

Some Peculiar Entertainments.

I.

BY FRAMLEY STEELCROFT.



YOU will often hear a man say, with smug, smiling wonder: "It's amazing what people will do for a living"; and, really, it is. Now, while I don't claim to have brought together—"right here" as the Americans say—all the peculiar items of "business" that are at this moment amusing, thrilling, or horrifying the paying public of both hemispheres, yet I have secured a representative lot, each one of whom I have at one time or another interviewed personally.

First of all, then, let me introduce to your notice (I feel something of a showman myself, now) Professor James Finney and his sister playing nap beneath the water in their

four and a half minutes beneath the water, and is the possessor of a whole museum of cups and medals, whose mere intrinsic value is about £1,000.

Miss Marie Finney is, perhaps, our premier lady swimmer; and among her remarkable feats may be mentioned a header from London Bridge. It is not known what useful end this served, but it is duly recorded in the printed matter relating to the lady herself. This peculiar pair perform a variety of antics beneath the water, including eating cakes, drinking milk, and smoking. "Professor" Finney (this is the generic title of these specialists) makes some interesting calculations as to the quantity of comestibles consumed by him under water every year;

and without prolixity I may say that this is enough to stock one of the Aerated Bread Company's well-known establishments.

I believe that in certain unexalted circles the expression "Go and eat coke!" is sometimes used as an opprobrious admonition. Into the derivation of this I will not go, but I have seen the thing done by an artiste (save the mark!) yclept "the Human

Ostrich." He was this and much more; for not only did the man swallow every day sufficient carboniferous fuel to cook a respectable dinner for an ordinary Christian, but he also "chewed" and ate at each meal a stout glass tumbler and a lot of wood shavings. The "dessert" (note the ghoulish humour of the printed *menu*) consisted of a couple of lengthy tallow candles, and the whole was washed down by copious draughts of water, while the pianist played a suitably fantastic fantasia.

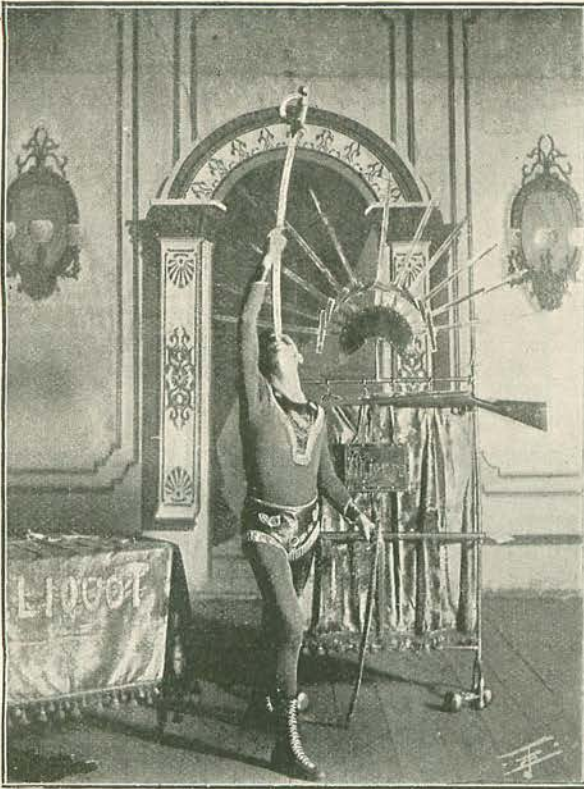
But some people will swallow anything—especially at £40 a week. We next see the Chevalier Cliquot (these fellows *must* have titles) in the act of swallowing the major part of a cavalry sabre, 22in. long. Cliquot,



PROFESSOR FINNEY AND HIS SISTER PLAYING NAP UNDER WATER.

big tank, which holds 300 gallons and cost a £100 note. And I should mention that it would be utterly impossible for these well-known swimming experts to simulate interest in the game, were it not that the water is heated to a temperature of 80deg. The porcelain cards are specially made at the Staffordshire potteries.

