

IN A CIRCUS SCHOOL.

A College for the Education of Tumblers,
Bareback Riders and Jugglers.

[New York Sun.]

Near Van Nest Station, on the Harlem River branch of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, there is an educational institution of a peculiar sort, with a large number of studious pupils every winter. While possessing a varied curriculum and an able faculty, the school grants no degrees and has no distinctive classes. It is peculiar in other respects. No instruction whatever is given in the classics or the sciences, and moral philosophy, history and mathematics have no standing there, and even reading and writing are absent from the list of studies. Yet it has a reputation second to none in this country as an institution for the education of young men and women in its specialty, which is the art of circus performing.

A reporter the other day visited the school, which is located in a round building whose interior resembles the familiar circus performing ring. A young woman was taking a first lesson in riding a barebacked horse. She wore a jacket, short skirt and bloomers, and stood upon the galloping horse in her stockings. In the center of the ring was a grizzled man of about sixty-five, with brown overalls tucked in the tops of cowhide boots, whose enormous mouthful of tobacco made him appear to have chronic elephantiasis of one cheek. This was Pop Carroll, the proprietor of the institute, dean of the faculty and head professor. Another member of the faculty was pushing around the ring in time with the horse's gait a beam attached to a sort of derrick, from which depended a rope and a contrivance called a mechanic, the latter being fastened beneath the performer's arms to save her from injury in case of a fall from the horse. Prof. Carroll cracked his whip at the trained steed and hurled instructive remarks at the performer between expectorations of tobacco juice.

"Left arm up—graceful—so—sassy now—a leetle further for'ard—right leg out—keep hoppin' on yer left leg—g'lang, there, Beppo! Now, left leg, right arm up—graceful, I tell ye—you ain't no windmill—left for'ard, right back—left foot crostways—keep hoppin' er ye'll fall—there ye go, dammitall, didn't I toll ye? Whoa, Beppo!" The performer having lost her balance, was hung in midair by the mechanic, but was straightway lowered to the ground by the associate professor, and, mounting again, continued her lesson.

While this was in progress the reporter discovered a network of trapezes, flying and stationary, horizontal bars, vaulting poles, and spring-boards, and a mass of circus properties in general, juggling tools, clown costumes, fights, trunks and shoes. While poking about in an adjoining stable for information, he was startled by an ugly growl, and saw in a dark recess a troupe of a dozen performing dogs that were being educated by Prof. Carroll, whose pedagogic attainments are as varied as they are remarkable. Standing in stalls were several well-kept horses, trained for the ring, and a herd of diminutive ponies frolicked in an open field.

Later in the day a number of young men practiced tumbling under the Professor's tutelage, and some male performers essayed trick pad riding and the management of four horses bareback. At five in the afternoon the dinner-bell was rung, and all, male and female, repaired to the Carroll residence, near by, where most of the pupils board.

Pop Carroll is one of the oldest and best known circus men living. He took Dan Rice from the talker's stand in front of a side-show and gave him his first start as a clown. His wife, now a matron of near his own age, was the first female circus rider to discard the pad and ride a galloping horse bareback. She is yet well preserved and jolly, although extremely deaf. Carroll's eldest daughter married Ben Maginley, when that gentleman had not yet relinquished the cap of the clown to become leading heavy man for the Madison Square Theater, and his youngest daughter, Annie, is Barnum's leading lady bareback rider, and the wife of Eddie Snow, a tumbler. Carroll himself has been a performer in every branch of the profession, the manager of several circuses, and has conducted his school in Westchester for nearly a dozen years. He has turned out hosts of finished acrobats, clowns, tumblers, jugglers and riders, and has trained half the educated dogs, horses, pigs and other accomplished animals that have appeared before the public of late years. His place is the resort of all circus people who winter in the neighborhood of New York.