The Free Press Short Story

At the Wreck of the Circus Train

BY SAMUEL MERWIN

going to give you the biggest he knows. | - that we were on-was clear. that, if I should give you the facts, you yards down the grade, for fear of fire, to find a way to chain the elephant so wouldn't believe a word of-but if queer I suppose: things didn't sometimes happen on railroads there wouldn't be any use for might still be a hostler's boy in the Chicago round house instead of an-but no matter what I am now. I started out to tell you about "Dad" Burns and through track.

another car with tools and spare ropes sounded like lions and tigers. for an emergency, and a caboose for

division when a wrecking call came into rifle. the round house, and close after it was Bill McGee, coming in on the run, self up the steps and jumped for the answered, "Up ahead." throttle. His fireman "flipped" on at drop my work and run out to see the

stood ready. . . . the train waiting to couple up the engine, feet braced apart. He was swinging from and hollering back to the boys to move side to side, and just then he lifted his fast. Andy Maxwell, the hostler and my boss, was walking along just ahead

"Here, Andy," he called. "Give me a

at a rate that made the speed limit set | wrestling for it. - by the city ordinance look like thirty!

he was the nerviest man on the division, up on the tender to see the finish.

know just what had happened. The for the elephant was walking right up and put them outside the culvert, so engine had gone down the eight-foot on him, when all at once Dad went tum- he'll kind of get used to coming up, embankment head first, so that the tender bling down the bank and dove into a low then we'll rig our noose and catch him." two cars had gone after and walked right out on top of the tender, one over the wreck so that trains could get a time. He never said a word; he just

OW, as a matter of fact, there are the other, and each had an end sticking moderately quiet stretches in a out in the air. The third car was halfadventure and excitement by any means | telescoped by the fourth. It had all gone This story may sound queer-though rest of the train seemed to be all right: honestly I've been through some things they had run it back a few hundred man had said, that the thing to do was

the engine that you couldn't see much not to be a very hard thing to do, for wrecking trains, and, for that matter, I of the boiler, and some pieces had been we had the derrick and no end of ropes thrown clear over the fence into the and chains. I kept still for a while, -we could see them among the wreckage old hands could help thinking of it too the elephant, and I'd better keep on the gether in a field, quite a long way off. and talking louder and louder and all There were ponies and hump-backed the while getting mad at each other, not I guess everybody knows what a wreck- oxen and 'zebras and buffaloes' there, for any reason, but because they were ing train is a flat car with a steam and a giraffe. They were all squealing excited. Finally I hollered out (because and grunting and bellowing, and I could tion and lift tons of wreckage off a track. hear others, back in the train. that

I stood there with a couple of the the crew to live in. There is always an boys, leaning against the hand-rail of there elephant." engine under steam ready to pull her the caboose platform, waiting for orders, when two men-you could tell that they I said it again, some louder: "I tell you, up to the floor of the car. Even if he One day I was cleaning the bright were circus men came out of the I'll chain up that there elephant." work on the big Schenectady mogul that caboose. They must have got on at the pulls the St. Paul Limited over the first back. One of them, the tall one, had a

"Where's your boss?" he said to me. buttoning his overalls. He pulled him- didn't speak up; but one of the boys

They didn't say anything more, but the doorway; and almost before I could started through the tool car. I was curious, and I went along. The three fun she was on the turntable. We were of us, the circus men and I, climbed over still using the old-style two-man table, the ropes and tools and across the coupwith long handles on each side. I ran lings to the derrick engine room, and for one handle, and we swung her round then out on the flat behind the derrick. in lively shape, locking the table so Dad Burns was there, and half a dozen that McGee could run her out on the of the boys. Dad was standing on a coll siding where the wrecking train-always of chain with his arm around a hollering in his choicest language at a The crew were hustling out in a strag- lot of the circus men who wouldn't come gling line, some without hats, and some near us but stood off in the field and with their coats slung over one shoulder. hollered back. It struck me as queer until he got there, and then he had to see it; a big elephant, one of the biggest work like bottled lightning with the cork I ever saw, was standing to one side of out. He was standing at the head of the engine with his ears flapping and his

