first of April, 1795, where, at the new Room, in Green's Lane, he exhibited, with other things, a self-moving carriage, and two mechanical Automata, which he had perfected in Philadelphia, and named *Citizen Sans-Culotte* and *M. L'Aristocrat.* He had with him also the Balloon in which, accompanied by Dr. John Jeffries of Boston, he had, ten years before, crossed the Channel from Dover to Calais. Towards the close of June he alludes to its being necessary for him to make preparations for his intended second ascension in America, for which he solicits subscriptions. Failing to raise sufficient funds, he sent up a smaller balloon, on November 6, from which two animals descended safely by means of the parachute, of which he was the inventor.

[45] Mr. Tyler died in January, 1825, æt 72.

A New Negro Song: Tune "Bob and Joane."

"Me be one poor slave, brought into Barbado
Ven one pickaniny, such de cruel trado,
How me fetch and carry, now go here and dere,
Dey no let me rest, dey for black man no care, Sair.
Fol de rol, de rol;"

and so on through half-a-dozen verses, a somewhat similar song, to the same tune, appearing in the "New York Songster" of 1836.

An announcement of the Federal Street Theatre, Boston, for Saturday, March 28, 1800, reads, "End of Act 2d, the Song of the Negro Boy, by Mrs. Graupner"; being an interlude to the five-act tragedy, which had been upon the stage as early as 1696, entitled "Oroonoko," wherein the hero, an African prince, carried away to a life of slavery in the West Indies, is a stilted character, devoid of any negro traits. The songstress, as Mrs. Hellyer, had made her first appearance in America, at the Boston Theatre, December 15, 1794, in the comic opera of "Rosina," and had early in April, 1796, while a member of Mr. Sollée's Charleston (S. C.) Company, married Gottlieb Graupner, leader of the orchestra. On the occasion of the song alluded to, she also took part in the concluding pantomime of "Gil Blas." The Theatre was, at the time, draped in mourning, and the performances were followed by a Grand Processional Dirge and a Monody on the Death of General

Washington, delivered by Mrs. Giles L. Barrett. Mr. Graupner subsequently established a Musical Conservatory on Rowe's Lane, Boston, and some years later, in February, 1813, we hear of him and Dr. G. K. Jackson, assisted by many vocal and instrumental amateurs and professors, conducting a Concert in the Stone Chapel.

With the exception of a more ephemeral production of 1824, entitled "Massa George Washington & Massa Lafayette," sung in Continental uniform and with blackened face, by James Robertson, a young Scotchman of the Broadway Circus, Mrs. Graupner's song appears to have been the only negro melody which could as yet claim popularity.

With the revival of the "Champlain" song in 1826 a fresh impetus was given to this kind of minstrelsy, and the next year George W. Dixon,[46] a young buffo, was singing "Coal Black Rose," at Albany, and in the fall of 1829, was at the Chatham Street Theatre, New York. His other popular songs were the "Long-tailed Blue," and "Old Zip Coon," of which he claimed to have been the author, though it is asserted that they were originally produced by others in the circus ring. Perhaps the latter statement arises from the fact that Dixon was singing them in character, accompanying himself with a banjo, in 1830, at the Albany Amphitheatre. One year before this, Th. D. Rice, of the same age as Dixon,[47]

[46] Born in 1808.

[47] During the summer of 1830 Mr. Dixon, "the celebrated

introduced himself to the public with his inimitable song and dance of "Jim Crow"; and appeared in the fall of 1832 at the Bowery Theatre.[48] His other melodies were "Clare de Kitchen," "Lucy Long," &c. The following summer he brought out a musical piece entitled the "Virginia Cupids."

That these songs, rough as they have been handed down to us, were a great improvement upon the improvised efforts of the American negro, we gather from an article which appeared in 1838, in the *Natchez Courier*. The writer described the negro firemen on a Mississippi steamboat approaching St. Louis, where, after taking on a load of good dry wood, a song was struck up with great life and

American buffo singer" heads the playbills of the Park Theatre, although at the time the elder Placide was considered the leading singer of this kind. The critic of the *New York Mirror* observes of Mr. Dixon, "in his imitations of African character he is far inferior to Tom Blakeley. Such exhibitions, by the way, ought to be confined to the Circus."

[48] When on the night of Nov. 25, 1832, Mr. Rice came forward to sing his celebrated song before an overcrowded house, many of the audience were upon the stage and had mixed themselves up hilariously in the drama of Richard III,. forming a ring around Booth and his opponent in the battle scene. They not only made Rice "repeat some twenty times, but hemmed him in so that he actually had no room to perform the little dancing or turning about appertaining to the song," and in the after-piece, where a supper-table was spread, the hungry swooped down like harpies and devoured the edibles.