Another feat performed by Finney under water is the picking up of seventy or eighty gold-plated halfpennies with his mouth, his hands being tied securely behind his back. Just consider what this means. The expert assures me he finds the picking up and stowing away of the coins one by one in his mouth a most arduous and even painful task. He has, however, remained nearly

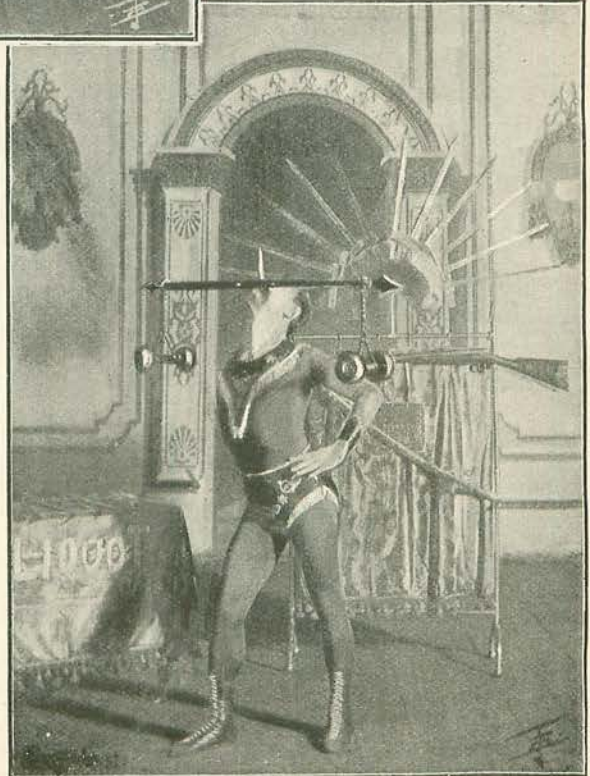


CLIQUOT SWALLOWING A 22-INCH CAVALRY
SABRE.

whose name suggests the swallowing of something far more grateful and comforting than steel swords, is a French Canadian by birth, and has been the admitted chief in his dangerous profession for more than eighteen years. He ran away from his home in Quebec at an early age, and joined a travelling circus bound for South America. On seeing an arrant old humbug swallow a small *machete* in Buenos Ayres, the boy took a fancy to the performance, and approached the old humbug aforesaid with the view of being taught the business. Not having any money, however, wherewith to pay the necessary premium, the overtures of the would-be apprentice were repulsed, whereupon he set to work experimenting on his own œsophagus with a piece of silver wire.

To say that the preliminary training for this sort of thing is painful, is to state the fact most moderately; and even when stern purpose has

triumphed over the laws of anatomy, terrible danger still remains. On one occasion, having swallowed a sword and then bent his body in various directions as an adventitious sensation, Cliquot found that the weapon also had bent to a sharp angle; and quick as thought, realizing his own position as well as that of the sword, he whipped it out, lacerating his throat in a dreadful manner. Plainly, had the upper part of the weapon become quite detached, the sword-swallower's career must infallibly have come to an untimely end. Again, in New York, when swallowing fourteen 19in. bayonet-swords at once, Cliquot had the misfortune to have a too sceptical audience, one of whom, a medical man who ought to have known better, rushed forward and impulsively dragged out the whole bunch, inflicting such injuries upon this peculiar entertainer as to endanger his life and incapacitate him for months.



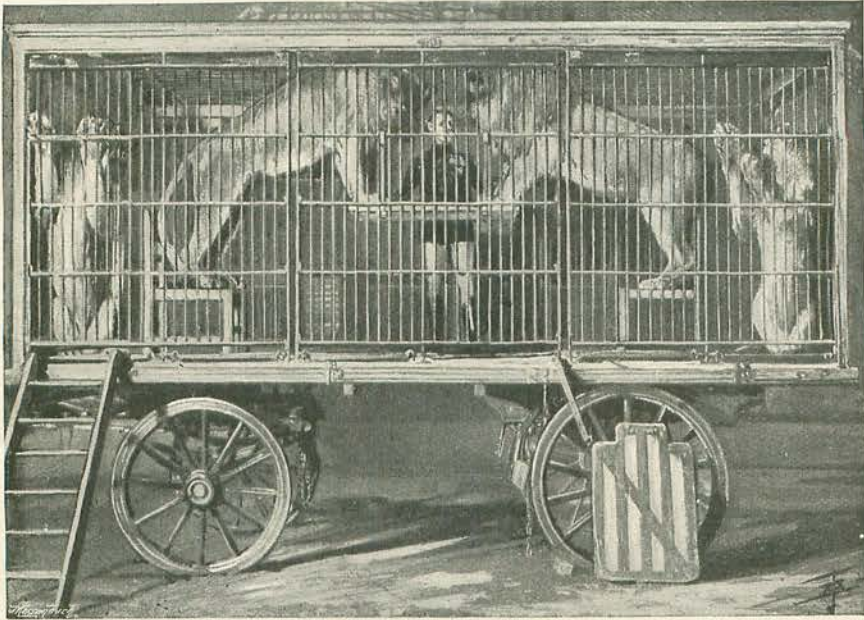
CLIQUOT SWALLOWING A WEIGHTED BAYONET-SWORD.

