

## INTO THE LION'S DEN.

### THE BOLD ADVENTURE OF TWO NEW YORK REPORTERS.

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

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

"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" men to give up their scheme. 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 these animals in their house; 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 breakdown.

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 containing the lions and the other in a similar position of 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 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 MAN 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 descend 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 coat 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 doesn't 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.

Keeping 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 put his paw 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 would have shrank away from the terrible animal if he had had room, but the middle compartment was only about four feet wide, and 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 dens 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.

"Tody" Hamilton 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 one glance. In a moment more he had eyes for nothing but the occupants of the cage.

"Stand still there 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

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 eagerly into the 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 appeared not to notice the lion at all. The lioness claimed all his attention. Lifting that terrible rawhide whip again he dealt the crouching lioness a blow across the eyes which brought her to her senses in 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 spit with impotent anger.

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. His jaws worked 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 do that. 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 spit with impotent anger.

Midway between 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 let slip 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 door 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 bolt shot to place, and the reporter shot 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.

Smarter Than the Doctors.

"Yes," said old Mr. Jones, "the doctors are getting smart nowadays; why, they've got instruments and things made so that they can see clear through you."

"Humph," replied old Mrs. Jones. "I don't see anything particularly smart in that. I've been married to you for thirty years, but I saw through you in two weeks after the wedding."

Mr. Jones rubbed his bald head for a moment and thoughtfully resumed his reading.

Sunshine After Rain.

Wife—"And you won't give me the price of an Easter bonnet?"

Husband—"Nope."

W. (with a sob)—"You are one of the meanest men, one of the niggardliest that—"

H.—"You are a lady and a model wife."

W. (with dignity)—"Thank you. You have told the truth. And I suppose I need not inform you that the opinion is universal that the meanest men always get the best wives."

H.—"Here, take the pocketbook. That speech is worth a new hat."

W. (smiling)—"I always knew you were a dear."

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 reporter's 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 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 prospect for a few moments' pleasure of an ecstatic sort sometimes turns men's heads. It turned the reporter, 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. He thought of distant friends and things, and wondered what would be said when the next shower of meat was gathered up in Kentucky or elsewhere, for 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 the 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 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 were seen within less than a foot of his face. The animal had sprung at the swinging 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 door, 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.

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#### AN ENGLISH EXECUTION.

The Gedalingham Murderer Suffers the Extreme Penalty.

On Wednesday morning, Ebenezer Samuel Jenkins, 20, described as an artist, was sentenced to death at the last Guildford Assizes for the wilful murder of his sweetheart, Emily Joy, at Godalming, on Jan. 7th, was executed in Wandsworth Prison. The morning after he had induced Miss Joy to accompany him to his studio, he told a man that he and his sweetheart had agreed to die together, but that after he had jumped into the water his heart failed him. The man then told him he must take him to the police station. Upon arriving there the prisoner made a statement in which he admitted having.

#### DECoyed The Girl.

to his "studio" on a sham errand, and had thrown her down, and in a sudden fit of madness, strangled her. This statement he repeated three or four times. The police at once proceeded to the studio, and on entering found the body lying on its left side. The face was very much disfigured, and the body the poor creature was twisted twice round her neck and stuffed over her mouth and nose. Her handkerchief was found in her mouth, and her neck was very much bruised. The defence urged at the trial was one of insanity, but neither of the doctors who were called considered Jenkins insane. Since his conviction the prisoner conducted himself exceedingly well and paid great attention to the ministrations of the Rev. G. B. De Renzi, the prison chaplain. He rose on Wednesday morning shortly after six, after passing a good night, and ate rather a large breakfast. At three minutes to nine a procession, consisting of Mr. G. T. Abbot, the under-sheriff, Captain Helby, the governor, and the other officials, was formed outside the condemned cell; the culprit having

#### QUIETLY SUBMITTED.

to the process of pinioning. Jenkins walked to the scaffold with a firm step, looking very pale and emaciated, and responding with great fervour to the prayers of the chaplain. The bolt being drawn, the man seemed to die without a struggle. Berry allowed a drop of 6lb. 6in.—The usual inquest was afterwards held on the body, and the jury found that the deceased had been executed according to law. There had not been an execution at Wandsworth for nearly four years.

#### The Panama Canal.

The captain of a British steamer who has recently inspected the line of the unfinished Panama canal reports that along the banks are scattered many pieces of valuable machinery that have never been used, and over which the grass is growing. This shows that the administrators who control the affairs of the bankrupt company are as careless and derelict as the officers of the company were throughout the years when the canal diggers were at work. Large quantities of very costly machinery were brought to the isthmus every year, only to be left to rot in the mud. If the inside history of the company could be laid bare