



They called him Picotin.

It was not his real name. Nobody knew whether he had a real name or not, but it was of no consequence, for he was only a clown.

Poor Picotin! He had been tumbling about inside the circus-ring ever since he could remember.

Of course there was a woman in it. Well, was there ever a life-story yet worth relating that had not a woman in it of some sort or another?

She was very young, with the face of a seraph and a slight, rounded figure reminding one of a flower-bud swayed to and fro by the wind.

One evening, during the performance, some senseless person, either drunk or fond of a practical joke, let off several crackers all of a sudden, and threw a squib down into the ring right at Babinette.

She gave a terrified scream and fell from the rope. Picotin rushed forward and received her in his arms.

Everyone made way for him as he hauled the coward into the ring. Once there, the infuriated clown administered a sound thrashing before the eyes of the public.

A few days after that he was strolling in one of the public gardens when a murmur of voices caught his ear.

profile in his direction. There was no mistaking those lines of cheek and brow, and chin, almost cherubic in their softness, nor the delicate, scarcely perceptible upward curve of the tiny nose that made Babinette a picture of childish innocence.

And so this youth wooed her with soft voice and ardent words, while the girl listened with head bent, like a blush-rose tremulous on its stalk beneath the warm breath of a summer wind.

"Poor Picotin! He is so good," she murmured once or twice, "and he loves me. It will break his heart."

"No clown ever had a heart," cried the young man, with conviction. "Do you think he could pass his life making jokes if he suffered as I do?"

That night Picotin failed in several of his tricks, and the people roared with laughter.

"What is the matter with Picotin?" asked one, who knew him well, of Babinette, behind the scenes; but she only shrugged her shoulders with indifference as she tried to get another peep at a fair-haired young man, conspicuous in one of the boxes.

"I think, Monsieur Picotin, you will forgive my intrusion when you are made acquainted with its cause," said this bland personage, holding out his hand.

"Yes," she answered, making a rosebud of her mouth, "but you—you will always be a clown."

"If monsieur will be pleased to look

over these papers he will be convinced that what I tell him is correct."

"I am a rich man," he murmured, at last, letting the papers fall down on the floor as his hands fell dejectedly at his side.

"You are, indeed," cried the lawyer, laughing outright at the woe-begone expression with which these words were uttered.

"I thought you would have been a great deal richer than you are," said Picotin, shaking his head mournfully.

Monsieur Emile Bertin was furious. He had received a letter from his man of affairs the morning before, with pleasant information that he was no longer inheritor of the fortune he had been brought up to expect.

"Well, Babinette must keep me," he said at last, with a cynical laugh. "we will go away to some great city, where her beauty and her talents are sure to get an engagement."

"A person wishes to see you, monsieur. I think it is Picotin, the clown," added the man, with a broad grin full of pleasurable recollections.

"Which is of a different kind from those indulged in by young gentlemen who are capable of throwing fireworks at a woman, and nearly causing her to break her neck?"

"I do not understand," said Emile, with a shrug of the shoulders, as he proceeded to light a cigarette, "but of course, Monsieur Picotin is always entitled to his joke."

"What! Babinette! She could never know! It was carnival time. We were disguised. I had on a black wig and my face was stained black-and-white. I did not mean to hurt her, but I was drunk."

"I suppose," said Mr. Gratebar, "that really the man who attains the greatest possible enjoyment of life is the man who finds his greatest happiness in work; but how few of us there are that are ambitious in that direction!"

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"I dreamed (we scribbling folk, you know, have funny dreams sometimes. Else, pray, how could we spin our yarns and weave our merry rhymes!)"

"I thought two proud and fond mamma's Each on a bright spring day Went walking with her little girl, As happy mothers may."

"Alas! what looks of dire dismay! What woe, what shock, what surprise! That fairly laughed upon the tears! Stood in his little eyes."

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