In the second photograph, on page 329, Cliquot is seen swallowing a very real bayonet-sword, weighted with a cross-bar and two 18lb. dumb-bells. In order to vary this performance, the sword-swallower sometimes allows only part of the weapon to pass into his body, the remainder being "kicked" down by the recoil of a rifle, which is fixed to the spike in the centre of the bar and fired by the performer's sister.

The last act in this extraordinary performance is the swallowing of a gold watch. As a rule, Cliquot borrows one, but as no time-piece was forthcoming at the private exhibition where I saw him, he proceeded to lower his own big chronometer into his *æso-phagus*

mauled by a majestic brute on Christmas Eve last; and this very man—Ricardo—dragged his dying colleague literally from the lion's jaws.

The fact is, we did not know what effect the magnesium flash would have on these four formidable beasts. Would it irritate them, and cause them to vent their leonine spleen upon the daring man in their cage? Nor do I use the word "daring" for cheap effect. The convenience of the lions—so to speak—was materially interfered with. They were not accustomed to do this sort of thing in the early morning; and, besides, the set performance was commenced in the middle. Frankly, the lions were fearfully excited, and



RICARDO IN THE LIONS' DEN.

by a slender gold chain. Many of the most eminent physicians and surgeons in this country immediately rushed forward with various instruments, and the privileged few took turns in listening for the ticking of the watch inside the sword-swallower's body. "Poor, outraged Nature is biding her time," remarked one physician of courtly mien and shabby attire; "but, mark me, she will have a terrible revenge sooner or later."

The circumstances under which the next photograph was taken are not likely to fade easily from my mind; indeed, the task proved one of frightful suspense and anxiety to everyone concerned, including the artist of THE STRAND MAGAZINE. For in this very cage was a so-called "lion tamer" fearfully

at times they were only restrained from flying at Ricardo by men outside the cage who were armed with spiky poles like boat-hooks. At the moment of taking the photograph, the two lions in the middle of the cage remained perfectly still, their horrid jaws open, their great, lustrous eyes blazing, and the hot steam of their breath playing directly on their "tamer's" face.

This man has practised his calling for seven years. He is not troubled with nerves; his constitution is of iron and his philosophy equally sound. "Of course, it *is* dangerous," he said to me, quietly; "but, then, might you not meet with a far less dramatic and more unexpected death beneath an omnibus in Piccadilly Circus, or the Clapham Road?"

"At first I was a stableman in a travelling circus," he continued. "I always watched the old lion tamer's performance (he has now retired after more than twenty years of it); and I gradually got on fairly good terms with his beasts. The first cage I entered contained a mixed breed of Alpine and Siberian wolves. Yes, they were very 'ugly' and made for my throat."

One day Ricardo unceremoniously slipped into a den of three newly-purchased lions, who were more than equal to the occasion, since they nearly killed him forthwith. After three months' private intercourse with the huge animals, he was permitted to remain in their cage under protest. And this protest is quite permanent. Ricardo has known what it is to have a monstrous black African lion on his chest, his left knee well in the fearful brute's capacious mouth.

