



# The Squeal of the Sucker

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

*Shoestring Charlie, showman, gets into a hole—and an elephant pulls him out*

A GIRL, fair-haired, young, had just called from the doorway of the wardrobe building. Shoestring Charlie Grenolds, owner of the World's Famous Circus, turned hastily from the car he had been about to enter, and crossed the wagon-yard of winter quarters. He had caught only enough of the message to cause him acute anxiety.

He was a trim little man, with sharply square shoulders, and a certain lithe-ness, as though nervous energy had pared him down to straight sinew and muscle. His angular features were sun-browned, although this was still early April. His eyes were blue, quick eyes. He leaped a puddle of water and approached the girl.

"Well, Molly," he asked, "what's wrong with you? Ain't you satisfied?"

Molly James of the Roman Rings laughed; the action did not seem difficult. Her brown eyes possessed a sparkle as if of constant happiness; she was Shoestring's favorite of the entire circus. Perhaps it was because she was young and full of life and dreams—of the day when she would be a star. That meant a great deal to Shoestring Charlie, both from a managerial and a paternal standpoint—Shoestring looked upon her almost as his own daughter. And their relationship had been almost that close; Shoestring knew Molly's problems, her sorrows, her joys, her responsibilities. Of the latter there had been plenty of late.

A year before, Molly James, at twenty, had taken the responsibilities left behind when Bert James, her father, had fallen from the high-wire at the top of the World's Famous tent. There was a brother in college and two small sisters were in grade school. Molly was in the circus, smiling in the spotlight from the Roman Rings, that others might have the finer things which a life of sawdust had denied her.

Again Shoestring snapped a question and again Molly laughed. Then she handed him a letter, and went into the costume rooms. Shoestring Charlie returned to his car.

"All she wanted to tell me was that the Ten Thousand Dollar Beauty was blowing the show!" he told his chauffeur. "What do I care? I can get a million of those dames. Gee, I thought it was Molly herself that was quittin'!"

"I thought you acted awful nervous when you run over there," said the chauffeur. "Where's the Ten Thousand Dollar broad going?"

"Her letter don't say, but I got a pretty good idea." Then, with the realization the chauffeur still awaited directions: "Take me out to the horse farms."

But suddenly he called for the chauffeur to halt.

"Kid," said Shoestring Charlie, when the car had scraped the curb, "if you ever hear of an open season on general agents, buy me a license! I told Slat's Warner not to post them twenty-four sheets!"

Then he sat, cigarette dragging on his lower lip, merely staring out at an inoffensive billboard.

Upon it was emblazoned a picture of mastodonic action. Before a circus audience, standing in its excitement, an heroic-sized elephant, trunk extended, huge hoofs eating up distance, sped madly in the lead of a half dozen race horses, frothing from exertion as jockeys stung them to greater efforts. Red-coated judges stood at the tape, with stop watches, thrill over a new distance record. Performers watched from the sidelines in the proper aspect of awed admiration, while in red letters, there appeared the legend:

THE WORLD'S FAMOUS CIRCUS  
Takes Pleasure in Presenting  
for  
THE FIRST TIME UNDER ANY CANVAS  
SPRINTO - SPRINTO - SPRINTO  
The Only and Original Racing Elephant  
See Him  
OUTRUN A SOLID FIELD OF  
RACE HORSES  
Watch Him—15,000 Pachydermic  
Pounds of Ponderous Power  
PLUNGING PAST PUFFING, PAC-  
ING, PADDOCK-PONIES!  
in a  
ONE-MILE RACE ROUND THE  
HIPPODROME TRACK!

After a time, Shoestring Charlie threw away his cigarette.

"Well," he said to his chauffeur, "it's a great act. Only one slight defect in the whole thing. We ain't got no Sprinto!"

"But I thought him and the East Indian mahout got here day before yesterday."

