

The Rebellion of a Millionaire

BY JULES VERNE DES VOIGNES.



Leaped straight for the throat of Jerry and bore him, crashing, down.

The feeling of wild animals for human beings is presented here in a common way, but is inconsistent with the persistence of wild animal tamer. On that account it is appropriate to state that this story, in every essential, is founded on fact.—The Editor.

The canvases were wet and sticky. A drenching downpour early in the forenoon had put them in that condition. Streamers hung in little gummy balls, and flapped back and forth with doleful pretense of hilarity when they were coaxed into it by the fresh breeze.

Farnum sat on a box southeast of the dressing tent and thought of Davidson. There had been a good deal of friendship between the two men in one way or another ever since the short, pudgy, good-natured "manager" had come into the circus, and so into Farnum's life. Davidson had ruled the two magnificent lions—the bills introduced them as the "Twin Hercules"—and ruled them as Farnum had known no other man to do save one, and that one had so far outreached Farnum's life and remembrance that the necessity of filling Davidson's place, and that, too, quickly, failed to awaken the recollection.

For Davidson was dead—had met his end at the sudden bursting forth of the savage instincts of the very beasts he had bantered, and teased, and bent to his own will, the while devils burned in their eyes and fear dilated their nostrils. The Twins loved few, and that love they could give never wholly repaid nor subdued their inherent hate of man and passion for the kill. Farnum believed this. And if they hated—well, this last was the only theory he could go upon in determining the cause of that gruesome scene when the keepers dragged Davidson, mangled and bleeding from the reach of the Twins just before the performance in Roburne.

"God!" said Farnum aloud, and shivered at the vision before his eyes. The streamers were showing being beaten into full length by the wind. Men staggered about reeking with sweat, trundling tent paraphernalia here and there with reckless precision. Stettiner, the manager, coming unexpectedly around the dressing tent, ran full tilt into a fellow with a huge stake on his shoulder. In unbalancing himself he caught sight of Farnum.

"What in thunder are we going to do?" he growled, dropping his thin and wiry length on the box.

Farnum straightened down his coat collar and put his back in a more comfortable position against a stake.

"Well, Dave's gone, poor devil!" he soliloquized softly without looking up. "Who'll you get?"

"That's what I want to know. I wired McIntyre—he's the only fellow I could think of, but no one knows whether he'll come or not. Likely not, he can't get here before Thursday anyway."

"Two nights," computed Farnum. "Enough to ruin us," grunted Stettiner. "The Twins are the biggest thing we've got. It's all up if we don't find somebody. Get your head to work, can't you?"

"A man can't think to order," objected Farnum, rolling a cigarette and studying matters. "I know only one man who could manage the Twins, and he's—well, he's dead."

"Nonsense. Why not? We've got to have him!"

"I tell you he won't do it," repeated Farnum bluntly. "He had exclusive control of the Twins seven years ago, and now he can't lift his clear every day with what you and I make." Farnum leaned over and whispered in the other's ear.

"Millionaire, by Jove!" exclaimed Stettiner, started. "And you say he's done it in seven years? No use then trying to reach him in the money line. Is there any other? Friendship?"

"Stuff!" vented Farnum. "Doubtful if he'd look at me. No, I won't say that—I don't know that I believe that. I don't think anything—anything we could offer—would move the new James Yapple. The Yapple I knew would have done anything for the Twins—the man simply idolized them, and the circus, too. I can remember myself how he hated to give them up. Fact, he said to me when he went: 'Farnum, I hate to give this up, but it's the best thing for me, don't you think? I've got my chance in the world now, and I'd be a fool not taking it.'"

"You don't believe it—in any way," persisted Stettiner eagerly. "No, I don't," was the hopeless answer. "The whole affair could be kept quiet, you know. And two nights—"

"You're an idiot, Stettiner," Farnum broke in with emphasis. "Farnum broke in with emphasis. With this Farnum thought he had

given him his final answer, but he had not reckoned with the impulsive Stettiner's suggestion had put into his head, nor even with himself. What power had those huge hulks of lion flesh over the millionaire James Yapple? What could did circus smells and noises sound for a man seven years beyond the domain of the savdust world? Nothing, thought Farnum, but he had an intractable desire to learn the truth. There was no possibility of success for the undertaking, but Farnum went.