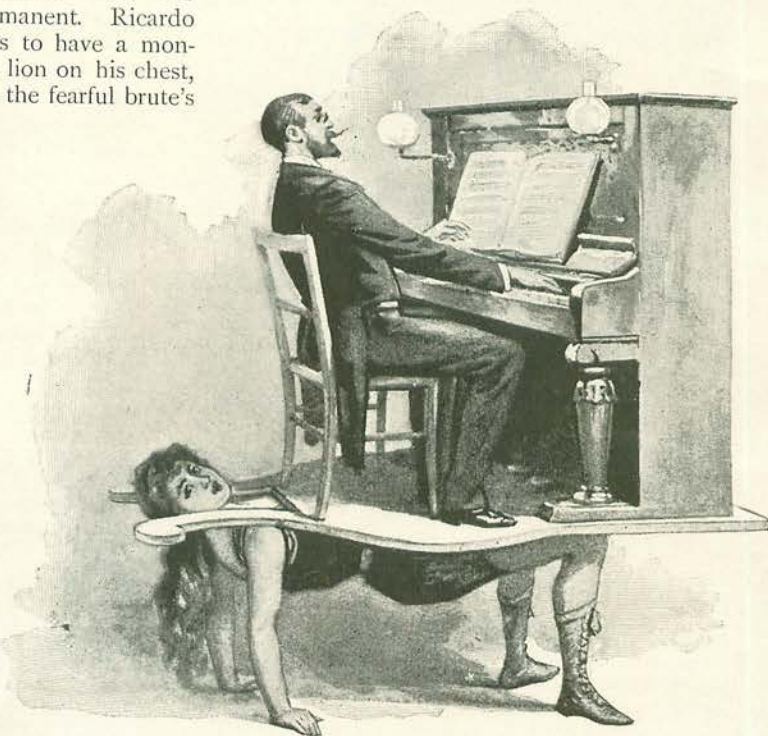
But you know the kind of thing. Let us pass to the "Singing Strong Lady," whose business is as funny as it is original. Really, I don't think the picture needs any explanation at all. This lady, by name (professionally) Miss Darnett, extends herself upon her hands and legs, face uppermost, while a stout platform with a semi-circular groove for the neck is fixed upon her by means of a waist-belt, which passes through brass receivers on the under

side of the board. An ordinary cottage piano is then placed by four men on the platform, and presently the lady's callous spouse appears, bowing, and calmly mounts upon the platform also, presumably in order that his execution may carry greater weight with the audience—and with his wife. First of all the pianist plays a dreamy, soothing Strauss waltz; and then the lady warbles a simple love-song—under difficulties and half a ton. But upon the burden of her song we need not dwell; she has enough to bear already.

Although the foregoing performance appeals directly to any chivalry that may be in a man's nature, I doubt greatly whether it would make much impression on Rannin, the thick-skinned Cingalese, whose unique business is next depicted.

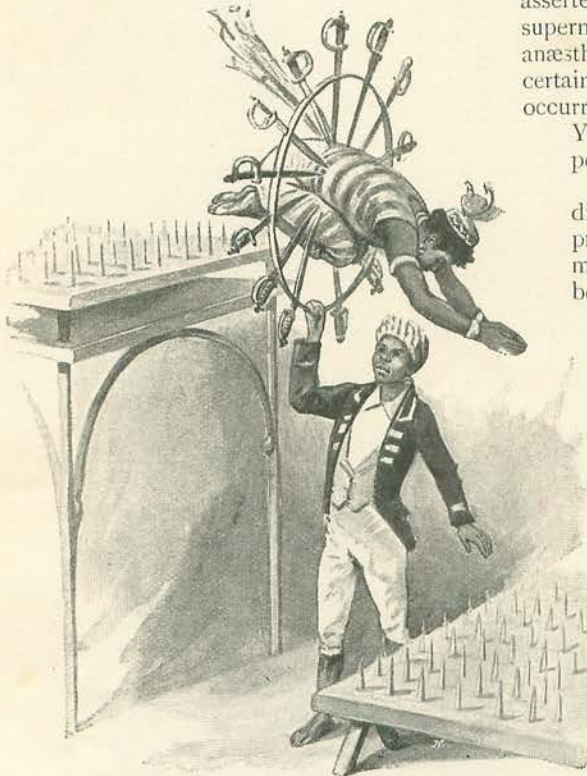
I saw this man last year at Ronacher's in Vienna; and of course there was the customary crowd of doctors and professors—real professors, this time—from the great hospitals in the Austrian capital.

Neither Occultism nor Theosophy have anything to do with this individual. Although, however, everything in the nature of the supernatural is wanting, the performances of



THE SINGING STRONG LADY.

the "man with the iron skin" are extraordinarily interesting; and in spite of their thrilling details they are given with decided grace. On the platform were the requisites with which Rannin conducts his show. Among them were a double ladder, the steps of which were formed of sabres ground to the sharpness of razors; also a kind of bed, thickly sewn with sharp-edged nails whose "business" ends were uppermost; and finally a barrel-shaped utensil, the inside of which was bristling with sharply-pointed nails. Rannin appeared with his shoulders, arms, and feet



