

THE CONDEMNED

A Great Story of the Circus
By Courtney Ryley Cooper

THE long, canvas-covered cars of the World's Amalgamated circus rocked and swayed with the uneven roadbed of a side-line railroad. It was night—a black night of slashing rain and shrieking winds and jagged lightning. In the dripping, tarpaulin-covered cat cages the feline jungle beasts roared and hissed and leaped. Here and there along the rocking train storm coats made their way from one den to another, carefully list-

hook an elephant when he's scared? Get out of here!"

The other man drew back sullenly.

"He broke his chains, Mason. I had to do something!"

"You didn't have to try to cut him to pieces, Rajah!"

The command was sharp, yet with a friendly quality. The beady eyes of the elephant turned in the direction of his master. Slowly Mason went forward. "Come on, Rajah,

"I'm not going. You're red-lightin' me off this show because you're jealous o' me, Mason. I'm a better animal man than you ever thought o' being."

"Get up that ladder, Brace, and pack up!"

"I'll not! I'll—"

"Get up that ladder!" Mason came forward.

The bull-hook circled; a snapping, clacking blow, a gasping cry. Slowly Mason sank to the straw-covered floor of the car. Brace stood over

crushed body of Jim Mason, the menagerie superintendent asked:

"What happened?"

"I—I don't know, sir. I was making my way along the top of the bull cars when I heard Mr. Mason shouting down here, and a terrible racket. I climbed inside, Rajah trampled him. I drove Rajah back with the bull hook, but it was too late. Mason told me privately that he was always a bit afraid of Rajah."

"Funny he never came to me about it. Still, Mason always tried his best—guess he thought he could handle him."

"That was about it, sir."

"Hate to see this!" There was a tone of sorrow in the superintendent's voice. "Old Rajah was the first elephant this show ever had." His eyes grew reminiscent. "Guess it wouldn't have been the show if it was today without Rajah. Used to be about the whole thing—helped unload in the morning, worked around the lot, made parade, acted as about all the menagerie we had, went in performance, and then put the show back on the train at night. But I

"All right, Rajah," he ordered. "Get with it."

The elephant wheeled grudgingly; his eyes rolled, and his trunk began to curl slowly upward. A shrill trumpet-blast sounded, angry, threatening. Brace moved into the more open space of the car.

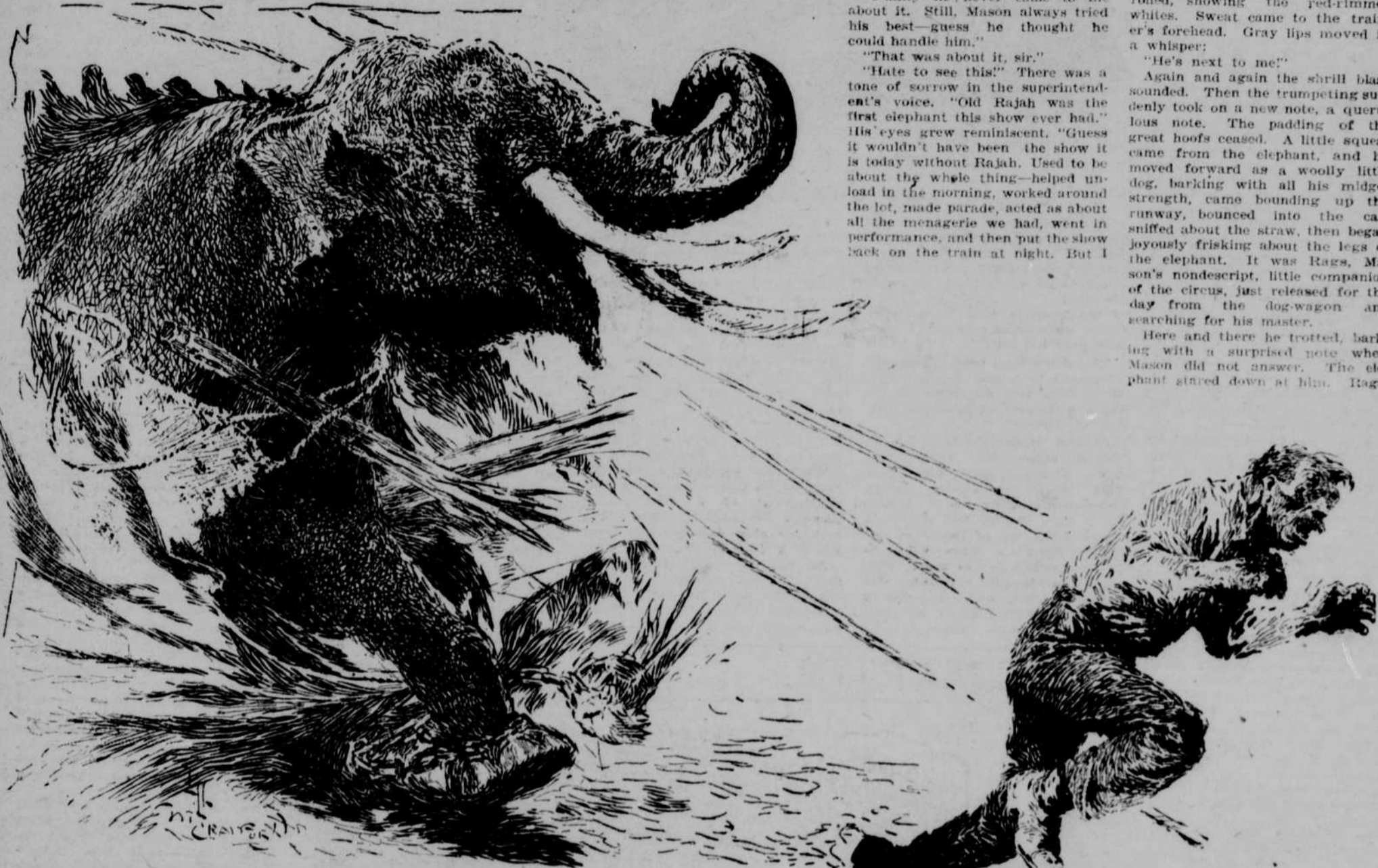
"Rajah! Get around there and out of this car."

