INTO THE LIONS' DEN.

THE BOLD ADVENTURE OF TWO EVENING SUN REPORTERS.

They Enter Cages of Wild Beasts at Barnum's—One Visits the Lions and the Other the Tigers—Their Story of the Experience—Old Showmen Astonished at the Exploit

The following remarkable story, which is true in every particular, relates the experience of two reporters who voluntarily faced appalling danger in quest of a new form of adventure. The reporters were N. A. Jennings and W. J. Rouse.

The two EVENING SUN reporters who rode the big elephants, Fritz and Gyp, in the street parade last Friday evening were conversing with Superintendent George Conklin of the animal department in the Garden yesterday, when the subject of lion and tiger training came up. William H. Winner, one of the most famous lion tamers living to-day, had also been spoken to upon the same subject a day or two previous, and had told the reporters many interesting details connected with the breaking of such treacherous animals as those with which he has had to deal for a quarter of a century. Mr. Winner is a scarred veteran in that line of business and knows all about it. As trade marks he bears many proofs of deadly encounters with these animals, and has been near death's door many times as a result of battles with them.

"What was your experience the first time you entered a den?" was asked of one of the veterans.

"Well, I can't tell you. The doors were closed between me and the animals, but that doesn't make the slightest difference to them, for they can reach through the bars of the cross doors and take a leg off you as easy as rolling off a log, if they are so inclined, and you can't get away from them either. I went in and stood still in the corner. I hadn't been there a hundredth part of a second, it seemed to me, when a paw, about as big and as yellow as a canvassed ham, struck my leg, removed half a yard of my trousers and some of the skin."

"What did you do then?" was asked, as the newspaper men exchanged glances and wondered what manner of consolation or encouragement could be gleaned from this tale.

"Then my hair rose on end, my knees struck together, and I rolled, or fell, or tumbled out of the door as quick as the Lord would let me. Excited? Well, just a trifle, I imagine."

"But do you mean to say that if a division door is closed the animals can reach a man in the empty compartment?"

This was a delicate question, and the reporters waited most anxiously for the reply. If it were in the negative, then there would be but little danger. If in the affirmative, it was barely possible that the idea of becoming lion tamers would be ignominiously abandoned, and sheep would be used to commence taming operations with. So it was that every word the trainer dropped in his reply was eagerly swallowed in a vain look for an assuring sentence.

"Certainly they can get you. They can reach about three feet. The middle compartment is only 3½ feet wide, and if you move out of the way of one the tiger in the other end of the cage will have a picnic with you."

"But can't the end compartment be used for the men to stand in instead of the middle one?" suggested a scribe.

"No; there is no door except in the middle compartment. Oh, it's all one compartment for that matter. Those grated doors only reach to within a foot and a half of the top, and are fastened only by a half-inch bolt, dropping into a socket in the floor, anyway. We don't care for that, though, for even if they do push the separating doors open, as they very often do, we hit them a belt on the nose with a rawhide and chase them back. That doesn't amount to anything."

Surely there was little in this interview to raise the courage or spirits of the self-appointed lion and tiger tamers. These keepers actually thought they were being interviewed in the orthodox way, and all that was wanted was a thrilling story, to be used in the manner so common with such exciting narratives. Would they never understand that it was sympathy and encouragement the reporters wanted, and not bloodthirsty accounts of men being eaten by the beasts!

It was more consoling to the spirits of the adventurous pair, however, when Mr. Conklin remarked in an audible aside that there was really no danger in going into a cage, provided the person who entered kept his wits about him and didn't show the white feather. Now that was consoling and healing to the feelings of the scribes, and the object of the meeting was broached before he had time to mid anything to spoil the effect. They wanted him to say that it was all right, and safe, and easy, and everything, and pleasurable, anyhow, whether it was so or not. Imagination, in lion and tiger taming, as in all other things, goes a long way. If the reporters could only be led to imagine that it was all right they would not hesitate a moment.

As for showing the white feather, they looked all around under the vans in vain for such a useful article, so they had to put on hand if it were needed, but it could not be found; hence there was no danger of their showing it. Of these points the trainer and superintendent were soon informed, and then out popped the question, in a single breath, by both:

"May we go in and interview those lions and tigers?"

"What!" gasped Superintendent Conklin in horror.

"Go in there!" screamed Winner, with three exclamation points understood.

"Yes, sir."

"When?"

"Now, of course."

"You're joking, aren't you?"

The veteran animal man was assured that the reporters were positively in earnest, and meant every word they said. He took a little time for thought, and then consulted with Tody Hamilton, the genial press agent for the big show. Keller, the magician, who was also present, held up both hands in holy horror at "the bare thought of such a thing, and begged THE EVENING SUN man not to give a thought to it. More than a score of the attendants of the animal cages were gathered about, and had heard the unusual request with horror and surprise. But it had been made in good faith, and this Mr. Conklin was soon convinced of.

