

EXTRA! EXTRA!! EXTRA!!

ILLUSTRATING THE AWFUL CALAMITY

DESCRIBED IN THE

NEW YORK HERALD.

THE WILD ANIMALS BROKEN LOOSE FROM CENTRAL PARK!!

Terrible Scenes of Mutilation!!

SAVAGE BRUTES AT LARGE!!!



"the infamous hoax," though its tremendous leader on the subject was certainly rather hysterical, owing perhaps to the desire of the then editor—"A Member of Parliament"—to do as much damage as possible to its more prosperous and enterprising rival, the Herald.

Among the writers of the Herald at the time were two very brilliant young men, Mr. Joseph I. C. Clarke and Mr. Harry O'Connor, gifted with very vivid imaginations. O'Connor (now dead, poor fellow) had distinguished himself by many bright humorous articles which attracted the attention of the country. Him I selected first to work up my wild-beast hoax; but when he brought his copy I found he had begun it in a way that stamped it as a transparent imposition in the very first paragraphs. I then committed the task to Mr. Clarke, and in a few days he had elaborated the little skeleton of a plan I gave him into the full page of ghastly and lifelike pictures as it was finally published in the Herald. If there is any credit due to the writer of "the most successful and beastly since the memorable moon hoax," it belongs to genial Joe Clarke.

It would be out of place in an article like this to reproduce the famous hoax in extenso. I will only briefly sketch what it contained sufficiently to enable readers of to-day to understand the comic illustrations with which this article is accompanied. It began by describing how a reckless keeper, Chris Anderson, provoked the rhinoceros by prodding him; how the animal burst from its fastenings and killed the keeper; how next the infuriated beast killed another darling keeper called Hyland, and broke down the bars of all the cages, liberating Lincoln the Numidian lion, the elephant Pete, the Bengal tigers, the lionesses, panthers, bears, leopards, hyenas, wolves, and serpents, while a battle royal among the fierce animals raged on the floors of the menagerie. A crowd of curious people, fascinated by the gory spectacle, gazed through the windows, and among them "our own reporter," who gave the first alarm to the sleepy Park police in the old arsenal, and then rushed back to take full notes, just in time to behold Lincoln the Numidian lion burst through a window of the menagerie and begin his bloody work by killing one young man with a blow of his paw, and crushing the life out of another by the weight of his body. One after another the animals leaped from the menagerie, and scattered themselves over the city, killing or mutilating beasts, men, and women all over town. General Dix was extolled for shooting the leopard "on the spot." Lester Wallace for putting a bullet in one of the tigers, with Mayor Hall looking on close behind; John Morrissey, a famous pugilist, gambler, and politician in those days, for "fighting the tiger," delivering a deadly blow from the right shoulder. Nearly every prominent man of the day figured some way or other in the deadly scenes described with harrowing minuteness. Consternation and death were on a ferry-boat, from which people jumped into the river to escape the brutish fangs; even a church was invaded while people were attending divine service, and one of the wild beasts made a meal of a worshipper.

From the heading of the six-column article I take the following lines, given here in smaller type than the original:

- AWFUL CALAMITY.
The Wild Animals Broken Loose from Central Park.
TERRIBLE SCENES OF MUTILATION.
A Shocking Sabbath Carnival.
SAVAGE BRUTES AT LARGE.
Awful Combats between the Beasts and Citizens.
THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.
General Duryee's Magnificent Police Tactics.
BRAVERY AND PANIC.
How the Catastrophe was Brought About.—A Frightful Incident.
PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR.
Governor Dix Shoots the Bengal Tiger in the Streets.
CONSTERNATION IN THE CITY.

