

THE CHRONICLE.

WILKESBORO, N. C.

The men from the "fresh-water colleges" seem to be able to row in salt water pretty well, too.

The postoffice at Mount Vernon, N. Y., will hereafter be closed on Sundays. This is the result of a campaign conducted by the Christian Endeavorers, who got up great petitions and forwarded them to the Postmaster-General.

According to recent statistics published by the Government at Bernese there are 509,000 men in Switzerland liable to military service. Of this number 233,000 are incorporated in the active service, and 276,000 kept on the rolls in case of emergency.

The only opposing candidate to the re-election of President Diaz, of Mexico, obtained a piano the other day on the instalment plan, and had it forthwith moved to a pawn shop. The money (\$300) raised on the instrument is said to have been expended for campaign purposes.

There are twenty-six cremation associations in active operation in the United States. The oldest was organized in Washington, Penn., in 1876, and the two newest are found at New Haven, Conn., and Elizabeth, N. J. (1894). The number of incinerations reported is 3670. The number incinerated in Europe from 1876 to 1893 was 19,700. The membership of the American associations is about 8000, and the adherents of the method number about 100,000.

The Kiel Canal, which was opened with such splendid ceremonies, has now been in use over a year. The maritime trade has not availed itself of the shortened passage nearly as much, thus far, as it was supposed it would, and in consequence of the fact the German Government has determined to reduce the tolls. The relative receipts from tolls are said to have fallen off considerably since last October, even with the winter season excepted. Nearly all the vessels passing through the canal are German, but there are also some Danish, Dutch and Swedish, a very few English and a Russian and a Brazilian ship of war.

The Atlanta Constitution exclaims: "The eyes of the world are fixed admiringly upon the flag of Cuba. In America the prayers of seventy millions of people are with her and the heart of the country beats as the heart of one man. Though Cuba has a population of less than one-half of that of the United States in 1776, Spain has sent over to the island twice as many troops as England sent over to conquer America. The statement throws light upon the situation and shows that the Cubans are making one of the most heroic fights this world has ever known. Such heroism as this is bound to succeed."

Queer methods are occasionally adopted in London to raise money for the hospitals. The Lancet says that on a recent Sunday in a certain part of London there was a street procession organized in aid of a hospital. In addition to the usual bands and banners of friendly societies which accompany these processions, there were tradesmen's carts, decorated with flowers and vegetables, the name of the owner of the vehicle being, of course, conspicuously visible. But the principal "attraction" was a man on what was supposed to be a sick-bed, and attended by two nurses, one of whom was a qualified nurse and the other a person masquerading in a nurse's costume.

Philadelphia has opened twelve public school-yards as playgrounds for children in the more densely populated parts of the city, announces the New York Post. At each of them is conducted a morning kindergarten, under the direction of public school teachers, and, in addition, each playground is supplied with toys and games for the amusement of the younger as well as the older boys and girls. A sand heap, with spades and buckets, is placed in each yard, and tents or awnings are fitted up in those yards not having sufficient shade to protect the children from the sun. The cost of fitting each yard with the articles needed for the games was about \$15. There are seats for mothers bringing their babies, and chairs and tables for the kindergartens. The janitors, with authority increased by appointment as special policemen, have the care of the toys and games and exercise a general superintendence over the children. Like provision was made for the children last summer and with very satisfactory results.

AQUARELLE.

A moorland margin of the sea
With gypsy roses overrun;
Above it all a blue sky free,
Where walks the golden sun.

Gray rocks and dunes of silver sand;
Beyond—one sail of purple shows;
And drowsily across the land
The pine's fresh fragrance blows.

Here is the paradise of rest,
Of peace the pinnacle supreme;
Lie down upon the earth's warm breast
And yield you to her dream!

—Frank D. Sherman, in Harper's Weekly.

THE BLACK PANTHER.

BY J. LAURENCE HORNIBROOK.



TEDMAN'S world-famed Hippodrome and Menagerie (which, as might be gathered from the flaring posters that enlivened all the dead walls of the town, had been patronized by several of the Crowned Heads of Europe) was about to honor Littlethorpe with a visit. Not that, in an ordinary way, the proprietor of this regal show would have deemed Littlethorpe worthy of such a distinction; but, as he took care to give out, it was a convenient halting-place between two important centres. Therefore, with the triple object of resting his horses, holding a couple of full-dress rehearsals, and affording the inhabitants a treat of a life-time, he decided upon a one-day's sojourn. On their part, the public in general displayed a due appreciation of his laudable intentions, and prepared to accord to show a vociferous welcome.