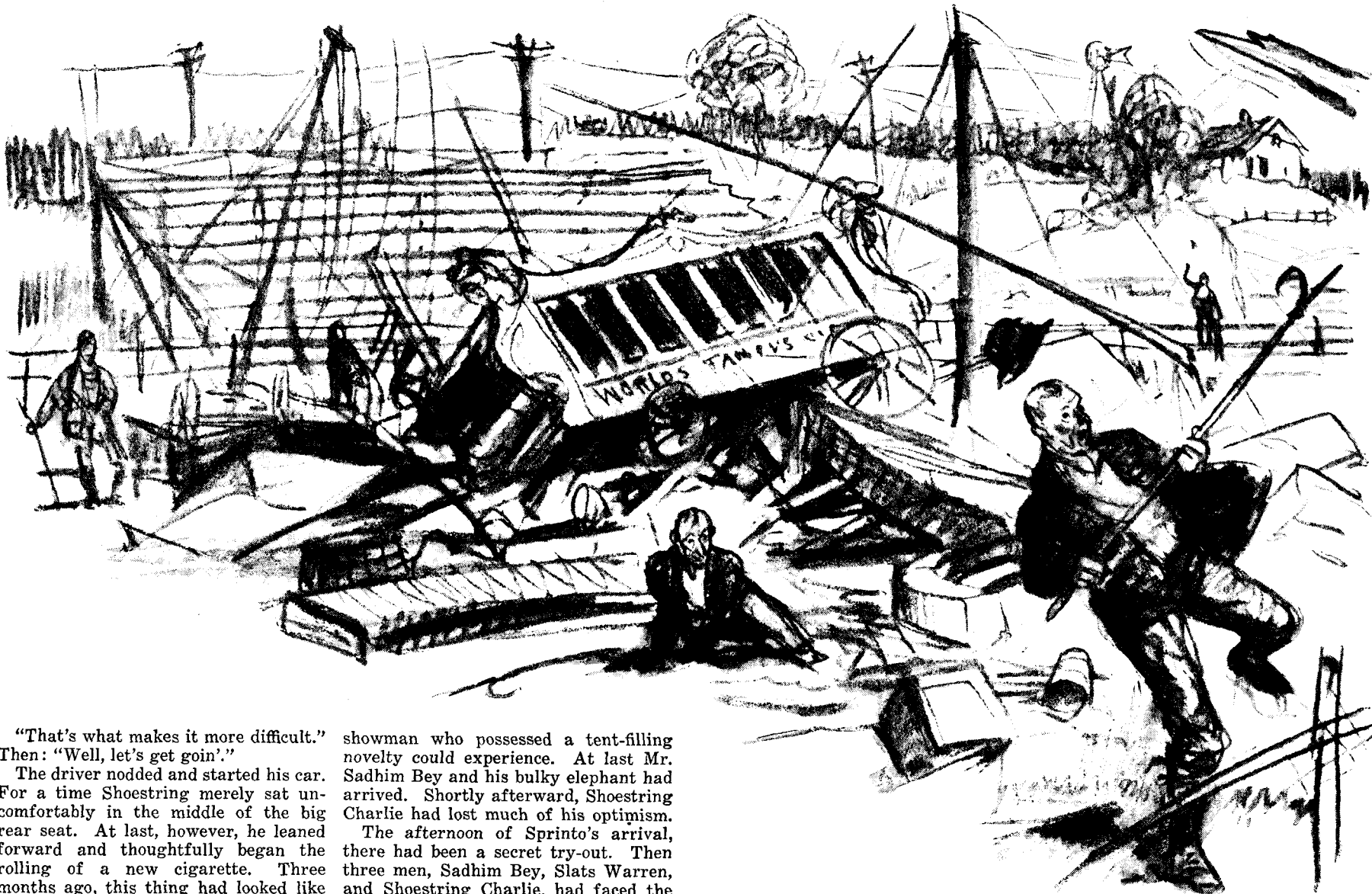


Illustrated by  
Arthur D. Fuller

"Well, Molly," he said to the little silk and tulle being, "what'd Shifty Willie Moran want when he came back here this afternoon?"

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"That's what makes it more difficult." Then: "Well, let's get goin'."

The driver nodded and started his car. For a time Shoestring merely sat uncomfortably in the middle of the big rear seat. At last, however, he leaned forward and thoughtfully began the rolling of a new cigarette. Three months ago, this thing had looked like the knockout of the canvas world. Now it merely looked like a knockout—to Shoestring Charlie.

**SLATS WARREN**, his general agent, had brought it about. Other show owners, now and then, had gone to Europe in the winter to gain their stellar acts for the next year. At last Shoestring had been persuaded to do the same. He and Slat Warren had gone abroad—and at the Carnival of Nice, they had seen this.

It had looked wonderful then, as with the bands playing, the bunting and flags flying from the grandstands and the Casino Municipale, an East Indian mahout had stationed a tremendous elephant a quarter of a mile away, and flanked him with six horses. Then, while the great throng had stilled, the mahout had shouted, a gun had been fired and the race was on, a thundering progress down the street to a finish tape, where the elephant led by a full two lengths.