Yapple was in, the boy told him, and Farnum scribbled a word or two on his card—and waited to hear that an interview was denied. But he was ushered ceremoniously into a room where Yapple rose with a tired motion from a desk littered with papers and received him with a slight show of cordiality.

"I hope I'm not taking too much of your time," ventured Farnum when the boy had gone. For a moment he regretted he had come. Yapple was changed—wonderfully.

"Not at all," said Yapple, running a hand through his thinning hair. "I'm glad to see you. How does the circus go?" he inquired dispiritedly.

"Much the same. Davidson was killed last night at Roburne. You remember he had charge of the Twins."

"Oh!" exclaimed Yapple. "That's awful! What was the trouble? I thought the Twins liked him."

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agerie quarters. He eyed Yapple's appearance incredulously, but came forward and shook hands gratefully. Both he and Farnum could see that Yapple was gulping in the scene just as it came to him—the smells, the sounds, the conglomeration and the inarticulate noises of the animals, the shouting and tramping of the gangs outside, everything like a man thirsting, thirsting, and never satiated. Farnum bent over and whispered in Stettiner's ear.

"He's dreaming, do you see?" he said. "He's living and dreaming in a real world. Gad, and how he's enjoying it, too!"

Late afternoon had been cloudy, and the flaring lights already made gray, swirling patches of the mist clouds in the tent. The three of them tramped around to the place where the Twins' cage had been rolled. It was a test moment—that meeting of Yapple with the lions. Every nerve in the man seemed to be a quiver.

"They look ugly," Farnum commented, aside to Stettiner. "They're on fire with the taste and smell of blood."

"They've been nasty all day, so Jim tells me," rejoined the manager. "I'm afraid they can't be handled. I wouldn't risk it for—" Stettiner shivered slightly, and edged back from two pairs of deadly eyes lighting the gloomy depths of the cage.

Yapple walked steadily to the bars, and without a tremor laid a caressing hand on a glossy paw half pushed through. Instantly there was a deep, vibrating roar, a flash of fur, and a mighty body launched itself against the steel rods. Yapple held his ground unflinchingly, only dropping his hand with a quick motion. The other animal had been aroused, and the pair of them crouched, glaring and lashing rolling steel muscles under innocent coverings of soft, furry hide. Then Yapple began to talk to them in a low, patient voice, keeping his eyes full upon theirs as he became a master of the lion's, scolding, showing them that he had no fear, only love, trying to awaken the old affection that had been theirs and which they had only missed, not forgotten. It was a voice speaking across seven years of absence, and it was a voice the like of which Stettiner had never known and of which Farnum had only a memory.

Was there some change, some transformation taking place in those brutal intellects? Was there a softening of bloodshot eyes, a relaxing of those insuperable bodies? If not, then two men handling close behind them were blind, deaf, and without simple understanding. For Yapple had first put his hands on the bars; then touched the furry-suppressed animals themselves, and they had let him do it, half protesting. Still Yapple talked on some times pleadingly, sometimes imperiously, slave and master, but master even when slave. And Farnum and Stettiner marveled and beheld it all without knowing when it had taken place and why only that the Twins' love had sprung up anew, as an old river cuts a new channel, slowly at first with constant eating and eating, then bursting forth in uncontrollable joy to sweep all before it.

"That's enough, man," said Stettiner, hoarsely, in Yapple's ear. "You're a wonder. The Twins'll die for you any minute. They're yours, body and soul. I don't understand how you did it."

Yapple wiped the sweat from his forehead and turned to them, smiling. Farnum noted the quiet fearlessness of the man in thus giving the Twins a place of plenty, when his eyes should not be upon them. He discussed it with Stettiner afterward, and their admiration and wonder grew apace.

"I think I'll practice them a bit. If you have no objections," Yapple said to them, as if over some pleasant memory of the man he had taken some of the tricks we used to do together, you know."

"Certainly!" assented the manager, and strode off to see to the condition of the big steel cage in the arena.

Revelations were impotent beside what Farnum and Stettiner saw in that brief hour's practice. To Stettiner it was the unmasking of a new and invincible personality; but to Farnum it meant simply a fresh grasp over the old, strengthened and directed by the knowledge and experience of seven years. Yapple had come into his own; his power had returned, not broken, not even marred, but heightened and fortified. He handled the Twins as if he might have taken them in his hands and trounced them soundly but kindly for disobedience. And through all his true and their were studies of love between beast and man beyond whose face expression no artist could hope to attain.