"Well, you'll be the first newspaper men who ever interviewed those lions and tigers, I know; and I'll bet you'll be the last for many a year. But if you have the courage to go, I'll go with you and take you in. Will you do it?"

A rather faint, but none the less distinct "Yes" spoken double, settled the matter, and then it was too late to back out. Either reporter would doubtless have willingly consented to withdraw had the other made the initial step in that direction; but neither would make the first move toward a backdown.

Superintendent Conklin placed two small stepladders inside the railings in front of the cages, and then placed one of the ladders in front of the cage of the lions and the other in a similar position at the tiger den. He unlocked the doors, but still left them fastened and called to the first reporter to get ready. The lions were to be visited first, and they evidently knew that something unusual was about to happen.

Mr. Keller and fully twenty gentlemen who were interested in the welfare of the reporter who was to go in came to a stand in front of the cage. Keller bade him a grave good-by and Superintendent Conklin swung back the heavy iron door.

"You had better take your overcoat off," said Manager Conklin to the writer. "It's best to be free if anything should happen."

The reporter looked at those two lions in their cage long and earnestly. The male lion, with his great mane and noble, kingly face, was lying at full length near the front of the cage. His nose was resting between his outstretched paws, and he met the reporter's gaze with such a mild, calm, dignified look that at the time it did not seem as though he would condescend to be ugly and savage under any circumstances. The lioness was not so lazy nor so dignified in appearance. She was pacing back and forth in the little compartment of the big cage just behind her royal spouse, and she seemed restless and ill at ease. Every now and then she opened her mouth in a most prodigious yawn, and thereby disclosed two rows of great white, glistening teeth in anything but a reassuring manner. She didn't seem to notice the reporter at all.

"Are you ready?" inquired Manager Conklin, as he took off his overcoat and opened the door to the middle compartment of the big cage. The writer wasn't quite ready to be eaten alive at that moment, but as he had expressed a wish to learn by experience just how it seems to be shut up in a cage with two lions, and as it would never have done to have backed out at that time, he proceeded to take off his overcoat. He didn't hurry himself a particle in doing this. Undue haste is not dignified at any time, and, besides, he had a faint hope that their majesties, the lions, would notice his deliberate manner and set it down in their minds to excessive coolness. But even when one is in no hurry it does take very long to get out of a loose-fitting overcoat, and in much too short a time for comfort the reporter was obliged to announce that he was ready.

"Look here, old man, you had better let it go," said "Tody" Hamilton at this juncture, as he laid his hand gently on the reporter's shoulder. "You know there is no real necessity for you to go into that cage. I tell you honestly that I wouldn't do it myself for $10,000."

But this advice, kindly as it was, came too late. The reporter was half way up the little ladder before Mr. Hamilton had finished speaking. In another instant he was in the cage beside Manager Conklin, and that gentleman had closed the door.

Seeing as near the centre of the middle compartment of the cage as possible, the reporter looked about him. On his right, in the easternmost compartment, was a great man-eating Bengal tiger. He was lying close to the bars which separated him from the middle compartment, and the bars were so wide apart that he could easily have thrust his paws between them and reached the reporter. There was a wicked gleam in the big tiger's great green eyes, and it seemed to gain in ferocity when Manager Conklin casually remarked that he was the most savage tiger he had ever seen in a menagerie in all his experience. The reporter he would have shrunk away from the terrible animal if he had had room, but the middle compartment was only about four feet wide, and in moving away from the tiger he would have been obliged to get close to the lions' end of the cage. This was not to be thought of for a moment, as the lions had become greatly excited as soon as they had seen the stranger come into the cage, and they were snarling and leaping about as though they smelled fresh meat and wanted to get at it.

The reporter looked at them as they dashed themselves against the sides of their den, and as he caught sight of the ferocious gleam in their eyes he began to think that he had better have taken Mr. Hamilton's advice after all, and remained outside. The only really cool man there at that time was Manager Conklin, for when the reporter cast a hasty glance at the little crowd in front of the cage he saw upon every face a strained, anxious expression. Keller, Hamilton and Winner had taken off his hat and was wiping his forehead, and Mr. Keller was as white as a sheet of paper. THE EVENING SUN man had but little time to notice this, however. He saw it all at once glance. In a moment more he had eyes for nothing but the occupants of the cage.

"Stand still here against the back of the cage, in the middle," said Manager Conklin in a low voice.

The reporter took one step backward, and felt the bars at the rear of the cage touch his back. Manager Conklin stepped to the door which separated the middle compartment from that in which the excited lions were confined, and, pulling the bolt, opened it.

And right then occurred something which the reporter is at a loss to fully explain. The newspaper man is a confirmed cigarette smoker, and has been for many years, but it would certainly seem that at that supreme moment when he was to meet two ferocious lions face to face he would not have thought of smoking. At this writing, several hours afterward, he cannot remember that he thought of it at all. But, be that as it may, he certainly did take a cigarette from his pocket and light it. It wasn't a piece of bravado—he didn't feel brave at all—it was simply a purely mechanical action. The proof of this is that he discovered with surprise, after he had come out of the cage, that he was smoking a freshly lighted cigarette.