Of course, there had been nothing new in the elephant's speed ability, at least to Shoestring; long ago he had learned that the apparently lumbering gait of a pachyderm is highly deceptive. But it was the revelation to the crowd which counted, and the high degree of control which this Indian had over the beast—an animal which easily could have wrecked everything in sight if he had not been under the absolute domination of a shrewd master.

Shoestring had made a contract that afternoon, guaranteeing to safeguard the act in every possible way through protective billing, and to hold it inviolate for its originator, Mr. Sadhim Bey, the mahout. Then, leaving the pale, soft-voiced East Indian to finish his exhibitions in France, he had sailed joyously home with Slat Warren, ordered the printing, and faced the new season with that equanimity which only a

showman who possessed a tent-filling novelty could experience. At last Mr. Sadhim Bey and his bulky elephant had arrived. Shortly afterward, Shoestring Charlie had lost much of his optimism.

The afternoon of Sprinto's arrival, there had been a secret try-out. Then three men, Sadhim Bey, Slat Warren, and Shoestring Charlie, had faced the facts. A race in front of the Casino Municipale in Nice had been one thing, and a race around the circus tent of the World's Famous distinctly another. For Sprinto, the Plunging Pachyderm, had demonstrated against all efforts to the contrary that he could run only in a straight line!

A straight line in the circus meant the knocking down of center-poles, the breaking of guy ropes and riggings, and a possible plunge through the blue seats at the general admission end, if Sprinto couldn't apply his brakes swiftly enough. Any of these things would have been sufficient; Shoestring Charlie knew that they'd all happen. More, he felt that there was no way out. An elephant's natural inclination when it turns on the speed is to accomplish distance by the shortest route between two points; smashed buildings in elephant stampedes, broken fences, collision-cracked walls; all these things could happen with even an ordinary elephant, obeying his natural instinct not to turn aside. It would be just that much worse for one that had been trained to eat up distance upon a straight course.

"Turn in here?" asked the chauffeur. They had been on a country road for more than a mile. Shoestring Charlie looked up.

"**YEH**, over by the track," he commanded. The machine veered through the open gate of what once had been a race-course, abandoned until recently when Shoestring Charlie had seen in its wide meadows, its stables and barns and outbuildings an ideal place for the wintering of his draft and ring stock.

The place was one of a dozen activities—the show's opening day was only a short time away. But Shoestring had little concern for the barns, the horses or the grooms. Instead, he half rose from his seat, staring over the driver's shoulder toward the space before the un-

painted, empty grandstand, where center and quarterpoles had been erected, as if to support a tent. These stretched throughout the entire area of the race-track oval, while between them were placed ring curbs, elephant tubs, ropes, old boxes, decrepit wagons whose usefulness to the circus long had ended.

A veritable junk-lot of the circus was this oval; obstructions placed in a crazy array so as to block the entire expanse, while upon a clear track, an East Indian in yellow tunic and baggy red pants shuffled mournfully about in the van of an equally mournful-looking elephant, which now and then chirruped sadly as if in unanswered query. A dolorous gallery of bull-men, animal punks and menagerie bosses perched on the outer rail, in contemplation of the activities, while a tall, ravenously thin man in a dusty black suit and a four-dent hat crawled over the fence and waited the approach of the owner's car.

"Well," he said, when at last Shoestring came forth, "here's the layout." Shoestring did not answer directly. He only moved closer to his general agent, and gazed at him with evidence of fatherly concern.

"Listen, Slat, you ain't been hurt or nothing? You ain't had a bad shock or been hit in the head?"

"Who? Me?" asked Slat Warren, raising a thin hand to a temple. "No, I'm all right."

"Then why'd you order them Sprinto bills put up?" snapped Shoestring. "You heard me say we'd have to struggle along without this here circus wrecker!"

Slat nodded sourly.

"Yeh, I heard you," he answered. "But we got to have a feature with this show, ain't we?"

"Since when ain't the Flying Bordons a feature? With Eddie Bordon doing

that double and a twist with his head in a gunnysack?"

Slat pawed for a pocket.

"Since 11:08 o'clock this morning," he answered. "That's the hour on Eddie Bordon's telegram."

"You mean they cancelled?"

"The only difference between them and us," answered Slat Warren sarcastically, "is the whole wide world. And I bet," he added, "I could give you all the guesses there is and you'd never think who got 'em to do it. So I'll give you just one."

Shoestring Charlie's hands shook slightly as he reached for his makin's. The usual sparkle departed from his eyes.