Courier and Enquirer.

energy by an African Orpheus and leader, "who kept rolling his eyes around on all sides, during the progress of a chorus, for a subject for the next two lines. . . . They were all ranged along the forecastle fronting the town, as we sailed past, the leader a little in advance of the rest, and all in their dirty shirts, swinging their arms to and fro, or lifting them to their heads as they joined in chorus, sometimes making tubes of their open palms, to give their voices, which, in all conscience, were loud enough, more volume." Then follows the song:

"Fare you well foreber—
I'm gwine away to leave you.

Chorus—"Oh-; O-O-O;—
Oh-O; I'm gwine way to leave you
O-O-Oh!

"What dat floaten dar?
I tink he 'tick o' wood,
Oh-O, etc.

"What dat in the cane brake?
I tink him alligator,
Oh-O, etc.

"Orleans mighty city,
St. Louis beat him hollow,
Oh-O, etc.

"What's dat coming yonder?
I b'liev 't is Miss Dinah,
Oh-O, etc.

"She's my gal for sartin,
See de nigger grinnin',
Oh-O," etc.

P. T. Barnum

To one of these tunes, then popular in the South and West called "Sitting on a Rail," Rice wrote some verses and dedicated them to Queen Victoria.

Finally, in the fall of 1843, the so-called band of "Virginia Minstrels," consisting of Messrs. Dan Emmet, Frank Brower, Billy Whitlock, and Dick Pelham, first appeared at the Chatham Street Theatre, New York, where Whitlock had already made his début, the previous year, with young Diamond, the clog-dancer, in some Ethiopian extravaganzas. Dan Emmet was the author of "Old Dan Tucker," which he produced in '44 at Howe's Amphitheatre of the Republic in New York; he also wrote "De Fine Ole Colored Gemman." And now, after half a century of unbounded popularity, with its old-time plantation character lost, negro minstrelsy is almost a thing of the past.[49]

I have already mentioned the Broadway and Mount Pitt circuses; early in 1830 a third establishment of

[49] A wandering Hindoo minstrel came along one day and requested permission to sit upon the veranda during our dinner and play for us. He tuned the wires of his mandolin, and to my astonishment began singing "Old Dan Tucker," and followed it with "Oh, Susanna," "Buffalo Gals," and other choice Ethiopian melodies. I had heard Spanish boatmen on the Isthmus of Panama singing "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," and Arab boys in the streets of Alexandria humming "Lucy Long," but I was hardly prepared to hear the same airs from the lips of a Hindoo, in Delhi, the capital of the Great Mogul.

BAYARD TAYLOR,
India, China and Japan (1853).

the kind opened on the west side of Chatham Street, between Duane and Pearl Streets, and was known as Blanchard's Amphitheatre and Chatham Garden. Messrs. Calahan, Cadwallader, Downie, Madden, and Master Bacon, were the riders; the former throwing a forward somersault, the latter riding on his head, and Mr. Alex. Downie giving the clown's act on horseback, with the sailor's description of a fox-chase. Signor Cabano ascended on the tight-rope from the stage to the gallery, some three hundred feet, and the ballet of "Little Red Riding Hood," with the farce of the "Spoiled Child," was performed. In March we have Spencer as Clown, and "Coal-Black Rose" on horseback.

Meanwhile on "the extensive and beautiful grounds at the corner of Broadway and Prince Street," where a few years earlier, had been a circus, William Niblo erected in fifteen days, and opened on the Fourth of July, 1828, a little summer theatre, the "Sans Souci," under the direction of Mrs. Charles Gilfert of "The Bowery"; with George H. Barrett as acting-manager, and William Taylor, leader of the orchestra. Several popular and talented performers were engaged, among them George Holland, the comedian, the Parisian dancer Mlle. Rosalie, and Madame Labasse (formerly Hutin), and the Seiltanzer, Herr (André) Cline, who occasionally ascended on the elastic cord, with a wheel-barrow. The comedy for the opening night was "The £100 Note," and the box admissions were fifty cents each. Access to the

garden alone was one shilling, for which a share could be had in the "gratifications of all kinds," also in enjoying the fireworks, the songs, the music, and the sounds of the Kent Bugle, as played by the celebrated Mr. Willis of West Point. The grounds were decorated with colored lights, there were boxes for those who were being refreshed, and piazzas and parlors for the ladies. Several balloons were sent up through the day and evening, and at 4 P. M., Madam Johnson made an ascent "the full band playing the much admired tune of *Hail Columbia.*" During the summer of 1830 Segura, considered the best player in America, was conducting the orchestra at Niblo's Garden, where, says Morris, "one might luxuriate upon its bowers and temples, and shady walks and glittering lights, and its rich music, and its unsurpassable eatables and drinkables, and yet more upon the graceful forms and sparkling eyes and delicious lips that meet the enraptured gaze, and ruin the defenceless hearts of our unhappy bachelors within its charmed precincts."