As soon as Manager Conklin had pulled the bolt of that door from its catch the lion sprang against it and forced it open. He was closely followed by the lioness. The two great animals bounded swiftly into the middle compartment where the two men whom they could have killed at one blow were awaiting them. The presence of a stranger seemed to excite them to fury. They threw their tawny bodies against the sides of the cage and snarled and growled in rage. The lion's body rubbed against the reporter's leg, and as the monarch of the forest felt the contact he roared with all the power of his mighty voice.

Swish! and the rawhide whip which Manager Conklin carried cut full in the lion's face. It was a cruel blow, but it was a necessary one. As the lion felt its sting he snarled and showed all his teeth, but he knew that it was his master who had struck him, and he bounded back into the compartment from which he had come. The lioness followed close after him.

As soon as they had leaped in Manager Conklin sprang for the door to close it, but before he could do so the lion had dashed against it again and was back in the middle compartment more enraged than ever. This time the lioness—she had followed close after her mate—showed her ugly disposition.

She backed into the corner of the compartment by the bars of the tiger's den, and showed all her teeth as she swayed her body from side to side as a cat does when about to spring upon a bird. Her mate was bounding about the compartment like a rubber ball. Twice he sprang into the air as high as the reporter's head.

But Manager Conklin knew where the greater danger lay. He happened not to notice the lion at all. The lioness claimed all his attention. Lifting that terrible rawhide whip again the instant the crouching lioness a blow across the eyes which brought her to her senses in a short order. With a howl of rage or pain she leaped back into her compartment, followed this time by the lion.

Manager Conklin had failed to fasten the door before, but not so this time. With a movement as rapid as that of the lions themselves he was at the door in a flash and had sprung the bolt. The lions were in a towering rage when they found that they could not get out again, and they dashed their huge bodies against the bars in a vain effort to break through them, while they howled and snarled and gnashed their teeth in unison.

All this performance had been watched with terrible interest by the man-eating tiger in the other compartment only two or three feet away. The terror of the India jungle was almost beside himself with excitement. His long claws were unsheathed and his fangs were running with saliva as he lashed his sides convulsively.

If he could have only broken into where the lion tamer and the reporter stood he would have torn them to pieces in the twinkling of an eye. It would have needed red-hot irons instead of a rawhide whip to have subdued him, and it may be remarked that red-hot irons are not in the contracts on hand at Madison Square Garden. As the reporter left the cage the tiger thrust one great paw between the bars and tried to reach him, but the distance was a few inches too great, luckily.

When THE EVENING SUN man reached the ground again Keller rushed up to him and threw his arms about his neck. The great magician, who has travelled all over India and a good part of southern Africa, was completely overcome with excitement. He hugged the reporter as if he had been a long-lost brother, and when he had finished hugging him he grasped his hand, and as he rung it with nervous energy, he said:

"I wouldn't do what you did for one million dollars."

THE VISIT TO THE TIGERS.

The feelings that agitated the mind of the reporter who had watched his fellow scribe pass through the exciting ordeal related above in his own words may better be imagined than described. The thing had been done and the lions had been visited. But it seemed to him that the lions had done very much the most of the visiting, and as it had been practically demonstrated that a reporter could go into their den and come out again alive, he didn't see the use of visiting the tigers at all. Why couldn't that part of it be taken for granted, anyhow? But a hearty handshake from his companion, accompanied by words that audibly boomed a great danger, assured him, and he wouldn't have shown that white feather if he had been sure of losing a leg. So, when Superintendent Conklin told him to get ready, he stepped promptly to the railing, dodged under it, and mounted the steps. He had been told by the superintendent that it would be impossible to release the tigers so as to allow them in the same compartment with himself and the reporter, for the reason that they were fresh animals, unbroken to the sight of strangers in their midst, and that it would be suicidal to attempt to handle them in a manner similar to that in which the lions had been handled. He further allayed the reportorial fears by assuring him that tigers were of a much fiercer and more treacherous disposition and were twice as quick in their movements. The reporter thought that if this latter was a fact, a Bengal tiger could give chain lightning a handicap and outrun it.

"Now, when you get into the den look out for their claws and see that they don't catch you, or they'll tear your arm or leg right out of the socket. Be particularly careful to keep in the rear of the cage and look out for this big male tiger over here; he's a vicious devil." This was positively refreshing. It was delightful. Such a prospect for a few moments' pleasure of an ecstatic sort sometimes turns men's heads. It turned the reporter's, for by the time he had reached the top step his distorted vision saw forty tigers instead of four, and each of them had eight feet, armed with sixteen murderous-looking claws each. It was a rare sight, truly, and one the writer will not soon forget. As he pushed his head through the small door, and wondered if he would ever come out of it alive, the scenes of his childhood passed rapidly through his mind. Hethought of distant friends and things, and wondered what would be said when the next shower of meat was gathered up in Madison or elsewhere. He wasn't just positive as to where he would be found. Another step forward and retreat was cut off, for Mr. Conklin banged the heavy iron door shut and locked it.