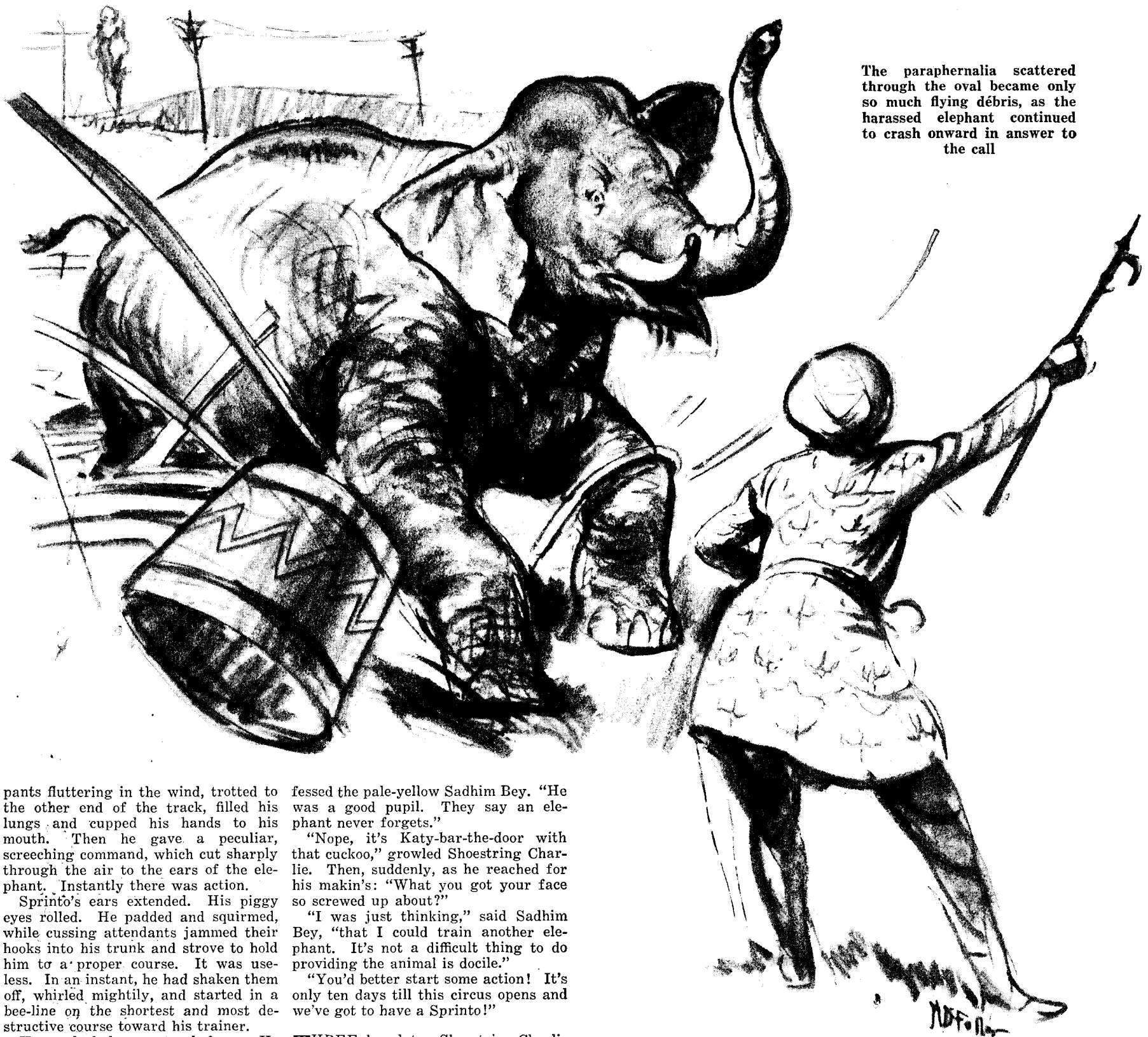
"**SO** Shifty Willie Moran's come out in the open!" he said at last. Then: "I've been kind of expecting it; us playing day and date at the Western Jubilee. Well, the way I figure, if a guy cancels, let him cancel; he won't do the show no good staying and putting on a sorehead performance."

"But how about somebody in the air?" asked Slat Warren.

"We'll just have to ballyhoo little Molly James up into star rôle, that's all. Shut off the rest of the show and give her a special announcement and sling a lot o' colored lights on her." Then, with a glance toward the race-track. "How's our baby tornado?"