> trunk and trumpted. Dad heard us and turned around. He was mad; I coud tell from the set of his

jaw, and the way his eve looked. "Here," he said, jumping back, "five man or two, will you? I'm short-hand- me that rifle. Who do you think I am the track, and I sent word for him to

to be held up like this?" But the tall man hung on to it. "Wait | culvert and make a big slip noose, a minute," he said, kind of excited, "It I had been working round the yards ain't no good to lose your head. We've stopped, and the exhaust was blowing long enough to know that the work ex- been shooting at him for ten minutes, off, and the elephant was snorting right pected of me didn't including talking. I but you can't touch him with this pop- down below us, to one side, and Dad tust made a dive, and swung myself up gun unless you put it right up against was hollering up at us to beat the Limit-

and we were off; and we bumped and | Dad had hold of the gun by this time, such a racket. I leaned out and called rattled through those two miles of vards and the two were so excited they were down to Dad:

"Hold your horses," said the little side now, Mr. Burns, He can't very well cents. It was a case of clear track all man. "We've tried it. His trainer's off climb around the train." the way: out through the suburbs we there now in the bushes, with an arm | Then he was mad. He talked so fast passed half a dozen local passenger broke, and he's the only man that I couldn't get what he was saying, until trains lying up on sidings , with a head stands any show with Kaiser when he's one of the boys, that was used to him. poking out of every window to see us go acting this way. There's his gun up ran across the car and looked down the by. Then we struck the rolling prairies, there now." I looked forward: sure other side. where the towns are farther apart, and enough, a rifle lay on the track, right . "It's no wonder," he said. "There's trees, and streams are scarce-nothing by the elephant's hind feet. "The only a sheep guard here, across the culvert." but waves of meadow and cornfields and thing is to find some way of chaining. There seemed to be nothing for it long snake fences. I didn't feel exactly him up so you can get close. He's mad then but for Dad to stay right there in like asking questions; anyhow, I don't now-he's got four balls in him already the mud until we could take care of

They all sat round on the bunks and Dad was so mad he couldn't talk. any more attention to Dad's holleringthe yellow-backed arm-chairs and swap- There couldn't nothing stop a wrecking I just got to work. ped lies corkers, too, some of them- train that he was boss of, he said. He "Now I'll tell you." said I. "What about the time McGee jumped his engine gave a jerk, snatched the rifle away, we've got to do first is to get him to clean over a washed-out rail, and the jumped off the other side of the car, come up to the culvert for some bread.'

and all that but there wasn't a man | Well, sir, maybe when you've gone stupid men can be when you get them living could have done the things they to the circus and seen a row of elephants off their beaten track-but just then I Their yarns were getting stiffer and on their backs, you've thought they were the scheme hadn't been coming to me stiffer from the way they looked at me slow beasts. That's what I'd always all at once. When I first began I was I guess they thought I was taking them | thought, you see. But when I got up on | more than half bluffing, but all the down whole-when all of a sudden the top of the coal in the tender and looked while I had the feeling inside me that I brakes squealed and we began hauling out over the engine, I saw that elephant was getting at it in the right way, and up short. Everybody broke for the tool going down the track like "223" making that if I just pulled a stout face and car, so I followed along. And right here up time. He didn't run pretty, but he went right on I could work it through I think I'd better stop and tell you what did get over the ground. And Dad was as easy as an exhibit of a new bearing I saw when I got out to the platform. in front of him, doing the sprint of his oiler. So now I put my face down to Since then I've seen worse smash-ups, life. He'd thrown away the rifle. We the wire and said: with loss of life and all that, but I never were all so flustered that we began to "Mr. Burns." before or since saw anything quite like it. | yell. but I don't believe Dad heard us. | He turned quick. I had to wait a "It was a circus train-"Harris Con- He had something else to think about couple of minutes before I could get n soldated Railroad Shows" was the name just then. It looked as if he was trying word in. Then I went right on, as if I on what was left of the front cars and to get down as far as the rest of the was the General Manager and I had it looked like a plain case of jumping train where he could dodge under the him on the carpet for a heart-to-heart the track. None of the circus men cars. We were holding our breath, won- talk: that I talked with afterward seemed to dering whether he was/going to make it, "If you'll take a few loaves of bread

had telescoped the cab and crumpled culvert with Kaiser right on his heels. He was a little taken aback—maybe he itself up around the boiler-it was a Then they all began to talk at once, thought I was talking too glib for a miracle that the engineer and the fire- some standing up on the tender, the hostler's kid. I had the boys hand down thing to do, of course, was to clean up the loaves in between the wires, one at

not hear what he was saying, but I away a few steps. reckoned, from the look on his face, it was something pretty vigorous. Then besides there wasn't any medal competition among the boys to see who'd be first to climb out on the wreck to handle the chain: for that beast was as likely back any minute (though I think myrailroad man's life: it isn't all way down the embankment and partly self he'd have found it a good deal harder to climb up the embankment than But when you ask a man for a story, he's off to the right, so that the other track it had been to go down). So they talked

> they could get close enough to shoot The wreckage had piled up so around him. Now it struck me that that ought fields. Some of the animals were killed because I didn't see how some of the -and a lot of others were roped to- but they just went on jumping around when I came to think of it, I might as well: I hadn't anything to lose, you know, being only a sort of a substitute): "If you'll quit jawing, I'll chain up that

Then they stopped and looked at me. A couple of them laughed. But I was getting a little mad myself, and I didn't care. I jumped down on the flat, and I was a green hand, you know; so I said to the circus man, the tall one: "What do elephants like to eat?"

