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### STORIES IN PASSING.

Mr. Gran Ensign feels the blood tingle to his finger tips whenever a big circus comes to town. It is not universally known that he was once the principal owner of a sawdust ring with all its accompaniments, but such was the fact. It is no fault of his that the name of Ensign is not floating higher up on the flag pole of circus fame than either Seils or Ringling. It is solely on account of the fantastic freaks of fickle fortune.

It was just twenty-five years ago this pleasant month of May that the circus of Saxby, Dunbar & Co., was organized in Lincoln. Saxby and Dunbar were old members of the "perfesh" and of course furnished the experience and not much else. The "company" consisted of Mr. Gran Ensign, who supplied most of the capital, including the stock. Circuses were scarce in Nebraska in 1872 and there seemed to be a fertile field for the enterprise. The public were supposed to be pining for amusement. It had the local interest of a home institution and it was quite a proud array that prepared to launch out from the port of Lincoln. All it needed was a smooth sea and favoring breezes, instead of which it struck a wet sheet and flowing streams everywhere, and like our unlucky batt'eships had to be hauled back on to the dry dock before making the bend.

As all big circuses have an advance agent Jaxby, Dunbar & Co., had one who was a hummer. He made more friends in a week than a man running for office. The first town billed was Ashland and the way the trains ran he had to stay twenty four hours. He wanted to make a good impression for the circus and he began distributing complimentary tickets with so liberal a hand that his memory has been a flower garden ever since. Everybody got them. The owners of the ground, all the hotels and livery stables, all the stores where bills were hung or walls were used, all the teachers and doctors, the town and county officials, all the men of leading influence, all the boys who could find an errand to run, and everybody else who could think of any reason why he should have tickets, got them. By the time the advance agent got away the boys couldn't think of anybody who wasn't supplied. If any one had failed it was because he was out of town or didn't intend to go.

The circus started out early in May, traveling overland. It had been raining for several days and the roads were in horrible shape. The night they started for Ashland it settled down into a cold, steady rain that would take the enthusiasm out of a Cuban patriot and effectually close up any ordinary war. When morning came not a wagon had shown up. They were stranded at various mudholes all the way between Ashland and Lincoln. According to report the decorations around certain mudholes would have done justice to a spring bonnet of 1897. Towards noon the teams began to straggle in and all day long the bedraggled and bespattered vehicles came into port like ships working in after a storm. Some never did get in. During the afternoon the tent arrived, which was raised at once and arrangements made for an evening performance. The various artists were rounded up and the gaps made by certain absent ones filled in as well as possible.

The rain had slacked up during the day but it began again as night came on. It was the kind of a night that makes any man ponder whether to go out or to stay at home and lose his ticket. Most of the ticket holders went, especially for the reason that there was not a soul from out of town to whom a ticket could be given. The band played

and there was quite a little noise and stir in and around the tent. There was a ticket seller's stand near the entrance but hardly any one seemed to notice it. Perhaps it was a little quieter there than anywhere else. It was pretty clearly demonstrated that Saxby, Dunbar & Co., didn't need an advance agent and a ticket seller also. One was certainly enough. Inside the tent the show went on as well as possible with a little of the machinery gone and water over the track part of the time. The groups of men and boys entertained themselves during the waits by laying bets as to whether there was any one in the tent who had paid to get in.

The circus got away sometime during the night and started for Plattsmouth, where it was billed for the next day. Thirty five miles of rain and hills and bottomless mud! They couldn't make it nor come anywhere near doing so. Plattsmouth was finally sighted on the second day out, the date on which they were billed to show in Glenwood. They pushed desperately on, hoping to catch up with their dates somehow, but reached Glenwood the day after they were to appear in Red Oak. The latter place was finally reached but it became evident that the dates were hopelessly lost. As it continued to rain most of the time it was plain that the goddess of good luck was not boarding with Saxby, Dunbar & Co. Doubt and discouragement would creep in in spite of all restraining orders, which perhaps is not to be wondered at. The show was abandoned right there and some of the attaches were back in Lincoln before their goodbye kisses had become cold.

Mr. Ensign certainly lost considerable money in the enterprise. He had barns full of trick ponies and circus paraphernalia for a long time afterwards. But it did not ruin him or break his heart or spoil his temper. He took it in nery, good natured way, as one of the incidents of life, and his business went on as usual. No doubt he looks back on that experience of a week a quarter of a century ago with a good deal of interest and perhaps amusement. And when the gaudy pageant of the modern circus rolls up O street he certainly may be pardoned if his thoughts should weave fanciful pictures of what might have been if he hadn't been vanquished by mud.

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