By ten o'clock two enormous tents, one circular, the other oblong, were struggling to maintain their upright position in the face of a pretty stiff breeze, which threatened every moment to level them to the ground. Strings of horses, spotted and speckled like the patriarch Jacob's kine, were led down to the river, followed by an enthusiastic and admiring crowd. The members of the equestrian troupe wandered through the town in search of breakfast; and, judging by the roar after roar that came from the zoological section of the show, an erstwhile king of the forest was clamoring loudly for his.

The oblong tent was set apart for the menagerie. Inside, the close, fetid atmosphere seemed to have a very drowsy effect upon the solitary custodian, for he lay stretched face downwards on a pile of straw in the corner, his head pillowed upon his arms. The great breadth of back, the girth and sinewy hardness of his powerful limbs, proclaimed him to be a veritable Hercules. He was none other than the renowned and much-advertised lion-tamer, Signor Petro Farreli, otherwise, plain Peter Farreli.

At the further end of the tent stood a long cage, capable of being divided into two compartments by means of a sliding barrier. It contained the lions. Gaunt, skinny, hungry-looking brutes they were, the bones sticking out sharply through their tawny hides. From end to end of the cage they moped in a ceaseless, monotonous tramp, like restless spirits that know no peace. Every minute or so one of them would rear up his head suddenly and glare through the bars, as if contemplating an imaginary crowd, and then resume his weary round.

The Polar bear seemed to vie with them as to the extent of ground he could cover, but the brown specimen sat upon his haunches looking decidedly mournful and out of sorts. Signor Farreli slept through it all. An occasional growl or a snarl did not appear to disturb the quietude of his slumber. But when the two hyenas became engaged in a lively discussion over the thigh-bone of a horse, he raised his massive head and glowed around the tent with sleepy eyes.

With a sudden twist of the body he rolled over on his back, and for some minutes lay there contemplating the fluttering canvas overhead. Then he indulged in a mighty yawn, shook himself and sat upright. In a listless sort of way he plucked a straw from the heap and began toying with it indolently. His manner was thoughtful and preoccupied; it almost seemed as if he had something on his mind—something, perhaps, which had been suggested to him in his sleep.

Having given the matter, whatever it was, five minutes' grave consideration, he dismissed it with an impatient "Pshaw!" and sprang to his feet. Lounging across the tent, he went up and stood before a cage which contained the latest addition to the menagerie. It was a black panther, a full-grown specimen of this somewhat rare variety, known to be the most ferocious of the whole species. Farreli had been trying his hand at taming the brute; but as yet, though his reckless daring often prompted him to foolhardy feats, he had never ventured into the cage for more than a second or two at a time.

Striding up and down, with the stealthy, gliding motion of a cat, the fierce beast kept its head persistently turned towards the man, and regarded him with savage, blinking eyes. With his face close to the bars, Farreli watched every movement of the animal, as if each had a significance which he alone understood. Then he seemed to drop back into a reverie; and in this fit of abstraction he commenced striking idly at the panther with the straw in his hand.

An hour or so later the tent was densely packed from end to end. When Farreli appeared on the scene, armed with his short whip, and marched boldly up to the lions' den,

the hush of awe fell upon the spectators. He proceeded to lash the cowed brutes round and round the cage, made them leap through hoops of fire, and perform other surprising feats, all of which elicited shouts of applause from the multitude. The display wound up with what was designated "a lion hunt," in which there was a tremendous flashing and banging of pistols, and a wild skurry on the part of the beasts to get into the corners.

When it was all over, and the tamer had backed out of the cage, the manager mounted the steps to address the crowd. He extended a cordial invitation to all present to attend the performance that evening, promising them that, among other marvelous attractions, they would witness an extraordinary and unique feat of daring on the part of the celebrated Signor Petro Farreli. He worked upon their curiosity, there was scarcely a man or woman in the assembly who did not resolve to avail themselves of the opportunity, even if it cost them their last sixpence.

In the interval, after the animals had been fed, Farreli wandered up into the deserted tent, and again approached the cage of the black panther. Somehow, it seemed as if an irresistible impulse drew him to that spot. It was growing dark now, and in the gloom he could just distinguish the red glare of the creature's eyes as it crouched down in a corner.