You see, I remembered that they liked peanuts and didn't like tobacco, but that was about all I knew. He looked surprised, but maybe you've noticed that when a lot of men get whirled off their feet and are fussed and rattled they're pretty likely to listen to a chap that thinks he knows what he's talking

"Bread's the thing," said I. "Can you

By that time I guess he was ready Dad Burns was the first on hand, of that Dad should be taking time to talk to try most anything, for he went back course. He was chief of the wrecking when the track was piled up with the through the caboose without a word and crew, and one of the quickest-thinking, remains of a train, and I looked around was gone quite a while. We all stood loudest-talking men I ever knew; the a little. I couldn't see ahead, for the around waiting, without saving much kind of man that asks no questions and tender was in the way; so I crossed the After a while he came back with a takes no excuses, who never knew what car to where I could almost touch the bushel basket full of loaves of bread sort of a mess he'd have to clean up wreck, and leaned out. Then I could that he'd got from some of the other

"There's another basket back there."

One of the boys hurried back for it. "Now." said I "we want a good strong rope and some poles."

One of the older men said, "The threeinch hawser's what you want, I guess: and some of them went for it. Then had McGee start up, kirld of slow, down stop when the derrick was right over the

It didn't seem a minute before we were ed. As soon as the engine guit making

"You can get out all right on the other

believe any of the boys, unless maybe to-day. And he's killed two men since Kaiser, for the old beast was watching Dad himself, knew where we were going. we've had him." the opening like a cat; so I didn't pay

time the Milwaukee freight got stalled, and ran up round the engine. I never They didn't seem to get me right away. and the wires were down, and "Pansy" saw anything grittier; it was grand. He so I dropped off the other side of the Brown ran eleven miles through the went up past that engine as if he'd car and climbed down by the culvert. snow in fifty-two minutes to send a mes- been waiting all his life for a chance to Sure enough, there there was a strong sage; and after a while, when Dad had shoot an elephant and he was afraid wire and scantling guard built right gone up ahead to see that everything he'd miss it if he didn't hurry. We across the low archway. I saw quick was in shape, they told things about all looked at each other a minute, and enough that we could rip it off in him that made me turn away and grin. then without saying a word we all had jiffy-I wondered that the fellow that I knew a little about Dad myself-that the same thought, and went climbing saw it first hadn't jumped right down there with an axe; it just shows how reaching for peanuts, or throwing hay thought of something else. / You see

crawled back-and say, that culvert was anybody in the crew with head enough an awful muddy place and tossed out a ing in the doorway, and when he saw to go at it without Dad to law at him couple of loaves. I climbed up to the car that . Kaiser was halfway through the and tell him how; and Dad was fifty in time to see Kaiser reaching out his noose he made a dive for the lever, and vards down the track on his hands and trunk for bread, keeping those little eyes before the elephant had got one loaf to knees in the mud under a culvert; every of his on us as if he suspected we were his mouth that rope drew up tight minute or so he'd poke his head out up to something. When he'd eaten it around his shoulders, and we had him. and holler at us and shake his fist until he felt around with his trunk for some But you should have seen him tear more, but there wasn't any, so he backed around. 'Once I thought he was going to

The engine started up, and the stee arm. with the noose dangling, came round until it reached out over where Kalser would have to come for the bread. Then all the boys fell to with poles and ong-handled hooks, and spread out the noose and held it that way, so that made a big circle with the bottom the ground. Kaiser wanted it all right but he looked pretty doubtful about

"Take it easy." the circus man said not very loud: "he'll come if you give him time. He ain't had anything to eat since vesterday." 'So we waited, the boys on the poles

growling some under their breath, for a three-inch' hawser is heavy to handle. and after a while Kaiser began to come and watching us all the time. body said. "Let him have it now," but mud on him. the circus man shook his head. I guess finished him we'd have had it all to Bill McGee to back up the grade to do over again, and maybe more. Kaiser had to put one foot through the loop to get within reach of the bread. We still kept still. You see we were safe enough, for he was down at the foot of the em-They didn't pay much attention, so bankment, and his head didn't come had tried to climb up, we would have had time to get back into the engine room. But he was watching the bread. time nearer the culvert and farther through the noose. It struck me all at

