

Battle of the Beasts.

An exhibition, not announced on the bills, says the *New York Times* of the 5th inst., took place at the Hippodrome the previous morning, in the shape of a fierce battle between two rhinoceroses, lasting over an hour and a half, and presented one of the most terrible scenes ever witnessed in a crowded city. About ten o'clock Mr Charles White put the two animals, male and female, into the same pen, and shut them up together. In a few minutes a terrific roar was heard, which appalled the few visitors present, and blanched the faces of the *attachés* of the establishment. The sightseers fled from the building by any mode of egress they could find, and it was some time before the *employés* could be induced to follow Assistant-Manager Fuller to the pen where the battle raged. The roar was followed by another and another, and was taken up by every living creature under the roof. The elephants, lions, tigers, panthers, sea lions, and birds joined in the unearthly chorus, and high above all arose the frightful howls of the hyenas. All the beasts in the collection were evidently aware that the thick-coated monsters had engaged in a final encounter, and were expecting momentarily that the battle would become general. For nearly two hours the enraged beasts continued to dash themselves madly against the bars of their cages, apparently in a desperate struggle to take part in the disturbance, while the pandemonium of noises would have drowned the screaming of 500 steamers. The quality of the howlings has never been accurately described, and probably never will be. The keepers could not hear each other speak, no matter how loudly they shouted; and this, with the constant dread of the caged beasts breaking loose, or the unfettered elephants making good their occasional threats to shake off all control, so completely bewildered them that it was some time before they could be induced to act. When Messrs Fuller, White, and Castella reached the pen of the rhinoceroses the monsters had already fought several rounds. Nobody was present when the misunderstanding began, but the young keeper of the old male rhinoceros, who, by the way, is known at the hippodrome as "Alligator." This lad jumped over the rail into the pen, and had the daring to stand between the infuriated beasts. His own animal acknowledged the keeper's authority, but the female rushed at him madly, and he narrowly escaped by jumping on the back of the other. In lifting herself up to follow him the female gave her antagonist an advantage which he quickly embraced, and thereby discovered a trick which he frequently repeated afterward with great success. It was to insert his huge nasal horn under her breast between her four legs, and lift her clear up to the top of the rails in an attempt to throw her over. This feat he invariably failed, at the last moment, to accomplish to his perfect satisfaction, owing to the opposition of the "Alligator," who at the supreme moment of exertion stuck a pitchfork into his nose, and distracted his attention from the business in hand. At length, after several desperate encounters, both brutes fell back for a fresh onset, and then Mr Fuller and his assistants flung in between the combatants a huge pile of lumber which they had collected and kept in waiting for this opportunity, pushed a broad board along the top of the barricade and hung a great piece of awning over it. The effect of this manoeuvre was miraculous. The moment its enemy disappeared from sight each animal appeared to utterly forget all about the late unpleasantness and quietly lay down in its improvised compartment as though nothing whatever had happened to irritate its pachydermatous feelings. The female, which, by the way, was the aggressor, and is held entirely responsible for the row, happened to lie down on the side of the pen near the door. The wheeled cage in which she had just completed a trip through the country was soon rolled up to this door, and, after much coaxing and pitchfork persuasion, she was induced to enter it, and was driven off to a distant corner of the building. It was found that her thick hide had been penetrated by the horn of her antagonist in some twenty places, but none of the wounds are likely to prove serious. She lay quietly in her old cage for the remainder of the day, and looked as if she considered herself well out of a disagreeable business. The male rhinoceros received only two slight wounds, one under the ear and another on the hip. He was sentenced to be kept standing up all day—a punishment against which he remonstrated now and then, but bore pretty philosophically on the whole. While the combat lasted, the anxiety of the more intelligent keepers was very great, though their presence of mind never deserted them for a moment. The solid iron bars of the cage were bent and twisted like wire, and its thick partitions of stout three-inch plank were parted and nearly broken down altogether. Had they given way entirely the door leading to Twenty-sixth-street would have been burst open, the great elephant (which had already made several angry demonstrations) would have taken part in the first, and brought the other elephants in with it, and there is no telling what the consequences might have been. A single one of those huge beasts in its fury could have smashed the cages of the other animals all to pieces in a few seconds, and the result would have been appalling. That the other animals had a thorough appreciation of what was going on in the cage of the rhinoceroses, and expected the war would extend to their own premises, was pretty clearly shown by the large elephant, whose constant companion is a setter dog. During the fight this dog made several attempts to take a peep at the proceedings, but on every occasion the elephant lifted her *protégé* in her trunk, tenderly dropped him behind her, and stepped to the front herself. About one o'clock the damaged cages and pens were all refitted and strengthened, the howlings had ceased, and the hippodrome and its *attachés* were ready to proceed with the afternoon performance.

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