But the elephant's forelegs were moving like the stamping of a child in a tantrum. His small beady eyes rolled, showing the red-rimmed whites. Sweat came to the trainer's forehead. Gray lips moved in a whisper:

"He's next to me!"

Again and again the shrill blast sounded. Then the trumpeting suddenly took on a new note, a querulous note. The padding of the great hoofs ceased. A little squeal came from the elephant, and he moved forward as a woolly little dog, barking with all his midget strength, came bounding up the runway, bounced into the car, sniffed about the straw, then began joyously frisking about the legs of the elephant. It was Rags, Mason's nondescript, little companion of the circus, just released for the day from the dog-wagon and searching for his master.

Here and there he trotted, barking with a surprised note when Mason did not answer. The elephant stared down at him. Rags,



The side-wall ripped from the menagerie tent, and chains clanking, picket-pins clattering, Rajah came, a trumpeting plunging monster of revenge.

ening at the sideboards for sounds of battle—the conflict of savage beasts which turn upon one another with a madness bred of darkness and fright.

In the horse cars the hostlers made the rounds of the animals, petting them and reassuring them. Back in the executive Pullmans superintendents and managers made their plans for the next day, plans for wet lots, for dangerous, ruddy rings and a slippery hippodrome.

The World's Amalgamated now was in the grip of a midsummer tempest, and with the next showstand a hundred miles away. Everywhere about the dripping train there was discomfort—danger.

Far ahead, in the biggest of the elephant cars, a great, shadowy bulk turned and twisted and trumpeted as he sought to evade the attacks of a "bull hook" in the muscular hands of a man who cursed and shouted at him. His chains had parted as he lunged in fright during an outburst of thunder; now he was an unfettered monster stumbling from one side of the car to the other. The trainer's voice rose to a scream:

"Get over there, Rajah!" he shouted, and drove the bull hook deep into the soft flesh behind the great elephant's ear. "Get over there, or I'll—"

Then he turned quickly, as a swish of rain sent his attention to an opened ventilator and the dripping figure clambering within.

"That you, boss?"

"Yes! What the devil are you trying to do to that bull?"

A man had dropped into the circle of light, his eyes blazing. "Haven't you got any more sense than to

old boy!" he shouted. "Everything's all right—everything's all right!"

He grasped the brute's trunk and clung to it, slapping the pachyderm about the mouth, blows which were only friendly pats to the thick-skinned mammal. The elephant squealed—a call of friendship—then ceased his twisting. Soon he was only a great, swaying hulk again, his beady eyes fastened on the man who, to him, meant friendship and protection and love. Mason reached for the stay-chain; then as he turned, he paused.