"We've been waiting for you to try him," answered Slat, and led the way to the race-course, where the East Indian, Sadhim Bey, waited with the recalcitrant Sprinto. There were many preparations and several conferences. The bull-men scrambled down from the fence and led the chirruping elephant to a position at the turn of the track, with his head pointed conclusively toward the circular course. Sadhim Bey, his red





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pants fluttering in the wind, trotted to the other end of the track, filled his lungs and cupped his hands to his mouth. Then he gave a peculiar, screeching command, which cut sharply through the air to the ears of the elephant. Instantly there was action.

Sprinto's ears extended. His piggy eyes rolled. He padded and squirmed, while cussing attendants jammed their hooks into his trunk and strove to hold him to a proper course. It was useless. In an instant, he had shaken them off, whirled mightily, and started in a bee-line on the shortest and most destructive course toward his trainer.

He crashed the race-track fence. He plowed through a decrepit bandwagon. He knocked down center and quarter poles. The elephant tubs and other paraphernalia which had been scattered through the oval to block his course became only so much flying debris, as head down, trunk extended, pink throat exposed, with his distressed screechings, the harassed elephant continued to crash onward in answer to the call. At last he tangled with an ancient tableau wagon, where the bull-men caught him.

THEY tried again the next day and for two days following that while the wreckage increased and splinters flew indiscriminately. Bruised and battered though he might be from continuous collision, Sprinto, the Plunging Pachyderm, continued to be just that. Whenever Sadhim Bey let out that particular alluring screech, Sprinto moved toward him by the shortest course, nor could curses, or bull-hooks, or even a small tractor, which they hooked to him by a rope as a final recourse, keep him to the hippodrome track. Sprinto had been taught to move according to signal, and that was the end of it.

"I taught him very diligently," con-

fessed the pale-yellow Sadhim Bey. "He was a good pupil. They say an elephant never forgets."

"Nope, it's Katy-bar-the-door with that cuckoo," growled Shoestring Charlie. Then, suddenly, as he reached for his makin's: "What you got your face so screwed up about?"

"I was just thinking," said Sadhim Bey, "that I could train another elephant. It's not a difficult thing to do providing the animal is docile."

"You'd better start some action! It's only ten days till this circus opens and we've got to have a Sprinto!"

THREE days later, Shoestring Charlie found that he was able to give his attention to other things. They were mostly troubles.

Out at the horse farms, Sadhim Bey had taken the most tractable elephant of the World's Famous herd, a patriarch named Snyder, and was busily reforming him into a makeshift Sprinto by the simple expedient of feeding him carrots at various spots on the hippodrome track. Already the new Sprinto was learning to run at command: the act was assured in time for opening day, and the former Sprinto had been put to work pushing wagons. So all was lovely there. It wasn't the same in other departments of the circus.

For one thing, there was the question of bosses—three of them had failed to show up, in answer to a lure from California. Out there, a gentleman known to the profession as Shifty Willie Moran was preparing the erection of a semi-permanent circus at a state celebration known as the Western Jubilee, which was to last most of the summer. Shoestring Charlie's circus was to be there too, under canvas. And Shifty Willie Moran, never particular about his methods, had decided to weaken the

opposition by taking as many of its personnel as possible. Nor had the bosses been all.

There had been the Flying Bordons, for instance, argued into the breaking of a contract by the promise of more money and the joy of working under a roof instead of canvas. There had been the Jarvis Troupe of Acrobats, the Riding Kendalls, the Aërial Lammisters. Shoestring had let them go, one by one; he had followed here a rule learned long ago in the circus world, that a contract is only a contract as long as there is contentment. He'd get them back again, he knew, wiser and more faithful, if he could only find a way to lick Shifty Willie Moran.

That was not a simple matter. True, Shoestring knew, he could refuse to allow performers to accept the better offers from Moran's projected indoor circus. But in doing this, he would be playing directly into the enemy's hands. Moran had just enough money to make exceptionally good offers to Shoestring Charlie's stars. If those offers were refused, then the same money could be used to offer a better job to every con-

tracted person on the World's Famous Circus.

He could do that safely if those contracted members were held from accepting them. Shifty Willie Moran was out to break the morale of the World's Famous Circus; a fortune awaited the successful exhibitor at the Jubilee, if one of the two opposing forces was either out of the way or sufficiently crippled to put up little serious competition. If he could get the mainstays of Shoestring's performance, forcing him to hunt up substitutes, well and good.

BUT even if he couldn't, he still held the advantage. Shoestring would either be forced to meet these exorbitant offers or invoke the rights he held under his contract. If he did the first, it would weaken him financially; his reserves were none too strong this season. If he did the latter, he would breed a spirit of discord that might wreck the entire World's Famous performance. Discord and resentment are bad things in a circus.