It was over at last. The crowds, the bands, the circus folk were gone. Yapple had come out of it strangely rested and triumphant, though the fever burned in his fingers when he shook hands with Farnum and said good night.

"You're a marvel, Yapple," said Farnum under his breath. "I'm hot and tomorrow night for fear you'll fall out brokenly. I'll spend one more night; then it's got to end," and somehow those words revealed a great deal to Farnum that he had never known before.

"I got this wire from the rascal McIntyre," Stettiner reported the next afternoon. He thrust a sheet into Farnum's hands and said:

"So he's coming, is he?" commented Farnum without enthusiasm, as he read it. "Well, we're lucky dogs, Stettiner."

"The trouble is your substitute's better than McIntyre can be in fifty years," grumbled the manager, tasting his words sourly. "Is Glover?"—he smiled at the alias; then bit seriously into his cigar again—"is this Glover coming tonight?"

"I've got his word," said Farnum quickly. "Gad; we've got to have him. I only wish we could keep him. I'm glad, Stettiner. He put his cigarette back between his teeth, and commenced to smoke nervously.

Farnum was much too busy after that to think about Yapple, but he did think in the city, and the crowd promised to be phenomenal. Advertising—the usual mode of advertising—had not done it. Farnum figured that it was simply an "old days" and "old days" type of thing, generated by Yapple and the Twins, which, flying from mouth to mouth, was going to flood the tent. He did not like to think just what a disappointment the non-appearance of Yapple would mean to that throng.

It was about time for the performance to begin when Farnum got back to manager's quarters. He strained his gaze for Yapple, but he did not see him. Finding him already rigged for his turn, standing beside the Twins' cage. He was talking to them as he had the night before, only there was a different touch and meaning to what he said. Farnum realized suddenly that the goodbyes were being said and that he was an intruder. But it was too late to get away, when Yapple turned and spoke to him. Farnum came nearer then, his eyes going from Yapple to the Twins, and from Yapple to the Twins, finally resting on the man's face and staying there.

"You're so much like a family of lovers, or something, you three, that I had to disturb you," he began hesitatingly, and with an odd little laugh that was meant to cover his embarrassment. "I'm going to be mighty busy later, and I wanted to say a word to you while there was time."

He cleared his throat, supposedly from the dust. It was a queer place to speak what he had in mind—there in the midst of the dirt-choked tent, in that strange, palpable confusion of relief and sound, of healthy movements, suggested rather than heard or seen, the voices of the keepers, monotonous, tired, the distant blaring of bands, the sputtering lights casting shadows athwart the cages.

"Yapple, I've met a few men, and never one like you. I thought I knew you seven years ago. I didn't. And those seven years have made you seven times what you were. I'm glad to know that you've got another chance of staying where you were! What do you think of all this finance tommyrot now? You know that you've had another chance? Can you shake it off without a fight?"

"Fight!" Yapple ground it out almost between his teeth. "I've been fighting myself these two days." Farnum saw his face and believed. "What do you know about fighting, yes, you must see it. You've got your eyes." Yapple turned slowly and looked at the Twins, so that his face was hidden as he added: "I've made my choice, Farnum, and I've got to abide by it!"

"Yes, you've made your choice," Farnum said, and choked.

They stood there in silence, feeling that silence was better than words. After a while, they walked over and watched the crowds in the main canvas. Stettiner came up in a flurry presently, saying something about Jerry, the half-grown elephant which Yapple used in his last trick with the Twins, and dragged them off to conduct an examination. The keeper was complaining of Jerry's actions, and Stettiner, nervous and fearful, demanded whether Yapple considered the animal safe.

"I think there will be no trouble," said Yapple, looking at Jerry. "Afterward Farnum rallied inwardly at a restraint that had held him back from entering a protest then and there. He had kept silence against his own convictions, but he made a desperate effort to clear it up in time to witness Yapple's act, which came along near the end. In spite of his hurry, Yapple had been in the cage several minutes and was complaining of the crowd, in which Jerry juggled skill with the Twins, when Farnum entered.

One of the presentiments which come to those who must look danger squarely in the face and know it, came to Farnum as he watched them let Jerry in at the door, and he knew that he was with him long before. He knew then that his presentiment did not rest against the lions, but against the awkward, shambling gaited elephant. And yet Jerry's appearance was everything to discourage suspicion. It was not until Yapple's first command rang, clear-cut, that Farnum stopped groping in darkness and faced the truth.

