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The Rise of the American Circus, 1716-1899

S. L. Kotar, J. E. Gessler

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To both young and old, the circus remains an icon of American entertainment, a wholesome pastime untouched by the passing years. But the modern circus, with its three rings, ringmaster, animals, and acrobats, is the product of nearly three hundred years of evolution. This intriguing work chronicles the history of the American circus from its roots in England through its importation to America to the end of the nineteenth century. It introduces the early pioneers of the circus, addresses business concerns such as management and training, and discusses the development of the show itself, including the incorporation of menageries, the need for animal training and care, the addition of circus music, the use of the tent, and the unique attractions of side shows and "freaks." Personal stories of those who made their lives under the "big top" are woven throughout the narrative, adding an intimate perspective to one of America's most enduring entertainments.

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