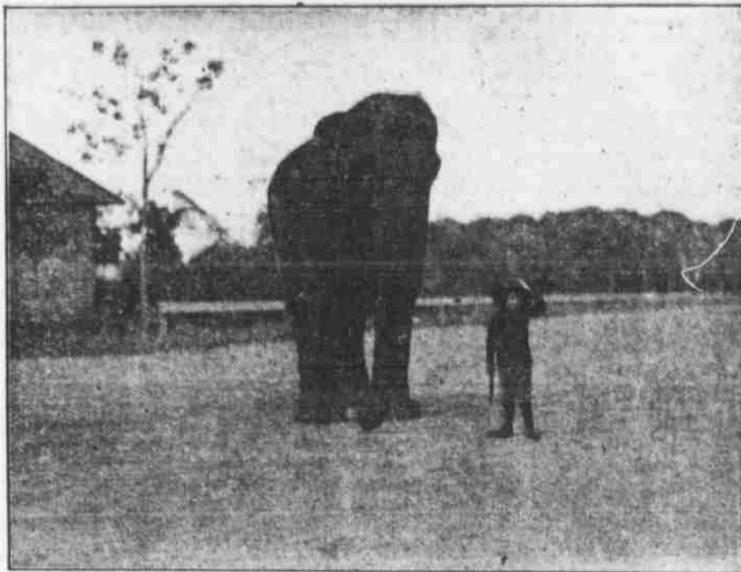


Smallest Elephant Trainer in the World



"DOWN, BABE, DOWN."



EVAN AND BASIL TAKING A MORNING WALK.

THAT'LL do now, Babe," said the animal trainer, extricating himself from the serpentine embrace of a great black trunk.

"She's very playful, Babe is," he added, somewhat breathlessly, which was natural, for Babe and her mate had been playing ball with him, throwing him from one to the other and catching him beautifully in a manner calculated to inspire a basket ball rooter. "She's a good deal friskier than Basil. You see, she's only half as old as Basil, who is 60 this year."

Babe was stamping her foot, just like an infant, and demanding more play. Frank Healey, the trainer, patted her on the trunk and said, "I guess she won't be contented now till Evan comes around. He's my son, you know, and he can do more with these two fellows than I can."

So he sallied forth to find Evan, and his visitors went with him, expecting to see a big, husky animal trainer like his father. But all they saw was a yellow head full of curls peering shyly from behind a tree and vanishing as soon as the strangers approached.

Dragged forth finally by the arm, with his face turned bashfully away, behold Evan, age 4 years and 11 months, master of the elephants.

Master Evan's unwilling way lay through an unrestful avenue of wild animal cages, from which the big cats spat and roared their disapproval of intrusion. A black panther and a young lion particularly were so vehement in their frank expressions of dislike that the strangers took painful care to remain well in the center of the thoroughfare. But Evan tried to hide his blushes behind the black panther, whence he was extricated on the verge of tears.

In the doorway of the elephant house the parental grasp relaxed and with a dive Evan got between the mighty wrinkled pillars that supported Babe.

That playful young creature had her vast ears thrust forward like immense banners. Her puggy eyes were all a-twinkle. She gurgled deep down in her caverns, like a mountain full of sizzling hot water.

Gently, ever so gently, her big trunk with its pink orifice reached out and seized the little chap. Slowly she rocked him to and fro while he sat, holding to the trunk as calmly as other children would hold to the ropes of a swing. But Basil wanted a bit of it, too. He reached and pranced and trumpeted until Babe swung Evan over to him. A toss and a catch and Basil had the boy. Back and forth they swung him like a ball, but with a care and gentleness that seemed impossible in creatures so huge.

A muttered word from Healey, and Basil lifted the little golden-haired trainer up, up until he held him ten feet above the ground. Then the trunk curved backward and set him as softly as if he were bisque on her big back. He sat there a few moments slapping the leathery skin, and then with a sudden motion slid down the sloping back to the tail, swung from it as if it were a rope and let himself drop to the ground, while Basil and Babe trumpeted and wagged their ears, watching for him to reappear between their legs.

"Safe?" said Mr. Healey. "Why, of course. I'd rather have Evan play with the elephants than with other children. They take as good care of him as any nurse could. Every morning they are restless till he comes. And as for him, he is always in here. He plays among their feet and on their backs all day long. They wouldn't step on him, no indeed. They take more care not to hurt him than a human being would. See here."

He lifted the boy up to Babe's left ear and commanded: "Listen, Babe. Something to say to you."

Babe stuck her ear out and inclined her head toward the boy, while he talked in her ear. Then she nodded her head wisely



EVAN HEALEY, 4 YEARS AND 11 MONTHS OLD, THE YOUNGEST ELEPHANT TRAINER IN THE WORLD.

and grunted.