Among the novelties this year, at the Chatham Garden Circus, were a Whimsical Race by eight Clowns, led by Mr. Meyers, and "Billy Button's Journey to Harlem," with a panoramic view of the route from New York. At Maelzel's exhibition of Automata, on Broadway, the best of all was the troop of twenty-two equestrians, "who executed all the various feats of horsemanship and dexterity usual at the tournaments of the European courts, together

with many of the most difficult evolutions of the circus, with beautiful accuracy and grace." An interesting item which meets the eye in collecting material for equestrian notes, if I may be allowed once more briefly to shunt my theme to a side track, is the fact that at this time the American Museum, founded in 1810 by John Scudder, was located on Broadway, opposite St. Paul's Church, and here, over the street, on February 22, 1832, was displayed "The Original Flag" hoisted on the Battery by the American forces, at the time of their entry into the city in 1783. The military were requested to present arms when passing under it. This valuable relic had been presented to the Museum by the Corporation of the City, to be retained as a memorial so long as the institution existed, and passed, later on, into the possession of Mr. P. T. Barnum. On the destruction of the building in July, 1865, "Old Glory" attained its apotheosis in a sheet of fire. It was at this same celebration of Washington's birthday, in 1832, that the General's marquée, belonging to Mr. Custis, was pitched in the Park, in front of the City Hall, with a guard of honor around it.

After another interval of six years, that is, in 1836, Thomas Cook, an English manager, came to New York, with a troop of 130 performers, including his own round dozen of talented children, and over thirty other members of the same family. One of these, by the by, Mr. Thomas E. Cook, never returned to the old country, and at Paterson, N. J., surrounded by his

grandchildren and great-grandchildren, celebrated in the spring of 1893, his ninety-first birthday. Cook's Circus was established at Vauxhall Garden, on the Bowery, and among the performances which delighted the public was James Cook's "Courier of St. Petersburg," performed with several horses, and his representations of *Sir John Falstaff, Shylock,* and *Richard III* on horseback; he also appeared, with William Cook, in the "Marble Statues," giving classical portraitures of ancient masters; Mr. Woolford was the *Brigand Chief* on horseback; Mrs. Cole (*née* Cook), the *Amazon of the Sun;* Mr. Cole was the *Positionist* and *Protean Artist;* and Mr. Wells, the *Attitudinarian;* the latter taking the part of *Jocko* in the ballet of "Jack Robinson and his Monkey." The juvenile part of the company gave the Doncaster races in miniature, "Cinderella," "Puss in Boots," "Old Dame Trot," and similar pieces. Other novelties at times were the Female Brigade, a brilliant entrée of twelve ladies; the "Masked Ball on Horseback"; the "Bedouins of the Desert," with Master George Cook, as *Nimrod, Jr.,* on two spirited steeds; and the splendid living picture of Old England, entitled "Kenilworth Castle"; not to forget the revival of the time-honored humorous piece "Billy Button's Journey to Brentford."

During the summer of 1836 the treasurer of Aaron Turner's traveling circus in a tour through the seacoast States was P. T. Barnum, and in 1841 the phenomenal showman, whose successful life continued

through another half century, was writing newspaper notices for the New York Amphitheatre. This permanent establishment had been erected, some three years before, at No. 37 Bowery, just above Bayard Street, and was being conducted much after the style and manner of Cook's Circus, which had returned to England. But this brings my remarks down to a period within the memory of many of my readers, who must surely recall the "Bowery Circus," with its mixed odors of tan-bark, gas, and peanuts.

I have mentioned Aaron Turner's name in connection with traveling circuses, a subject which undoubtedly demands more than a few passing words. Turner was an Englishman who came out to America in 1817 with his two sons, Tim and Napoleon, both good riders and vaulters. These rolling-shows, however, were on the road much earlier in the century, and by 1820 it has been estimated that there were over thirty of them moving throughout the New England and Atlantic States. At first they were but small affairs consisting of a couple of wagons, four horses and some half dozen performers, mostly tumblers and vaulters, with perhaps a trick man and that indispensable—a clown. There was no band, save a fiddle or two; no lady in gauze and spangles, no ring-master and no tent; but they carried some six-foot poles, around which, planted in a circle, was stretched, at each performance, a canvas to keep them from the gaze of outsiders, while a few boards served to build an inside platform, raised just above the