"I thought I told you to get out of here," he said abruptly.

"I'm going." Brace moved surlily toward the ventilator.

"Well, move, then. You've only got 20 minutes to pack your stuff. We stop for water at Larrettsville."

"My stuff?" The assistant paused on the ladder, then slowly clambered down again. "Why—why, boss, you ain't goin' to red-light me?"

"Ain't I?" Mason dropped the chain, came forward. Brace stood with hands shifting along the taped handle of his heavy bull-hook.

"You're through! There ain't a man on this show can sail into a cat or a bull without getting stepped off for it. You get out of this car and off this train! You're through!"

"I've got a right to my money!"

"Money? Nothing doing! It's cowards like you that—" He paused.

"If you've got anything coming to you you're fined that amount. And you're red-lighted at the next stop. Maybe the next show you go on you'll—well, aren't you going?"

"No, I'm not going!"

Mason doubled his fists.

Just as you please. Get off or be put off."

him, glowering, menacing. Then suddenly he went to his knees.

"He's dead!"

Trumpeting, the elephant moved slowly toward the body of his fallen master. Brace leaped quickly to the protection of the shadows. If one tremendous hoof could only obliterate the red mark of that blow!

Out of the shadows came Brace, his weapon brandished high in the air.

"Rajah!"

The hook sank deep. The animal writhed and turned. A great hoof struck flesh—and for a second and third and fourth time. Then Brace, driving the elephant into the rear of the car, stood staring down. The mark of the bull hook was gone. A moment later, dripping, scrambling he clambered from car-top to car-top to the Pullmans, his voice shrieking:

"Flag down the train! Rajah's gone bad—he's killed Mason!"

Brake-shoes gripped and slipped and shrieked. Half-dressed men tumbled from the Pullmans to race along the tracks to the bull cars.

The gleam of the lanterns, through the hastily opened door, displayed Rajah's big form, half kneeling beside the crushed body of his master, his cry echoing again and again.

"All right, bull-men! Put down the run and get that elephant out o' there before he takes another streak! Hop to it—Bartwell! Jones! Cassidy! Brace!"

They slipped the wide wooden runway into place, and drove the elephant down to be chained and picketed. Then, while the three other bull men picked up the

guess he's gone now. Mason wasn't mistreating him?"

Brace's eyes gleamed. Of course, when I saw him last, he was hooking him pretty bad; but then, he was fighting for his life."

"Sure. Sorry to see it happen. Mason was a good man, and Rajah was a good old bull. But I guess there isn't much chance for him now. Better watch him pretty close."

"Me, sir?"

"Yeh. You take all your time to Rajah—see if you can pull him out of it. If it was just a grudge proposition against Mason alone, there's a good chance. So—"

"Yes, sir. I understand, sir! I'll handle him, all right." Brace spoke cockily. "As soon as them other men get back, we'll run him into the car again and chain him. The storm seems to be letting up."

"Hope so." The superintendent went on. "Hop to it."

The train was again on the move, and Brace, back in his bunk in the sleeping cars, stared fixedly at the face-board of the berth above him. Safe! Safe from suspicion! Safe—with a reputation of fearlessness. But the next morning—

The door of the big bull-car slid open in the gray of dawn, and a man hurried to the shadowy form of the elephant within. He loosed his chain a, and prodded the beast in the shoulder

merely an endured thing until this moment—for an elephant, by instinct, hates a dog—invariably denoted the presence of Jim Mason.

Rajah squealed delightedly and extended his trunk slowly toward the little mongrel. Rags leaped and wagged his tail.

For a long moment they stood and sniffed at each other in animal silence. They appraised each other and were satisfied with their findings, while in the background a murderer stood staring at the strange pair. Brace bent forward, whistling to the mongrel and luring him with soft words and an extended hand.

Rags bounded and leaped about the man, rallying toward him, then rushing happily to the shelter of the elephant's legs. The trainer straightened, with the knowledge that Rajah again was calm. Still petting the dog with one hand, Brace sought the doorway of the car, and turned.

"Come on, Rajah!" he ordered and the elephant obeyed. There was no attitude of yielding, only of tolerance. A canine friend had intervened, that was all.

The dog often scurried about the circus lot in vain search for his master—but inevitably he returned to Rajah. And the elephant came to watch for him. At night Brace tied a string to the collar of Rags and led him to and fro the cars, and