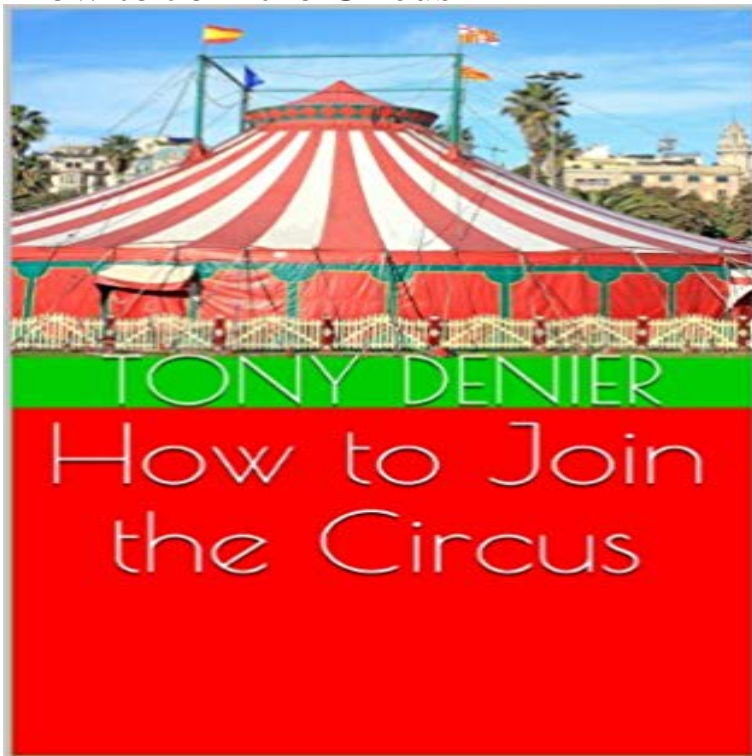


## How to Join the Circus



The first circus in the United States was run in 1780 by a man named Ricketts. Definite information as to its organization is now of course unattainable, but if reproduced at this day, and put in contrast with the enormous circuses now competing for public favor, it would doubtless be considered a very small affair. Such as it was, however, Gen. Washington and his staff patronized its performances in Philadelphia, and it was deemed quite a high-toned amusement for that city in 1780. Two or three years later a Frenchman named Boschard was associated in management with Ricketts, and when the latter died the enterprising Gaul for some time had the business all to himself. His success encouraged rivals, and several circus companies sprang up during the latter part of the last and the beginning of the present century. It is very doubtful, however, if all combined would have made up a show as big as Barduis was in 1875, or if their expenses or receipts during the forty years between 1780 and 1820 would have figured up as large as those of any one of a dozen circuses of the present time for a single season. Few people have any idea how very crude a thing the American circus was as late as 1828. At that time nine horses and seven men constituted a full troupe. The band was made up of a hurdy-gurdy, a clarionet, and a bass drum; there was no roof to the ring enclosure; the largest posters were about 16 by 44 inciiies, and their pictorial ornamentation was confined to a rude wood cut about six inches square, in the centre of the sheet, and painted in black; and performances were rarely given at night, except in the very largest towns, where means for feebly illuminating the ring with candles could be improvised. Gipsy-like the circus men of that day went from place to place by night, moving altogether by wagons, oft-times startling early-arisen villagers into joyous expectation by their white canvas fence at

break of day ; waking the echoes with a solitary trumpets shrill notes, proclaiming that the show had come to town; infusing an unwonted excitement into all human and animal life in the vicinity by their wondrous performances during the afternoon and evening, and with the shades of evening folding their tent (only it wasn't a tent) like the Arab and quietly stealing away, leaving behind them as a tangible reminder of vanished joys the ring in the earth, where emulous boys would tumble and prance and scuffle, until rain and sun and frost had beaten it out of sight. But there were things then for which the old circus men of to-day sigh vainly. The tavern keepers tharges were but thirty-seven and a half cents a day for each man, and very often even that was remitted, the pleasure of the showmans company being accepted as compensation for their entertainment. There was no license to pay; no ground rent was demanded; one little poster of the sort described was generally deemed sufficient for a town; no costly trappings, costumes, and paraphernalia were expected or required; forage for the horses was cheap; newspapers were few, and what there were did not expect column advertisements, and the percentage of dead heads in the audiences was exceedingly small. Merry days those for the circus men. SIMPLICITY GIVING PLACE TO GORGEOUSNESS. In 1830 began to be inaugurated the new order of things, wherein costly luxury made insidious inroads upon the primitive simplicity described. Purdy, Welch & Co.'s mammoth show started out upon a scale of such magnificence as dwarfed all its predecessors and rivals. It boasted twenty-four gray horses, and a thing until then unheard of, and associated in the popular mind with royalty, unbounded wealth, and lavish prodigality it actually had a brass band of eight pieces. It also encouraged a new dignity on the part of performers. Prior to that time upon the accomplished artist who ground the hurdy-gurdy, the talented musician who

manipulated the bass drum, and....

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