"Halloo! Signor Petro," cried some one behind him. "Taking stock of that beauty, eh?" Farreli turned round sharply, and found himself face to face with the ring master, Mark Radford, the only member of the whole troupe with whom he was upon any sort of intimate terms.

"You're not afraid of him, are you?" continued Radford, pointing to the dark recess in which the panther lay.

"Afraid? No!" returned Petro, contemptuously. "I've got the mastery over him already; I can quell him with my eye. Besides," he went on, vehemently, "if he cuts up rough, I could strangle the brute before he had time to get his claws into me. Oh, no; it isn't the panther I mind; but—"

"But what?"

"I'm afraid of that woman!"

"What woman?"

"Come outside, Mark," said Farreli, taking his friend by the arm as if compelled to confide in him. "I'll tell you the whole story right off, and then you can judge whether I have cause to feel a bit uneasy about the panther."

They strolled out of the tent, arm in arm. Two or three flaring naphtha lamps, suspended from poles, threw a broad fringe of light around the entrance, glimmering faintly upon a row of intent, eager faces in the background. The two men turned aside and wandered off into the darkness. When they came to the low wall which bounded the market place, Farreli stood still and listened. Then, as if assured that they were alone, he seated himself upon the edge of the wall, and commenced his story.

"You remember that fellow Vallard, Mark?" he said, with a seriousness that convinced the other there was some startling disclosure coming. "Should think I do," replied Radford; "Rowdy Vallard, we used to call him. A good bare-back rider, but a desperately cantankerous, quarrelsome sort of fellow. He left us very suddenly, too; and no one seemed to know what became of him."

"Yes," muttered Farreli, "that's so. Well," he went on, sternly, "you'll hear now what befell him. When we were running the show up in York last winter, I had the ill-luck to fall foul of that man Vallard. It was about a girl. I had noticed her hanging around the circus for two or three days—wanted to become rider, or something of the kind. I managed to strike up an acquaintance with her. She told me her name was Florence Mayhew, and bit by bit it came out that she had a sweetheart in the show. But for the life of me, though I kept nagging at her about it, I couldn't get her to say which of us it was."

"One night, when the performance was over, I set out for a quiet ramble through the streets. I wandered on through slums and alleys, until I got down close to the river. "It was a dismal and deserted spot. As I looked around I saw a man and a woman ahead. I knew at once who they were—Vallard and Florence Mayhew. Her secret was now out; but I couldn't help wondering what she saw in that brute to attract her."

"They seemed to be wrangling about something. Suddenly they stopped short, as if to argue the matter out. While I stood watching them I saw Vallard raise his hand to strike the girl. My blood boiled, Mark; the next second I was at his side and flung him on the flat of his back in the mud. He got up and went for me furiously. We had a stand-up fight; and—well, he came off 'second best,' as we say in Ireland."

"When it was all over I turned towards the girl, half expecting she would throw herself into my arms or something of that sort. She gave me a look—you should have seen it, Mark—and flew at me like a tigress. Good heavens! I little guessed what a demon was in that woman! She screamed with passion: she tore at me savagely, and shouted that I had killed her sweetheart. I shook her off, and left them to square matters up between themselves."

"I took a smart turn of a mile or two along by the river, for I felt a bit ruffled, and wanted to walk it off. I was coming back slowly, not minding much how I went, when I came upon a huge pile of timber stacked up on the bank. Just as I passed, a man sprang out upon me with a knife in his hand. It was Vallard. He made a savage blow at me, but I managed to twist myself out of the way in the

nick of time, and let him have a heavy right hander in return.

"He dropped the knife and reeled back as if half stunned. His heel caught in a stray log; he tried hard to keep his feet, clawing the air with his hands as his body swayed out over the brink. Then, before I could reach him, down he went into the river!

"I rushed to the side and peered over. He must have gone to the bottom like a stone, or else the current whipped him away out of sight, for I never saw eyes on him again. I tore up and down the bank, shouting for help, but there wasn't a soul within hearing. I stood still to listen for a cry from the drowning man. The only sound that reached my ears was the rousing and gurgling of the water.

"I gave up the search at last, and went home considerably sobered. The rest of that night I sat in my room thinking the matter out. I came to the conclusion there was nothing to be gained by making a fuss over it, and determined to keep my own counsel.

"A day or two later the girl turned up at the show, and began to make inquiries about Vallard. One evening I happened to meet her; she stopped and looked at me—and upon my word, Mark, I never got a worse look from any of these savage brutes over there. I believe she partly guessed that I had a hand in her lover's disappearance.