ground, for acrobatic performances, jig-dancing and the like; the rest of their loads was baggage, cooking utensils and provisions. The place of exhibition was open to the sun and rain, though in time a covering suspended from a center-pole was introduced. There were no seats, except such as could be borrowed for the ladies, but sometimes the wagons were drawn in, so that the back crowd could mount upon them, and two hundred and fifty spectators, at an entry price of twenty-five cents, was a big house. Usually a man went ahead who placarded all conspicuous places, procured the five-dollar license and hired the ground; then presently a bugler on horseback announced the approach of the show, and on the village-green the clown would soon be proclaiming the time of performance. All this gradually improved, and about 1828 we read of Buckley and Wicks' Circus, with 40 horses, 8 wagons, 35 people, and a tent of 75 feet diameter, accommodating about 800 spectators. Before 1847 none of the traveling circuses ventured farther west than Buffalo, when Louis Jones led the way to Chicago. Purdy and Welch appear to have been the first to travel with a band of music and have a show parade, and of this company was Eaton Stone, formerly with Buckley and Wicks. He was the first American bareback trick-rider, and appeared as such when with the Howes, in 1833, at the Richmond Hill Circus in New York. His career has been a long and prosperous one. In 1855 he returned to America after an extensive European visit, and remained active

in his profession until about 1868, when he retired to his farm at Franklin, near Nutley, N. J. Here this veteran of the American ring established a Circus Training School, over which, though in his 80th year, he still (1898) presides.

Spaulding and Rogers claimed to be the first company who, in the spring of 1856, placed upon the railroads their own cars, which were switched off at the different places of performance; they had with them several clowns, and all the winners at the Great Circus Tournament in Washington, where the principal performers in the country had met in a grand "Trial of Skill." In the old time circus, before the era of the double, triple and quadruple rings, the Clowns were as necessary an adjunct for public amusement as were the riders on horseback. Many of us can still recall their merry greeting, "Here we are again!" as they headed the troop and came tumbling into the ring for a competitive trial of skill in jumping, vaulting and turning flip-flaps. Among the well-known names of the past are Joe Pentland, Dan Rice, John Gossin, Johnny Patterson or "Irish," Dan Gardner, Jim Cook, who spouted Shakespeare in a dress-suit; John Lalow, Dan Costello, Charley Seeley, and Billy Burke.

Gossin was at the Bowery Amphitheatre in 1851 under J. Nixon's management, at the same time as Mlle. Louise Tournaire and Miss Mary Ann Wells. Gossin and others could turn fifty consecutive somersaults, but Levi J. North could throw them sixty and

seventy times, and was the first to do so, from feet to feet, on horseback. Pentland appeared in New York with Cook's Circus, and was afterwards at the Bowery Amphitheatre. He was famous for his impromptu topical songs, and we well remember his act of the Drunken Sailor on horseback, who disrobes, showing first the clown's dress and afterwards the circus-rider in tights and spangles.

Gardner, who before assuming the cap and bells was a slack-wire performer, had afterwards a ring of his own in Philadelphia. "Dan Rice" (as he is known in the professional world), the "King of Clowns," was first engaged in 1840, at four dollars per week, by a traveling puppet-show near Reading, Pa. Here he used to exhibit a trained pig, was afterwards a negro-singer and then a clown, in which latter capacity (in 1844), at Galena, Ill., he is said to have received $1000 per week, and to have been subsequently paid by Forepaugh a salary of $27,000 yearly. In 1850 he was acting at the Astor Place Circus, corner of Third Avenue and Eighth Street, with the English Clown Wallet, known as the "Queen's Jester." In 1858 his Circus was at Niblo's Theatre, New York, and two years later he owned the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. This was the full tide of his professional celebrity. In April, 1883, we find him delivering a temperance lecture at the "Indian Wigwam" on Broadway, and soon after fulfilling an engagement in Nathan's Circus at Bath, N. Y. Still he lingers with us, one of the very few

whose odd quips and cranks and merry antics have stirred to mirth a past generation.

My attempt to say something about early circuses draws to a close; if I told you why such a subject had occupied my attention I might scarce be believed; but I do think it was suggested while loitering through the Egyptian Collection of our New York Historical Society. Not that I could for a moment suppose the worthy founder of that collection ever rode any more tricksy steed than a nightmare; but who unearthed and sent old Memnon's head to England and opened up the hidden secrets of the great Pyramid?—even Signor Giovanni Battista Belzoni, he who, as the "Patagonian Sampson," threw balls and exhibited feats of strength in Astley's rings.

I must stop. The lights grow dim; the tents are being struck; the vans are ready to roll onward; "but the Ring so truly cut upon the Green by the hoofs of the horses will remain throughout the year, . . . to the boys as hallowed ground, as though the summer fairies had danced the circle into being."

FINIS