Everything in that menagerie seemed distorted and distended. The faces of the reporter's friends outside looked larger than usual, and all wore the same expression. Keller's bald head shone in the electric light like a polished door knob, and was dotted all over with beads of cold perspiration. Poor fellow, he suffered as much from anxiety as did the reporters themselves.

The heavy rawhide carried by the Superintendent was soon at work on the tigers. That particularly fierce gentleman who occupied the second floor front made himself felt before the visitors had been inside the cage two seconds. A light iron-grated door, or more properly a barred door, for it was constructed of half-inch round iron rods, running vertically at a distance of five inches apart, was all that separated the beast from his coveted prey.

The door was made to swing open in the middle, and it didn't reach to the top of the cage by about a foot. It was a weak looking sort of an affair, and was fastened by a drop bolt, also of half-inch iron, which fitted into a niche in the floor. It was plain to be seen that it would open easily under pressure.

The reporter took a position in the rear of the cage and tried to look both ways at once. Do as he would, he couldn't keep track of all the tigers. Their big striped bodies bounded hither and thither, and they seemed anxious to have a taste of his flesh. While he was gingerly stepping an inch or two to the right to escape the formidable claws of a giant paw thrust through the partition bars on his left he felt a hot breath in his face, and a growl or roar sounded in his very ears that fairly made his hair stand on end.

A quick glance around, and the terrible red jaws of that particularly ferocious tiger of the second floor front were seen within less than a foot of his face. The animal had sprung at the swing doors, caught them at the top with his forefeet, and was trying to get his head through the opening over them. And he all but succeeded, too. To describe the thoughts that flitted at lightning like speed through the reporter's brain in that second of time would be an unending task.

He moved only a little, but enough to escape the threatened danger, only to look the other way and find the whole tiger household up on the grated doors, snarling and roaring at him, their little greenish yellow eyes emitting scintillations of pale light, and their cruel white fangs sheathing and unsheathing as they snapped their red jaws together in anger and excitement. From the nose of the bad tiger, who occupied the second floor front, to the fangs of his neighbors, who lived in the rear, was just forty-two inches.

Midway between these, and these stood the reporter, dodging hither and thither to escape the muscular paws as they were thrust through between the iron rods in the door, in an endeavor to reach him and rend him limb from limb. The danger and terror were further added to by the fact that the Superintendent accidentally left the bolt on the bad tiger's door in trying to secure it more firmly, so that the ferocious animal so far succeeded in his effort to get at the reporter as to force the doors far inward and part them sufficiently to get his head through, but was beaten back by the heavy rawhide in the Superintendent's hands.

The reporter, in this place, had time to think about two things. He knew that if he once got out the instant the outside door was opened. The first lesson in lion and tiger taming had been a success, and the reporters are now convinced that they can become adepts in the business in a short time, if they want to—but they don't want to. It was such an experience as has never before fallen to the lot of a newspaper man, so far as the showmen know. It was exciting in the extreme, hazardous and, perhaps foolhardy, but it was done in precisely the manner as narrated above, in every detail.

TALKS WITH OLD SHOWMEN ABOUT THE ADVENTURES OF THE EVENING SUN REPORTERS.

The cages of the lions and tigers at Barnum & Bailey's show were a great attraction last night. Thousands of persons gathered in front of them who had read of the daring adventures of the two EVENING SUN reporters who voluntarily entered the cages and "interviewed" the animals on Friday afternoon. The crowd talked of nothing but the recklessness and nerve of the men who had dared the lions and tigers in their dens. The men connected with the circus were talking about the adventure all day. Hundreds of people plied them with questions, but the circus men said that the story as told in THE EVENING SUN was a full and absolutely truthful account of what had happened.

A SUN reporter talked to a number of persons connected with the show yesterday about the exploit of the two EVENING SUN reporters. Mr. James A. Bailey, the partner of P. T. Barnum, could hardly find words to express his opinion.

"I never heard of such a thing being done before," he said, "and furthermore, it will never be done again in this show. I have given orders to that effect. When we are in winter quarters we break men in to handling the lions and tigers. When they go into the cages first we have a lot of men stationed just outside with iron bars, meat hooks, red hot irons, and other weapons to beat the animals off if they should attack the man in the cage. The reporters did not have anything to defend themselves with, except lead pencils and cigarettes. There was no preparation of any kind, and, if the lions or tigers had attacked them, the reporters would have been killed instantly. The idea of 'green' men going into those cages is terrible to me. Why, I wouldn't do what they did for any consideration. Nothing could induce me to go into one of those cages with George Conklin or anybody else.

"When 'Tody' Hamilton told me yesterday that two reporters wanted to go into the cages I never supposed for an instant that they really meant it. I thought they were joking, and I said: 'Yes, let them go in, if they want to.' If I had thought they meant business I never would have given my consent. That only goes to show that I didn't know what kind of stuff THE EVENING SUN reporters were made of.