The fellow in the engine room didn't better.

pull the car, derrick, engine, and all, "Now, boys," said I, "swing the derrick clean down the bank. I think maybe he would have upset us if we hadn't all hollered for the engine chap to ease up -you see he wanted to lift Kaiser right up in the air; and three tons and a half of live, kicking elephant aren't to

While we were hanging on to our-

Then Dad came out. He wasn't say-

he was right, for if the first shot hadn't rope free from the elephant and signal

them looked foolish, sort of

But hold on here: I didn't start in to tell about myself. That's about all there for Dad had put out some more, this is to the story of Dad and the elephant.

coat next day on a peg in the caboose of once why doesn't he try to get around the wrecking train. But I didn't mind the rope? But no, he came right ahead changing. Sometimes the crew had to and put both fore feet over it, humping work hard, but that's so in most jobs: up his back and reaching way out with there were long stretches when it was easy going, and then the pay was some

be trifled with. selves and talking all at once and wondering what to do next, that tall circus chap just jumped down by the side of the car, and, standing part way down the embankment (where I expectedevery second to see him knocked to pieces), he hauled up his rifle and pumped ball into the beast until, almost before we knew it, it was all over, the rope was slacked down, and a big gray heap all that was left of Kaiser, lay there

toward it, putting his feet out carefully ing a word, but there was a lock about him that kept us from laughing at the

"Who's boss here?" he said

For All Who Prefer Quality

"Fresh from the Gardens"



J. Cadesky

WILL VISIT ACTON ON

Monday, November

Anyone suffering from Eyestrain, Defective Vision or Headache should not miss the opportunity of Appointments may be made with Mr. A. T. Brown, Druggist.

CONSULTATION FREE Office Hours: 9 a. m. till 4 p. m.

FINAL ALIBI

Tombstone dealer (after several futile

suggestions)-'How would just a simple 'Gone Home' do for an inscription?" right. It was always the last place he

to blame."-Peter Arno.

THE DIFFERENCE

"Do you know, John," remarked Mrs. stairs, "that I've been awake for hours waiting for you to come home from the

"If that isn't just like a woman!" growled Jaggs. "And I've been at the club for hours, waiting for you to go t



GOVERNMENT OF THE

DOMINION OF CANADA

4% LOAN-1932

The Minister of Finance offers for public subscription

\$80,000,000 Dominion of Canada 4% Bonds

Bearing interest from 15th October, 1932, and offered in two maturities, as follows:

\$25,000,000- 3 YEAR 4% BONDS, DUE 15th OCTOBER, 1935 \$55,000,000-20 YEAR 4% BONDS, DUE 15th OCTOBER, 1952 Subject to redemption at par and interest on or after 15th October, 1947

Principal payable without charge, in lawful money of Canada, at the office of the Minister of Finance and Receiver General of Canada at Ottawa or at the office of the Assistant Receiver General at Halifax, Saint John, Charlottetown, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Victoria:

> Interest payable half-yearly, 15th April and 15th October, in lawful money of Canada, without charge, at any branch in Canada of any Chartered Banks

Denominations:

3 YEAR BONDS, \$1,000 20 YEAR BONDS, \$500 AND \$1,000

The proceeds of this Loan will be used to retire \$34,449,950 of bonds maturing 1st November, 1932, and to provide for the general purposes of the Government and the Canadian National Railways.

The Loan is authorized under Act of the Parliament of Canada, and both principal and interest are a charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada.

The amount of this issue is \$80,000,000. The Minister of Finance, however, reserves the right to allot or reject the whole or any part of subscriptions received, provided such allotments do not increase the principal amount of the issue by more than \$25,000,000.

Applications will not be valid on forms other than those printed by the King's Printer.

3 Year Bonds, 99.20 and interest, yielding to maturity 4.28% ISSUE PRICE: 20 Year Bonds, 93.45 and interest, yielding to maturity 4.50%

Payment to be made in full at time of application or in the case of the 3-year bonds, on alletment. Subscription lists will open on 31st October, 1932, and will close on or before 16th November, 1932,

with or without notice; at the discretion of the Minister of Finance. Subscriptions will be received by any branch in Canada of any chartered bank and by recognized dealers from whom official application forms may be obtained.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Ottawa, 31st October, 1932