"Well, if (Continued on page 48)





Posters like these wielded a tremendous influence in bringing about national prohibition



## Call Out the Marines

*Every reader of Collier's knows that our opinion of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act does not coincide with Dr. Wilson's. But we are glad to present the views of so influential and tireless a leader of the prohibition ranks*

**W**HAT Kansas and North Dakota, by going dry, did for the states of the Union, America has undertaken for the people of the world: We must show them that we can live without rum.

This prohibition proposition will not stand still. It will move on to observance and enforcement or it will move down to nullification or lawlessness. Which shall it be?

We have reached the point where people have ceased to reason; they have divided themselves emotionally into sides. A Dry can no longer by logic convince a Wet nor a Wet a Dry. This is the current phase of the prohibition struggle.

Shortly before the Republican national convention Senator Borah and Raymond B. Robbins, of Chicago, helped to place as a plank in the Republican platform a sacred pledge to the people that, if intrusted with power, the Republican administration would see to it that officers and men connected with the government should not only enforce the law but should personally observe it.

We take that to mean that the President and the First Lady of the land will not serve contraband goods in the White

House and thus, by example of our Supreme Home, set the law at defiance.

We believe that platform plank means that no officer of army or navy, wearing a uniform of the United States and pledged to uphold the Constitution thereof and to honor the flag, will publicly or privately drink intoxicating liquor while it is banned by law.

There is much talk of temperance as if temperance was different from prohibition. It is not. Temperance has come to be defined, by a universal usage, as moderation in the use of all things that are helpful and right and total abstinence from all that which is hurtful and wrong. It does not mean a moderate use of poison, but the total eschewing of that which injures the system, the mind, the morals of the individual, or is detrimental to society.

But certain changes are now needed in the law to make prohibition effective. No one claims that the Volstead Act was perfect. The most its advocates claim for it is that it was the best law we could get enacted at the time.

### A Neglected Government Function

We must amend the law to have adequate pains and penalties as sanctions of the law. Congress is under moral obligations to do this.

The putting of the fear of God in the minds of those who fear neither God nor man is one of the chief functions of good government.

It was a preposterous mistake in the Volstead Act to make the violation of this law merely a misdemeanor. Thirty or forty distinct provisions of the Volstead Act which have been constantly violated had no adequate penalty prescribed. It was absurd to have a violation of law, based upon the Constitu-

tion, punishable by a fine of only \$100.

The brilliant mind of the former Assistant Attorney General, Mabel Walker Willebrandt, yielded us the finest suggestion. This is that those offenses which are definitely set forth by the Eighteenth Amendment itself and which, therefore, are direct violations of the Constitution, should be considered as felonies.

Congress has given us this enactment in the Jones-Stalker bill—five years in



prison and a \$10,000 fine for each of the five crimes mentioned in the amendment: the manufacture, sale, importation, exportation, or transportation of intoxicating liquor for beverage purposes.

Another change in the law must provide that we shall punish the buyer as well as the seller of bootleg liquor. We must amend the Volstead Act so that the patron of the bootlegger shall be punished equally with the victim of his cupidity and appetite—the bootlegger himself. The man or woman who spends

money to transform a citizen into a criminal must be taught that it is not the bootlegger alone who is the criminal, but also those of large means who, enjoying the protection of our government, use their money to corrupt other men.

### Enforcement with a Vengeance

When these makers of criminals pay their money to an experienced bootlegger, they are responsible for maintaining the most criminal and dangerous class we have in the Republic—men who have not hesitated to shoot, stab, to set live wires as death traps for government officers, who drive high-powered cars to run over men who attempt to interfere, who go heavily armed to shoot down innocent men who discover them in law violation and government detectives who are simply giving their lives to help Uncle Sam work out successfully his greatest moral experiment.

To be responsible for the maintenance of this group of cut-throats and purveyors of poison is to incur a terrible responsibility. For so-called law-abiding citizens, not only men but often the women, to employ young and inexperienced boys to become bootleggers, not only maintains but supplies the ranks of the lawless and criminally disposed—who are actually making their livelihood by tramping the Constitution of their country into the mud. No patron is any cleaner or more patriotic or respectable than the bootlegger he creates and supports.

The next change in our prohibition law must make the first offense involve a prison sentence. Nobody is now ignorant of the prohibition law. There was a time when a moderate penalty was, perhaps, justified because of pos-