"Shortly after that we went on tour, and I was beginning to think I had got out of the mess uncommonly well. I never heard of Vallard's body being recovered; there was no mention of the affair in the papers, and the whole thing seemed to have blown over quietly.

"One night—it was at Huddersfield, I remember—when I went into the tent, ready for my turn, the first person I laid eyes on was Florence Mayhew. What on earth brought her there, I wondered? She was standing in the front row, just like an ordinary spectator, but it was easy to see by her looks she had some special reason of her own for being present. All the time I was in the case with the lions I felt that those dark eyes of hers were glued upon me. I didn't mind it much at first—thought it was only some strange whim on her part, for women sometimes take queer fancies into their heads, you know, Mark.

"But the very next night she was there again, watching me like that black panther did a while ago. The strange part of it was, she seemed anxious to avoid me the moment my performance with the lions was over. I couldn't for the life of me make out what she was up to; it worried me; and, to tell the truth, Mark, I didn't altogether like the look of it.

"We moved on to another town. Well, I was done with the girl now, at any rate, I told myself. Not a bit of it! She turned up at the evening performance, went through the same part, and disappeared. Next day the show was at Stalybridge; and Florence Mayhew was there, too. Night after night, no matter where we went, she came and stood in front of the lions' cage, never addressing a word to anyone, but watching me through the bars as if that was all she had to live for.

"I was getting to dread that girl, because I know she had a grudge against me; and women generally have a queer way of revenging themselves. What she was driving at, what her motive was in following me about from town to town, was a constant worry to me. To be haunted in this fashion, without having the faintest notion of what it meant, is bound to tell upon you in the long run. I was completely in the dark; that was the worst of it.

"When this sort of thing had been going on regularly week after week, I felt that I must get to the bottom of it somehow. I sat down in the tent one night after the performance was over, determined to puzzle the matter out. Bit by bit I got at the truth. I understood the meaning of it all now; I saw what that she-devil was up to. Good heavens! she, it gave me a creepy sort of feeling in spite of myself. No one but a woman could have hit upon such an extraordinary way of gratifying her malice, and set about it in this cold-blooded fashion."

"What was it?" demanded Radford, with an eagerness which showed a deep interest in Farreli's singular story.

"Just this: I needn't tell you that when a man steps in among the lions he requires to have all his wits about him. It is a ticklish business, no matter what people may say. Your eyes must be in each corner of the cage at the same time, watching every twist and turn of the brutes. If your attention should be drawn off for a single instant you are done for! And that is what the woman was trying to do!"

He got off the wall, took his friend by the arm, and the two began pacing slowly up and down.

"If you had known her, Mark," he went on, thoughtfully, "you wouldn't wonder at her doing a thing of this kind. You see, it was an easy way of seeking to revenge herself upon me; all she had to do was to watch and wait. She must have felt that the very fact of keeping her eyes steadily fixed upon me night after night was bound to take effect sooner or later. And she was right. More than once I caught myself on the very point of looking round at her. I had to fight against the impulse; it was dragging at me from the moment I entered the cage—and every night it seemed to be growing stronger."

"What did you do to get rid of her?"

"Nothing. At first, in a sudden burst of rage, I made up my mind to wait for her outside the tent the next evening, and strangle her on the spot. Then something prompted me to fight it out with her, and not give her the satisfaction of knowing that she had got the better of me in anyway. I have stuck to that ever since; and this

silent, deadly struggle is still going on between that woman and myself. How it will end, God only knows."

The spacious tent was crammed to its utmost extent. The dromedary camel came in for a good deal of attention, and the wily elephant faced smugly upon biscuits and cakes. The greedy little eyes of the monkey gleamed with delight at the many hands stretched out with nuts, while the brown bear devoured buns with befitting solemnity.

In the midst of the merriment there was a sudden lull, the crowd began to sway and surge forward towards the rope which was stretched across the further end of the tent. All eyes were turned expectantly in the direction of the lions. Signor Farreli appeared upon the scene, his tight fitting costume displaying to advantage his massive chest and the great swelling muscles of his powerful limbs.

He shot a keen, searching glance through the crowd in front; and then, with a jaunty air, stepped briskly into the cage. He was greeted with a roar that shook the tent, and made the spectators feel they were getting good value for their money. The lashing and scramble commenced; the lions growled and snarled, but Farreli drove them round with his whip, and sent them backwards and forwards through the hoops. The burning of red lights and flashing of firearms followed, at the conclusion of which the tamer emerged triumphantly from the cage.