"The New York Times, in its comments, remarked: "Such an incident was not altogether unlikely to happen, for the animals in the Central Park are confined in the flimsiest cages ever seen, and many a mother has cautioned her nurse not to take the children near the wild beasts. When, therefore, the startling headlines of the Herald were read, natural alarm was felt in every household. In some cases the children had just gone to school, and without waiting to read through the six columns of this insane jest, parents rushed off to bring back their little ones. Some cases of this kind are described in our columns to-day. Ladies took alarm at the mere headlines; and, indeed, throughout three or four columns the narrative is told in an apparently serious vein. . . . And for three or four columns, as we have said, the 'joke' was carefully hidden. The writer in the Herald spoke of 'the mutilated body of Annie Thomas, an unfortunate serving-girl,' and of a lion which seized four little children, and 'mangled the delicate little things past all signs of recognition. . . . I saw the dead bodies of Anderson and Hyland' (two of the Park keepers), 'the panther crouched over Hyland's body, gnawing horribly at his head.' These pictures of the mangled young children and of the dead keepers are irresistibly funny, and cannot fail to make our readers laugh. Still more amusing are the accounts of a lion which was 'tugging and crunching at the arms of a corpse, now letting go with his teeth to plant his paws upon the bleeding remains and snap with his dripping jaws at another beast'; of a leopard which 'killed a little child and mutilated several women'; of the deaths of Annie Thomas and Ellen Schubert; of a child in a cradle which was burnt to a crisp; of the African lioness which saturated herself in the blood of eighteen victims, men, women, and children; of the 'dead body of a youth fearfully disfigured about the head and face'; and of the panther which 'sprang upon the shoulders of an aged lady, burying his fangs in her neck.'"

The hoax wound up with the following aphorism: "The Moral of the Whole.—Of course the entire story given above is a pure fabrication. Not one word of it is true. Not a single act or incident described has taken place. It is a huge hoax, a wild romance, or whatever other epithet of utter untrustworthiness our readers may choose to apply to it." The general effect of this audacious hoax may be imagined from the tone of the Times article, but what the public was not told at the time may be worth repeating now as a matter of interesting record. Let me tell my own experience first.

A FAMOUS NEWSPAPER HOAX.

BY T. H. CONNERY.

From time to time I have seen allusions here and there in the newspapers of the country to the famous wild-beast hoax of the New York Herald, and lately in the Journalist there was something said about certain people supposed to have invented and written it, which prompts me to prepare a true history of the extraordinary imposition, which one writer has pronounced "the most successful and beastly since the memorable moon hoax in the early days of the New York Sun."

it was not destined to run at large, for quicker than you could count a hundred the beast was covered by the long iron rods in the hands of attendants and driven into its cage, with the door securely fastened. But the incident, as may well be imagined, made a deep impression upon me. The possible results from a future possible accident, the carnage among the innocents, the consternation of the whole city over the unexpected appearance of Mr. Leopard here, there, and everywhere about the town, rose before my imagination, and by the time I reached corner of Ann Street and Broadway my mind was full of it. My first impulse was to call public attention to the accident and to give the menagerie men a sound scolding through the columns of the American Traveler; but I thought better of it. What would be the use of a little scolding and a few warnings? The menagerie man would only be a little more careful for a while, and then relapse into their old habits. If carelessness was really one of their habits, of which I did not know, the public would soon forget all about it, and nurses and children would continue to go to the menagerie as of old, on the theory that lightning never strikes the same place twice. So I resolved to think over some other plan than an ordinary beware to the public and the every-day scolding to officials. That night in bed the idea came to me—get up a harmless little hoax, with just enough semblance of reality to give a salutary warning. That was what occurred to me, and the idea grew fast and furious, especially the fun of it, and I jotted down quickly the headings of my hoax to give to one of the reporters to develop and embellish. I became enamored of my idea—a very dangerous thing, for when one allows one's self to be thus carried away, one is apt to see only that side of the idea that tickles his fancy. It was precisely what happened to me. I saw only the laugh which the publication of such a tremendous hoax would produce. To my shame be it confessed, I was utterly blind to the serious side of the hoax. And here it is proper to exonerate the present Mr. Bennett from any share in what the New York Times called, not undeservedly perhaps,