"Hereafter if there should be any man, newspaper reporter or other fool, who wants to risk his life by going into a den of wild animals he will have to do it outside of this show. I don't want his blood on my hands, and I have taken steps to prevent any repetition of the performance. I consider that those reporters have had a wonderfully lucky escape, and to save my life I cannot understand how they managed to get out alive."

William H. Winner, the veteran lion and tiger tamer, was found in front of the cage containing the Bengal tigers that were visited by the newspaper men.

"I never heard of any newspaper men attempting such a thing before," he said, "and I consider that they ran an awful risk. The lioness in that cage there is a rattle-brained animal, and has only been in captivity a year. She is very excitable, and you can't depend upon her at all. Some days she is comparatively gentle, and again is terribly ferocious. When the reporters who went into that den stepped inside the door they took very long chances. So did Mr. Conklin, for how was he to know what would happen? Of course the animals might behave fairly well, then again they might not, and the chances were in favor of the latter.

"I never heard of such a thing before, and I doubt if another will ever try it. It's a very risky business, but those men did it and got off easily and nicely. They might go in a second time and get out alive, but if they tried it again it might be fatal. They might be torn to shreds and never have a chance for their lives. I wouldn't have gone in there with a club in my hand, for the animals might have got rattled and attacked me as well as the reporters.

"But those tigers are the bad ones. They are treacherous and ferocious to a high degree, and you can't depend on them a minute. They are worse than lions by far, and I would think twice before taking a stranger into their den. I think the adventure of those two reporters must have been very exciting to them, and it would have been much more so had they known what they have since found out by experience. I've been a lion tamer for twenty-eight years and have handled all sorts of cat animals, but never did I hear of such doings before. It was certainly a nervy act on their part."

Henry Barnum, who has grown gray haired in the show business, said that he wouldn't go into either of those dens for $10,000. He says that the longer a man is with a show, the more he comes to fear tigers and lions, and that nothing would induce him to take the risks the reporters took. He considered it a daring, but foolhardy thing to do.

William Newman, the well-known elephant trainer, said:

"When I saw those boys go into the dens I turned my head away and expected to hear a shriek at any moment. It was the most astonishing action on the part of reporters I ever heard of, and it certainly never was attempted before. I once went into a den of hyenas and came out alive, but into that tiger den or lion cage I wouldn't go for half of New York. I know both the reporters personally and well. They are the boys who rode my big elephants Gyp and Fritz in the parade, and are the first newspaper men who ever rode them. Fritz is a holy terror when he gets frightened, and if he runs old Gyp follows. I told them all about this and tried to dissuade them from going, but they didn't scare worth a cent. When I saw they were determined to go I said nothing more, but I tell you I was uneasy every minute until we got back to the Garden. At Sixth avenue and Forty-second street, where the elephants started to stampede, they sat as coolly as Arabs and never squealed. But another reporter fled in terror at the mere sight of a camel he had been selected to ride, and got out of the Garden before the procession started. When the boys told me they were going into the lion and tiger cages I did my best to dissuade them, for I knew it was useless. I tell you it was a dangerous thing, and I wouldn't do it for four Barnum shows. I wonder what they'll be at next?"

One of the elephant attendants, who was present when THE EVENING SUN man entered the cages, said concisely and staggeringly:

"I didn't think they would have the nerve to do it, but when I saw them go in, I looked around for a shovel and basket in which to scrape up their remains, for I was sure there would be a mess of blood and bones in those cages. Never heard of anything like it before."

Dick Elliott, the bird and animal man, who has been with the Barnum show for seventeen years, and who has seen several persons torn to pieces by tigers and lions, was found in the office.

"I wouldn't believe it was possible for those men to go into the dens and come out alive, but as I have just seen such proof of it, I would not do what they did for the Barnum show, receipts and all, and I've been around a menagerie all my life, and no man knows more about the habits of the animals than I do as an outsider. In 1870 I saw the lion tamer, Joe Whitter, almost torn to pieces in his den. He made a mistake, and George Conklin went into the cage a little later with a club and almost killed the lion. Poor Joe used to put his head into the lion's mouth when performing in his den. On this occasion he had just placed his head between the gaping red jaws when the brute shut down on him and literally bit his face off. The brute then bravely was seized by the lion again, this time being bitten through the leg. He was rescued after the animal had been burned with hot irons. Then George Conklin was sent for. He came and went into the cage. He took a club and beat that lion unmercifully, and, although the brute had tasted human blood, Conklin subdued and almost killed him. It was just such a lion as the one in the cage where the reporters were, and it's a mystery to me that a similar scene was not witnessed. Why, it was the most unusual and dangerous thing I ever heard of. I wouldn't have been in their shoes for anything on earth. When I lecture on animals I tell the menagerie I never watch the people, but always keep my eye on the animals. They are so treacherous that they'll snatch an arm off you quicker than lightning."