The event of the evening was now about to take place. The spectators were prepared for something with a strong spice of danger in it; something that could be talked over with wonder and admiration for months afterwards.

The manager mounted a stool, and with a hand on each hip, proceeded to announce:

"Ladies and gentlemen, Signor Farreli will now perform a feat of daring hitherto unattempted by any tamer in Europe or America. In the cage to the left you see a specimen of the fierce black panther, or jaguar, an animal which, in its native state, roams the tangled forests of South America in search of its prey. Signor Farreli will enter the panther's cage in your presence, and thereby demonstrate the dominion which man is capable of exercising over the most ferocious of the brute creation."

The assembly cheered; Signor Farreli bowed. He whispered a few words to the manager, and moved away towards the cage. The panther was prowling up and down, watching the crowd with a sort of wondering interest. As Farreli approached, the beast paused in the midst of a stride and glared at him defiantly. The tamer mounted the steps fearlessly, the spring lock of the wicket clicked and the next second he had slipped into the cage.

With a savage growl the panther whisked round and crouched against the opposite wall. At one side stood the man, erect, motionless, undaunted, in the full consciousness of his mighty strength and indomitable will; at the other the infuriated beast cowered, its body quivering with rage, the small ears laid flat with the head, and the tail flapping against the floor.

The spectators kept perfectly still, and looked on with bated breath. It almost seemed as if a sound—a motion—would break the spell which held man and beast apart. The tension was so great that even a stifled exclamation might cause it to snap.

Suddenly there was a slight movement in the center of the crowd, and a woman pushed her way to the front. Those who were closest to the cage saw a strange look appear at that instant upon Farreli's face; he grew deathly pale; his features twitched convulsively, and for one-half second his eyes were withdrawn from his enemy. It was enough! The spell was broken; with a terrific roar the panther shot into the air.

Farreli saw it coming; saw the great jaws extended, and the gleam of the fierce white teeth. On the spur of the moment he trust his left hand into the gaping mouth, while with his right he gripped the brute by the throat. The panther struck him full on the chest, the savage claws were dug into his flesh; then, with a crash, man and beast went down, and rolled together on the floor.

A shudder ran through the horrified crowd; the women screamed and fainted; the men pressed forward towards the ropes with white, agitated faces, as if fascinated by that deadly encounter. Two attendants came running up with heavy iron bars, sprang into the cage, and rained blow after blow upon the panther's head. They succeeded in separating the combatants; the beast, dazed and half strangled by that awful grip, was driven back into a corner while the man rose from the floor and staggered out of the cage.

That Farreli had come in for a severe mauling was only too evident. His clothes were torn to shreds, his blood flowed freely from the numerous gashes in his chest; but, standing erect, he faced the crowd with a fierce and determined aspect. His angry eyes swept through the swaying throng, flitting from one white face to the other as if in search of that relentless enemy of his.

But the woman was gone. From that hour she passed out of his life, never to trouble him again. When he failed to discover her in the crowd, his head suddenly drooped, and he leaned heavily upon his friend Radford, who had hastened to his assistance.

"Well, Mark," he whispered, grimly, as he limped away, "she has had her revenge, you see. We are quits now; and—I forgive her!"—Strand Magazine.

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Hallowe'en.

Hallowe'en is a festival that should be especially honored by young people. There are so many amusing and good-natured tricks, and so many innocent bits of "white magic" appropriate to the time, that no self-respecting youngster should allow its observance to be omitted by careless "grown-ups."

There, for instance, are the "snap-dragon," and the "bobbing for apples," and the blowing out of a candle hung at the end of a stick suspended on a twisted string and balanced by an apple so contrived as to deal a smart blow upon the cheek of the too lingering candle-blower. And there are the many charms and contrivances that, once consulted in honest faith by rustic lovers, are now the pastime of boys and girls during an autumn evening.

On Time.

The President of an accident insurance company, strictly in the line of advertising his business, has been telling a wonderful story, which he locates in Brooklyn, where numerous trolley accidents occur. He says: "Some time ago a large policy holder in my company was run over by a trolley car, and his right leg painfully crushed. He remained conscious after the shock for three minutes, during which time he pulled out his watch and called the attention of the crowd to the fact that it was just fifteen minutes to 12 o'clock. His policy expired at noon, and his loss was rewarded by the immediate payment of his weekly indemnity without controversy or litigation. The man was a one-time winner. He called time before death knocked him out."