At Yapple's first word, Jerry obeyed sullenly; at the second, he hung back; at the third, he brought him to open defiance. Yapple stoop quite cool and fearless, calling out the order to him. Sudden rage seemed to possess the brute, and with a snort and a bellow he charged straight for Yapple. The man held his ground up to the last instant, then stepped quickly and lightly aside. Farnum breathed again. He tried to move, to do something, but his limbs were numb and worthless. Keepers were running forward, surrounding the cage, yelling and cursing uselessly. A prolonged hush of horror had stilled the house. Then some one screamed, and what Yapple had feared most happened. Jerry went mad, and tore in a great black blur for the place where Yapple stood. The man shot, once, twice, thrice, but death itself could not have stopped that fury.

Yapple was doomed. The inevitable tragedy that the next minute was to know burned before Farnum's eyes. Terrific cries went up from the crowd. Yapple was facing yet another peril. His back was toward the Twins, and he was at their mercy also.

But the end was a miracle. Like whirlwinds the lions had crouched for the spring-like driving of their massive bodies, alive with sinew, leaped straight for the throat of Jerry and bore him crashing down. The Twins' love and understanding had saved Yapple!

Terrified and in uproar the people had been driven out, and out the tent, once more empty, listened unmoved to the inarticulate words of the man in the cage. For Yapple was tenderly binding up the wounds of the Twins, blinded by his tears and ut-

terly contemptuous of his own blood-stained garments.

"Hello, Yapple, grinding away as usual, eh?" Campbell dropped into Yapple's offices the following afternoon, tossed his well-groomed figure into an inviting chair, stretched his legs comfortably, and puffed out smoke from a big, fat cigar. "I want your advice on that traction deal Shellito had in mind. It's got to be trimmed into shape before night, and I'm getting confoundedly sick of this slaving anyhow. But say—" Campbell paused, chucking and laughing—"say, I did not get out of my shell last night. What do you think I did, Yapple? Hist! I mustn't speak so loud. Well, sir, I went to a circus."

Yapple leaned back, closing his eyes. "Yes, sir, I went to a circus," repeated Campbell, with the air of recounting some exploit. "Fooled the whole bunch of 'em for once, and got off by myself. Reminded me of the old times I used to trot all day barefoot after the parade. Brought back the old days with a vengeance. Gad! and I enjoyed it, too! There was one fellow there that was great. Had two like lions with him—bustlers—and the way he handled them! Honestly, Yapple, I don't believe that fellow needed a cage to perform in."

The pencil between Yapple's fingers fell to the desk with a sharp little click. He brushed his hand over his face, but he did not speak.

"He simply took the house by storm. Never saw such perfect control as that man had over those beasts. They seemed fairly to worship every look he gave them; and I believe they proved it, too, by what happened in the very

last trick—the one they never finished."

"Campbell pulled his cigar from his mouth and, leaning over, began gesturing for emphasis.

"There was a big elephant in their last trick," he went on, "and the brute went into a rage while the fellow was trying to get him to perform; flew at him once, but he dodged. The second time the animal charged, he shot three times in succession. I think he hit his mark, too, only it seemed to do no good then. It was all up with him when all of a sudden those two magnificent lions sprang at the elephant's head, neck and neck, and brought him to the ground like a chunk of lead. Not a shadow of doubt they saved his life, but Gad! it was awful. Such nerve in a man! Why, I asked myself over and over, what couldn't a man do in our world who had grit and magnetism and pure courage enough to face that kind of thing night after night? That's the kind of stuff that would outlast hundreds of us poor wretches through the tight places instead of casting us up weak and miserable wrecks. Yapple, it made me feel like crying out: 'Man, man! Don't you know you're ruining the greatest opportunity of your life? You might have made the—'"

Yapple had risen from his chair, and Campbell stopped involuntarily, unable to interpret the drawn face of the man before him. Yapple was trying heroically to throw himself together.

"Campbell," he said slowly, "you know, and I know, that if that fellow loved those animals as they loved him—if the circus was the whole world to him, then he was a thousand times

better off to stay there always!"

As if ashamed of his outburst and eager for it to cool, Yapple walked quickly to the window and looked down upon the busy streets. A minute he stood there. When he came reluctantly back, his face was the passive face of the Yapple of Finance.

"If you're ready, Campbell, we'll look over that traction matter now," he said.

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