One of the most excited spectators present when the reporters went into the den, as related above, was Harry Keller, the magician. He is a warm personal friend of both men, and his anxiety while they were in the dens was painful to witness. When Mr. Keller was asked what he thought of the adventure he could hardly speak.

"Oh, how glad I was when they got out. I felt as if my own flesh and blood was in that den when I saw lions and tigers jumping and rearing about, springing hither and thither and almost upon them. They're both friends of mine, and, although they had only a little time before loaded me up with doughnuts and cakes and given me the grand razzle dazzle, I thought as much of them as if they were brothers. The agony to me was unbearable, and I wouldn't see the thing done again for any amount of money. I wouldn't let the boys do it, either, if I could prevent it. It was the nerviest piece of business I ever saw. They went in just to get the experience of standing face to face with full-grown vicious and treacherous lions and tigers, and I'm as glad to know they came out alive as if I had done the thing myself—which I wouldn't do for a cool million. It was a great act, but a dangerous one, I tell you. I saw it all, and I realize fully just what risk they ran."

General Manager Frank Hyatt, who has been in the business for twenty-seven years, and who has, as he expresses it, "been everything about the show," said that he had never heard of a stranger going into a lion's or tiger's cage before, and didn't think it likely that he would ever hear of another instance of it.

"There have been dozens and scores of newspaper men who passed in free tickets," he said, "but they all weakened when the time came to go in. I can't understand those EVENING SUN men's object in doing it. If they were going to get $1,000 apiece, and had their lives heavily insured, it might make some difference, but I understand that all they did it for was to get the story. It's a new one on me, and it beats anything I ever heard of for enterprise."

Superintendant Conklin, who took the reporters into the cages, is recognized as one of the most daring lion and tiger tamers in America. He used to put his head in the lion's mouth and make a graceful exit, and has had animals perform all sorts of tricks. He doesn't know what fear is, but he understands better than anyone, perhaps, the danger of handling lions and tigers. He has seen any number of men either killed or maimed by the animals, and he has had many narrow escapes himself.

"Of course," he said last night, "it is an old story for me to go into lions' and tigers' cages, but then they know me, and I understand how to handle them. I never took a perfectly strange man into a cage with me before, and I don't think I ever will again. When I didn't succeed in closing that door between the compartments I confess that I was quite nervous. You thought I were getting greatly excited, and I was afraid that the lioness particularly might get ugly. I could see that she was a little frightened, and fright is a great thing to be dreaded. When lions become frightened they lose all control over themselves, and will attack anyone, I never felt that I would completely lose control of the animals, but I knew that there was a chance, and a big one, that they might suddenly attack the reporter. If they had done so, I couldn't have saved his life."

Mr. Benjamin Fish, Mr. Barnum's private secretary, sent a great batch of EVENING SUNS to friends in England last night.

GOOD-BY NEW HAVEN FREIGHT DEPOT.

Tenants Must Clear Out by May 1 and Make Way for the City.

The Commissioners of the Sinking Fund approved yesterday the action of the Armory Board in ordering the purchase of the armory site at Park and Lexington avenues, Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth streets. The Armory Board designated the site for the use of the Seventy-first Regiment, but this designation may be changed.

The Sinking Fund Commissioners also passed a resolution approving the project of building accommodations for all of the criminal courtsonthe block north of the Tombs, bounded by Centre, Elm, White, and Franklin streets. Recorder Smyth, who has vigorously opposed this project, was not present. He objects to the site as malarious.

Comptroller Myers and Alderman Storm were appointed a committee to spend $1,500 in getting up plans for the new building, and the Commissioner of Public Works was ordered to clear the building now on the ground preparatory to demolition. The present tenants, who sublet from the New Haven Railroad Company, will have to get out on May 1. The company will get $10,000 for giving up a lease that runs another year.

HOW WAS THE ALBERT RUSSELL LOST?

Inclination to Discredit the Alleged Story of Two Survivors.

The bark Albert Russell, whose loss with all on board, except two sailors, was reported yesterday, sailed from this port on Feb. 9 for Brisbane, Australia, with a general cargo. She belonged to Boston. Her owner is D. F. Atkinson of Newburyport. The crew consisted of Peter C. Cane, captain; P. S. Larnsen, mate; Charles White, second officer; D. C. Navin, A. S. Casey, John Thompson, A. Yanson, Henry Ford, H. Fursh, Alfred Anderson, S. Segall, John Chertnero, Charles Boyle, Carl Anderson, August Kummermann, and George Patterson, seamen. They were all foreign born except the mate and second officer, who were born in Maine, and A. S. Casey and Charles Boyle, who are New Yorkers. Vernon C. Brown, agent for the Albert Russell, is disinclined to credit the story of the vessel's loss. He thinks she could not have been wrecked two days after leaving this port and then have drifted about for thirty days and never reached shore, without having been sighted and heard from long before. She left here with an easterly wind, and could scarcely have got seventy-five miles out when she is said to have come to grief. She certainly, he thinks, could not have drifted to where she would be likely to be picked up by the whaler who hails the news from St. Vincent, West Indies.