Healey dropped the boy. Evan stepped alongside of Babe and slapped her on the leg as high up as he could reach, which wasn't higher than a short man's knee. "Down, Babe, down," he said.

Babe looked at him with a funny look of appeal in her eye. She wiggled her tail and flirited her trunk and turned her head away, saying plainly, "Let's talk of something else." But the baby trainer was insistent. And Baby sighed—a rumbling, roaring sigh, as if a steam engine were to whisper, "Oh, my!"

Then, with a weary grunt, she held her trunk out to him coaxingly. But Evan only patted it and cried shrilly, "Down, Babe, I say." So Babe, looking as if she had no friend on earth, grunted once more and dropped laboriously to her fore knees. With another plunge that shook the elephant house she let herself fall cumbrously on her side, and stuck her four feet into the air. Then she held out her trunk and wiggled her upturned ear. Evan scrambled with hands and knees up her massive, throbbing side and perched himself, a little bright spot, on top of the great tonnage of black flesh.

Then Basil had to go through the performance, and she, too, begged Evan to let her off, but finally did what she was bid-

den like a lamb. Each elephant at once searched his clothes for sugar when he let her get up.

"Basil," said Mr. Healey, "is one of the biggest elephants in America now. She is a little more than nine feet high, and Babe is almost as big, but thirty years younger. Basil and Evan have been friends almost since Evan was born. He was born in Willis avenue, New York, and when he was only a few months old we came to Glen Island, and ever since then Evan and the elephants have played together. When we first came here Basil learned to wheel Evan around in the baby carriage, and it soon got so that we could turn her loose with the little one and feel that he was safer in the protection of his great nurse than he would have been under the care of any human attendant.

"We used to say that Evan had the very biggest nurse girl in the world. She was as gentle and careful with him as she could be. She never let go the handle of the carriage, and she would push it up and down all day long if we let her. The baby was so accustomed to it that he soon began to play with her trunk, and she, in turn, didn't like anything so much as to be allowed to reach into the carriage and fondle him and let him pull her trunk.

"As soon as he could crawl he went into

the elephant house by preference. And now, no matter what time of the day he goes there, the elephants are ready to play with him. If he doesn't appear at his usual time they make a great fuss and won't keep quiet until he arrives."

While the trainer was speaking the big brutes were jostling each other to reach Evan and tap him with their trunks. He stood between their legs, leaning against them, and the elephants never moved a limb without looking and feeling to make sure that they would not step on him.

It wasn't possible to see a bit of him when he got well behind one of the huge legs, but he was the master of the elephants for all that—Kipling's Toomali in real life.

Mr. Healey brought out a grindstone, and Evan stood before the elephants and commanded Basil to take hold. Again Basil groaned with unwillingness. Evidently her idea of play was not to do tricks. But Master Evan permitted no malingering. "Take hold, Basil, right away," he said, and Basil, with one last plaintive groan and an extraordinarily mournful expression, reached over and began to turn the handle. "That won't do," said Evan, firmly. "Take hold like this." He stooped under the trunk, pulled it to the grindstone and pressed the end of it firmly against the handle. "Now turn it," he said, and Basil sadly turned it without taking an eye from the lad.

"Now, Babe," he ordered, and Babe unwillingly did the same. But Basil had not obtained her usual reward and she trumpeted and thrashed her mighty feet around, making a noise that scared the strangers into jumping. Close beside Evan the huge feet went up and down, but Evan never turned. He finished with Babe, and not until then did he give the indignant Basil her piece of sugar.

"The grindstone," said Mr. Healey, "is being used now by Evan to teach the elephants to turn a barrel organ. It would be a little too expensive to begin with the real thing. They've smashed this arrangement several times. They don't like to learn any too well, but they always come around to it. Evan doesn't let them off from a single lesson, and, no matter how much they may object, they always do it in the end."

He has taught them to lie down and play dead, to throw up their trunks and trumpet the "royal salute," just as Toomali did, and to pick out the American flag and wave it. Their musical education has been finished so far that they are ready to play the real thing.

Evan walks around Glen Island every day with the big elephants following him placidly and watching his every motion. He takes them out to pasture and to water and drives them home again as other boys of his age and size would drive goats. In the four and one-half years that he has spent on Glen Island he has not missed visiting his two playmates a single day except when he was ill, and then the two elephants nearly became ill, too.

He is allowed to go wherever he pleases on the island, with no one to watch him. He wanders in and out of the menagerie all day long, but his father says that he knows too much to get within reach of the cat animals and the bears, although he is in and out of the tiger, lion and panther houses all day long and his way lies right alongside of the cages that contain the grizzly, cinnamon and Polar bears. He has never been hurt by an animal.

He gets his love for animals legitimately, for his father has made many trips to Asia and Africa to get wild animals for American shows, besides having been a collector of snakes and big reptiles in Cuba and South America. He has been an unusually successful animal trainer almost all his life, and Evan has made up his mind that he will become one, too.