

**THE YOUNG ACROBAT
OF THE GREAT NORTH
AMERICAN CIRCUS**

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The young acrobat of the Great North American Circus by Horatio Alger

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HORATIO ALGER

**THE YOUNG ACROBAT
OF THE GREAT NORTH
AMERICAN CIRCUS**

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OF THE

Great North American Circus

BY

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

AUTHOR OF "THE ERIE TRAIN BOY," "RAGGED DICK,"
"TATTERED TOM," ETC.



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THE YOUNG ACROBAT

CHAPTER I.

KIT WATSON.

THERE was great excitement in Smyrna, especially among the boys. Barlow's Great American Circus in its triumphal progress from State to State was close at hand, and immense yellow posters announcing its arrival were liberally displayed on fences and barns, while smaller bills were put up in the post office, the hotel, and the principal stores, and distributed from house to house.

It was the largest circus that had ever visited Smyrna. At least a dozen elephants marched with ponderous steps in its preliminary procession, while clowns, acrobats, giants, dwarfs, fat women, cannibals, and hairy savages from Thibet and Madagascar, were among the strange wonders which were to be seen at each performance for the small sum of fifty cents, children half price.

For weeks the young people had been looking forward to the advent of this marvelous aggregation of curiosities, and the country papers from farther east had given glowing accounts of the great show, which was emphatically pronounced greater and more gor-

geous than in any previous year. But it may be as well to reproduce, in part, the description given in the posters:

BARLOW'S GREAT NORTH AMERICAN CIRCUS.
Now in its triumphal march across the continent, will
give two grand performances,

AT SMYRNA

On the afternoon and evening of May 18th.

Never in all its history has this

Unparalleled show embraced a greater variety of attractions, or included a larger number of world famous Acrobats, Clowns, Bare back Riders, Rope walkers, Trapeze Artists, and Star Performers,

In addition to a colossal menagerie, comprising Elephants, Tigers, Lions, Leopards, and other wild animals in great variety.

All this and far more, including a hundred

DARING ACTS,

Can be seen for the trifling sum of Ffty cents;
Children half price.

COME ONE! COME ALL!

Two boys paused to read this notice, pasted with illustrative pictures of elephants and circus performers on the high board fence near Stoddard's grocery store. They were Dan Clark and Christopher Watson, called Kit for short.

"Shall you go to the circus, Dan?" asked Kit.

"I would like to, but you know, Kit, I have no money to spare."

"Don't let that interfere," said Kit, kindly. "Here is half a dollar. That will take you in."

"You're a tip-top fellow, Kit. But I don't think I ought to take it. I don't know when I shall be able to return it."

"Who asked you to return it? I meant it as a gift."

"You're a true friend, Kit," said Dan, earnestly.

"I don't know as I ought to take it, but I will anyhow. You know I only get my board and a dollar a week from Farmer Clifford, and that I give to my mother."

"I wish you had a better place, Dan."

"So do I; but perhaps it is as well as I can do at my age. All boys are not born to good luck as you are."

"Am I born to good luck? I don't know."

"Isn't your uncle Stephen the richest man in Smyrna?"

"I suppose he is; but that doesn't make me rich."

"Isn't he your guardian?"

"Yes; but it doesn't follow because there is a guardian there is a fortune."

"I hope there is."

"I am going to tell you something in confidence, Dan. Uncle Stephen has lately been dropping a good many hints about the necessity of being economical, and that I may have my own way to make in the world. What do you think it means?"

"Have you been extravagant?"

"Not that I am aware of. I have been at an expensive boarding school with my cousin Ralph, and I have dressed well, and had a fair amount of spending money."

"Have you spent any more than Ralph?"

"No; not so much, for I will tell you in confidence that he has been playing pool and cards for money, of course without the knowledge of the principal. I know also that this last term, besides spending his pocket money, he ran up bills, which his father had to pay, to the amount of fifty dollars or more."

"How did your uncle like it?"

"I don't know. Ralph and his father had a pri-

vate interview, but he got the money. I believe his mother took his part."

"Why don't you ask your uncle just how you stand?"

"I have thought of it. If I am to inherit a fortune I should like to know it. If I have my own way to make I want to know that also, so that I can begin to prepare for it."

"Would you feel bad if you found out that you were a poor boy—like me, for instance?"

"I suppose I should just at first, but I should try to make the best of it in the end."

"Well, I hope you won't have occasion to buckle down to hard work. When do you go back to school?"

"The next term begins next Monday."

"And it is now Wednesday. You will be able to see the circus at any rate. It is to arrive to-night."

"Suppose we go round to the lot to-morrow morning. We can see them putting up the tents."

"All right! I'll meet you at nine o'clock."

They were about to separate when another boy, of about the same age and size, came up.

"It's time for dinner, Kit," he said; "mother'll be angry if you are late."

"Very well! I'll go home with you. Good morning, Dan."

"Good morning, Kit. Good morning, Ralph."

Ralph mumbled out "Morning," but did not deign to look at Dan.

"I wonder you associate with that boy, Kit," he said.

"Why?" inquired Kit, rather defiantly.

"Because he's only a farm laborer."

"Does that hurt him?"

"I don't care to associate with such a low class."

"Daniel Webster worked on a farm when he was a boy."

"Dan Clark isn't a Webster."

"We don't know what he will turn out to be."

"I don't consider him fit for me to associate with," said Ralph. "It may be different in your case."

"Why should it be different in my case?" asked Kit, suspiciously.

"Oh, no offense at all, but your circumstances and social position are likely to be different from mine."

"Are they? That's just what I should like to find out."

"My father says so, and as you are under his guardianship he ought to know."

"Yes, he ought to know, but he has never told me."

"He has told me, but I am not at liberty to say anything," said Ralph, looking mysterious.

"I think I ought to be the first to be told," said Kit, not unreasonably.

"You will be told soon. There is one thing I can tell you, however. You are not to go back to boarding school on Monday."

Kit paused in the street, and gazed at his companion in surprise.

"Are you going back?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm going to keep on till I am ready for college."

"And what is to be done with me?"

Ralph shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not at liberty to tell you," he answered.

"I shall ask my uncle this very day."

"Just as you please."