Rat and Mocking Bird in Battle.

LOUISVILLE, March 30.—Dr. S. L. Butts of the Wayt Dental Company of this city has a white mocking bird, a species remarkable for its rarity. On Wednesday afternoon the Doctor had been feeding his pet and left the cage on the floor with the door open. The bird was in the cage pecking at some seeds when a large rat entered, evidently intending to make a supper of its occupant. The bird could have easily escaped through the open door, but it was evidently not averse to battle and flew straight at the rat.

A spirited combat, witnessed by Dr. Wayt and a friend, ensued. The bird pounced upon the rat and pecked at its eyes. The rat bit at the bird, but the latter was so active that the rat succeeded only in nipping the ends of its feathers. The bird's point of attack was always the eyes of the rat, and it soon had the rodent's face covered with blood. The rat finally endeavored to escape from the cage, but was so blinded that he ran against the wire work several times before he found the door. But having reached the outside, he was too much weakened to dash off, and was followed by the bird, which soon pecked both eyes out, and did not cease its warfare until the rat tumbled over dead.

The City's Debt and the New Park Bonds.

Comptroller Myers and Chamberlain Ivins were yesterday appointed a committee by the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund to examine the laws and ordinances affecting the whole financial system of the city. The sources of city revenues, the management and accounting thereof, and everything necessary to make a basis for the proposed change in the treatment of the city debt are included in the scope of this committee's inquiry. The issue of $9,860,276.03 of new park bonds was authorized and they were exempted from local taxation. Bids will be invited on Monday.

Arrested On Suspicion of Arson.

Simon Sandowitz of 342 Cherry street, and Philip Coplan of 47 Eldridge street, kept a dry-goods store at 2,998 Third avenue. It caught fire on the night of Feb. 16, and the eight families living above it had a lively time getting out. The store was insured for $2,500 in two companies—$1,500 in the London and Liverpool and Globe and $1,000 in the Phœnix of Brooklyn. The merchants offered to settle for $750. After an investigation Fire Marshal Mitchell ordered the arrest of Sandowitz and Coplan. They were locked up in the Tombs yesterday in default of $10,000 bail.

Chinese Decoration Day.

This is the Chinese Decoration Day and Chinamen will visit the various New York and Brooklyn cemeteries with cart loads of roasted pigs, chickens, &c., to lay before the diminutive graves of their departed friends. It is a great national holiday in China, but the Chinaman in New York will probably not ask the Mayor to run up the big yellow dragon on the flag staff of the City Hall. They will content themselves with flooding it at its usual place in Mott street.

WONG.

A Lower Seat for Lee Phillips.

Lee Phillips, who resigned as chief examiner and secretary of the local Civil Service Commission last week and will be superseded by Gunther E. Ackermann to-morrow, was appointed yesterday by Mayor Grant to be one of the examiners. As clerk his salary was $4,500. As examiner he will receive $10 for each session he attends.

In these days when food adulteration is so common, it is a comfort to find an article for the table that is thoroughly reliable. Walter Baker & Co.'s breakfast cocoa is eminent in the limited class. No chemicals are used in its manufacture, and it is absolutely pure. It forms moreover, a delicious and healthful drink, as refreshing and more nutritious than tea or coffee, and free from the injurious effects that those beverages sometimes produce. And it is very cheap withal. The house of Walter Baker & Co. has maintained for more than 130 years a great and honored repute by the excellence and purity of its manufacture.

GOSSIP ABOUT THE BOXERS.

A PLEA FOR HUMANE BOXING IN PLACE OF BARE-KNUCKLE SLUGGING.

The Days of the Old Prize Ring Over Forever—The Coming Contest Between Mitchell and Jem Smith.

Though the old prize ring, with its endurance bare-knuckle contests, is practically dead, never to be permanently resurrected, boxing had never so many supporters and admirers as at present. This is true of England as well as of America. A most noticeable instance of the interest now taken in static events on the other side is given by the attention paid them by the leading daily English newspapers. Heretofore these journals seldom noticed a fight unless it was for an international championship, but within the last two months the *Times* has published extended reports of the fights between Joe Hayes and Ted Pritchard, and Bill Goode and Nunc Wallace. Yes, the days of the old ring have passed, but those of glove contests under Queensberry rules have taken their place, and during the winter just passed the Londoners have seen more good fighting in boxing competitions than was ever known there in a season before.

Those who love the manly art will be glad to learn that efforts are being made to render glove contests less cruel than were most of the old-style battles, and it is believed that these efforts will be successful. I have labored for years to bring this consummation about, and I hope yet to see boxing rules so amended and humanized that contests under them will not be banned by law.

