CIRCUS CLOWN A SERIOUS PERSON OUT OF THE RING.

Yet People Refuse to Believe He Is Anything
But a Buffoon Even in His Private Life.

Slivers was drawing no airy picture of the imagination, and a shorter and uglier word might be used.

Then up spoke Al Oliffen, who had just completed, to his own satisfaction, superimposing a comic grease-paint face upon the serious countenance of nature that had given him. It's just possible that it wasn't Al Oliffen. It may have been Pat Valdo; perhaps it was Fred Eegner, or it may have been Bill Scott. It's hard to keep track of names when you're carrying on an intermittent conversation in the midst of the lightning changes that are constantly going on in the clown's dressing room. You're talking with a Rube policeman. He disappears, and a moment later a voice addresses you from the inside of a colossal paper-mache head: Well, as I was just saying—

And then you realize that the Rube policeman has undergone a sartorial transmigration.

But whether it was Al Oliffen or not, somewhere with a comic grease-paint face said:

"There was one time when I was not able to maintain that stand-up attitude with the public citizenry. On that occasion I almost played the leading role in a lynching bee. Our show struck one of those shack-down towns; it was out in the country. I think the geniuses had said to themselves: 'The circus is coming. Here's where we get enough to pay our rent.' Oliffen and I went into action. They demanded some exorbitant sum for a parade license, and we called the parade off. That started a row, and in the mix-up a circus man whom I had the misfortune to resemble hit the Sheriff a fine left on the nose.

"The Sheriff retired to the town to get recruits to avenge this insult to one of the town's officials.

"Meanwhile I was down in the train, almost wholly ignorant of the trouble that had broken loose. I started for the circus grounds, going by way of the town's main street. And I ran into the Sheriff and his crowd.

"That's him!" yelled the Sheriff, and the crowd started at me, crying: Lynch him! Lynch him!

"I didn't know what it all was about, but you can take your word I didn't stop to inquire. I ran. Gee, how I did run! I dodged into a grocery shop and hid behind a barrel. But the crowd had seen me and lynched me out.

"I dropped on my knees and cried: Gentlemen, oh, gentlemen! Please tell me what all the trouble is about.

"And then one said: 'What did you paste the Sheriff in the nose for?'

"'I didn't. Honest, I didn't. I'm only the circus clown.'

"That struck them as funny, and they ran off. And that laugh saved me my life. We opened our act.

"Wait a minute, gentlemen,' said I. I opened the make-up bag which I was carrying to the show, and in a couple of minutes I had my clown's face on. That hit the crowd on the funnybone, and they laughed harder than ever.

"Do a stunt,' the Sheriff commanded. "Say, I never did do it so hard before. That started a row, and in the mix-up a circus man whom I had the misfortune to resemble hit the Sheriff a fine left on the nose.

"The Sheriff retired to the town to get recruits to avenge this insult to one of the town's officials.

"Well, you boys just follow alongside of me in the street parade, and whenever you see any one pull you down, you just say you just said in and paste him, paste him good and plenty, see. Then come around after the parade and I'll give you free tickets."

"It did my heart good to see how those kids attended to business."

"Just to show you how kind-hearted people are toward clowns, I'll tell you a little conversation I had a couple of years ago in a little up-state town. After the performance I went across the street with a friend to get a drink. Somebody passed the word, 'There's one of them circus clowns,' and immediately every Rube in the place ran across the street and bought me a drink."

"Howdy?" one old Chin Whisker piped up.

"Fine," said I, shifting further along the bar.

"Everybody settled with me.

"Tandy cut-up, you had,' continued old Chin Whisker.

"Thanks," said I.

"Ever break a leg?"

"Nope.

"What! Never hurt yourself?"

"Nope."

"Best thing I ever see," continued old Chin Whisker cheerfully, "was a clown that fell down and all the horses just stopped all over him. Laughed, how I did laugh."

"That must have been funny—look at me.

"But with all the slap-sticking and horse play," said the Times reporter, "don't you often get hurt?"

"Yes, but we get hurt. Of course the kicks and slaps are meant to be taken, but in the hurly-burly of a circus performance distances are occasionally misjudged, and—well, for the next week or so we've got looking for the softest place to sit down.

"And that reminds me of an old clown pal I once had. He only got one real laugh all the time he was in the business, and that was when an elephant stopped him in the street.

"He let out a yell that made the tent flap, and the audience roared. And when we stopped him he cleared it out, sneering and biting his fingers, Lordy! how the crowd did laugh!"