The last number of the London *Sporting Life* received on this side of the Atlantic, speaking of this movement, says: "We hope and trust and believe that the praiseworthy efforts to put the noble art of boxing and boxing men on a higher and more independent scale than ever was anticipated, even in the palmiest days of the prize ring, will meet with their reward. At the same time there is a possibility of the sport degenerating into cruelty, and that is a matter to which we particularly draw attention, in order to prevent its receiving more serious consideration from other quarters. Great power should be entrusted to the judges, and they should be the most competent that could be appointed, so that, when they see, as the majority of the spectators can see, that one man is plainly inferior to the other, the combat should be officially stopped and judgment given accordingly, inasmuch as no end is served, whatever gameness is displayed, by seeing a man punished beyond his abilities to resist. Being great admirers of boxing ourselves, and knowing that its hold is great throughout the best representatives of English athleticism, and also believing in the saying that 'the iron hand should be governed by a velvet glove,' we particularly desire to impress this point in the most high-toned manner.

"The English of this laudable sentiment is rather uncouth and strained, but the sentiment itself is as bright as a silver dollar fresh from the mint.

"The men to bring about a reformation in this matter in America are those in authority in amateur athletic clubs. Unfortunately a good many of these gentlemen are possessed with the idea that they will not be known as athletes unless they adopt the manners and airs of the professionals. As a consequence they often look and act like so many well-dressed 'toughs,' and are never so happy as when a couple of gentlemen amateurs are slugging one another like a pair of coal heavers. They were to bear in mind that the prime object of the manly art of self-defence is to enable a man of moderate size and strength to resist the attacks of bigger and stronger men, they would put a much higher estimate on skill than they do, and a much less one on mere slugging. Then they would not permit men to be knocked in the presence of ladies, into semi-insensibility and left weltering in their gore, as was Harry Prittner of Philadelphia when he met Jim Brown at the championship contests of the Amateur Athletic Union at the Metropolitan Opera House a week ago. Very little boxing, in the opinion of the writer, was in the third round that Prittner was overmatched, and yet the judges of the night could not agree on a verdict, and the referee cruelly sent the poor fellow up to be smashed and hammered like a butcher's block, and finally to be knocked in a heap—a bleeding and stunned mass of humanity. I hope the police will put such contests between professional fighters. Why do they allow gentlemen amateurs special privileges? New rules for the government of amateur contests should be made as speedily as possible. They should favor skill in every possible way, and frown upon mere slugging. The man who can hit the most times and does the bulk of the leading should get full credit therefor, but two good stops should count as much as one ordinary clean hit, and a clever duck which evaded a blow should have due consideration. Above all things, when it becomes apparent that one man is overmatched and that a continuance of the contest by the merest accident, it should be the duty of the referee to stop the contest and award the victory to the cleverer boxer. In amateur contests I would have no divided authority; therefore, I would have no judges. The referee should be an expert judge of the rules and of boxing, and he should be a man of merciful, humane man. Then we would be able to have all our boxing competitions in public and in every city in the land, and to enjoy them without any more fear of police interference than there now is in a regular theatre.

"George Godfrey's easy victory over Jack Wannop was rather the nature of a surprise, for the talent expected the darky would be beaten, and beaten, too, in a canter. The boot was on the other leg, however. The tyke was never in it. After it was over we learn that Wannop was not in condition, owing to a severe attack of rheumatism, which prevented him from training. He was hog fat, and we all know that rheumatism and that does not amount to much. He was a great fool to attempt to fight Godfrey under the circumstances. Had he won, it was the intention to send him to California to try to lower the pretensions of Peter Jackson, should he defeat Patsy Cardiff next month. By the way, Lon Myers, the great sprinter and runner, told me last night that the report that Jackson was a West India darky of French or Creole descent is not true. He met Jackson in Australia and saw him defeat Slavin (who has just beaten Jack Burke) there in a barroom fight. Jackson told him that he was born in Jacksonville, Fla., and that he took his surname from that city. Myers says that he is as quick as a cat, has a splendid left, and was away and ahead of any man in Australia as a fistic athlete. Many people here think he will have a walkover with Cardiff, but Patsy is strong and a bit awkward to get at, and he may do better than is expected.

"Jem Smith, the English champion, and Charlie Mitchell are to box ten rounds to-morrow night, and all England is agog over the event. It was at first intended to have the affair come off in public, and even now there is a pretence that it will take place in an east end of London theatre, but the odds are that it will be pulled off in Bedford Hall, a country residence near Newmarket, belonging to Mr. Abingdon. Lots of people will be called upon to pay $150 a piece to see the go, and 100 spectators at this price will make the gate aggregate $15,000. Even two-thirds of this sum will be a nice plum for the thumpers to divide between them. Charley is sure to demand a square division of the gate money, win, tie, or lose. Smith is a very good man, and Mitchell knows it, and Mitchell has cunningly cast an anchor to the windward by complaining that his right hand is bothering him. Perhaps it is, but if he should win, what a big thing for him to be able to say that he outboxed England's champion with a lame hand! Should the verdict be against him he can lay the blame on his crippled fin. Charley is a cute one. He is like the fellow who set the trap to catch the coon "a-coming or a-going." Sullivan professes to believe that the whole affair is arranged so that it will result in a draw. Perhaps he is right. We shall know all about it on Tuesday mor