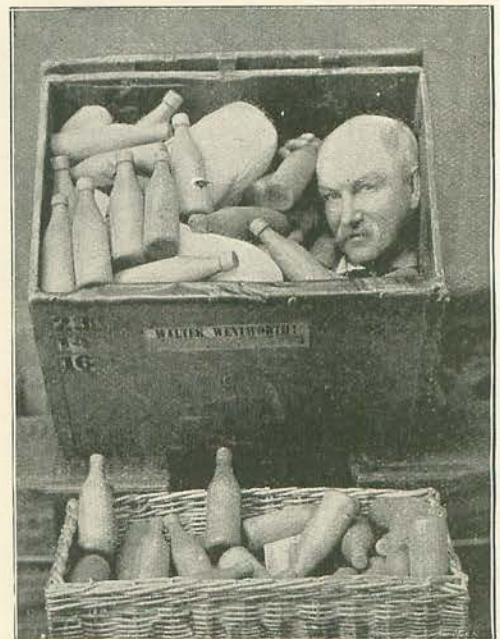
"THE MAN WITH THE IRON SKIN"—(RANNIN, THE CINGALESE).

uncovered, and advanced lightly to the front of the platform. After showing how the sabres shred pieces of thick paper into atoms, he ran with bandaged eyes up one side of the sharp sabre-ladder and down the other, at the same time balancing a lamp on his forehead. He next lay down in the barrel, curled himself up closely, and allowed himself to be rolled up and down the platform. Extricating himself with some difficulty from the barrel, he offered himself to those present for their inspection. The impressions of the nails were certainly there, but not the slightest suggestion of a wound. Afterwards he placed himself on the spiked bed, and a man in thick boots mounted on his chest. This individual then placed an iron bar on his own shoulders, and from this two other men hung on the right and on the left. After several other marvellous performances, concluding, as here shown, with a jump from a high spiky platform through a hoop of razor-sharp sword-blades on to the nail-covered bed, Rannin ended his exhibition amid the plaudits of his audience. The medical authorities who had attended the séance of this veritable "man with the iron skin"

asserted that it had nothing to do with the supernatural, but was the effect of a kind of anæsthesia, which is the insensibility of certain nerves to exterior impressions, occurring sometimes in peculiar natures.

You have probably met such—though perhaps in different degrees.

My next performer is a man of retiring disposition—so retiring, in fact, that his professional *habitat*, so to speak, is a box measuring barely 23 in. in length, its depth being 29 in. and its width 16 in. Nor is this all. When inside, six dozen wooden bottles, of the same size and shape as those which contain soda-water, are carefully stowed in with him, and then the lid is slammed down, leaving the audience, and especially disappointed farmers, to marvel that it should be possible for a man to make such a handsome living out of so infinitesimal a portion of the earth's surface. This man, Mr. Walter Wentworth, whom I met at Moore's Circus in Toronto, is the oldest contortionist living, being now about seventy years of age. He bestows upon his act the quaint name, "Packanatomicalization." In the second photograph he is seen asserting



WENTWORTH, THE CONTORTIONIST, PACKED WITH SIX DOZEN BOTTLES.

his presence in the box in a very comic manner.

Wentworth married the lady whose portrait is next reproduced; this is Miss Grantly, the Albino Princess, who is believed to be a descendant of an albino tribe formerly found in America. The lady's appearance, *per se*, is supposed to constitute an entertainment. She has the usual characteristics of her kind — pure white complexion, pink eyes, white lashes and eyebrows.

As is well known, these "freaks" are well paid in the United States (Miss Grantly received 200 dollars a week); but this showman has a code of rigorous compulsory modesty for them—instituted, of course, in the interests of the paying public. For, clearly, if the dog-faced man or the bearded lady is foolish enough to go for a walk in park or street, followed by an ever-increasing crowd of unprofitable sight-seers, is not he or she doing a serious, wicked thing by spoiling potential patrons? Most certainly; if these well-paid "entertainers" *must* go out, they are compelled to take proper precautions. The Albino Princess, for example, invariably makes an elaborate toilet before venturing abroad, using cosmetics galore, and wearing an artful wig over her own snow-white hair.

The reproduction on the next page depicts that curious mode of progression known as "ceiling-walking," as performed by the Vol Beck children. They were trained by their father, who has had thirty-two years' experience as a professional gymnast, and, therefore, plenty of time in which to invent new "business." On retiring, Mr. Vol Beck thought he could not do better than put his enthusiastic boys in the way of climbing the ladder of fame; or, at any rate, teach them to make inverted progress along a horizontal ladder—an equally arduous task.

This "property" ladder is of steel and brass, elaborately and beautifully made in thirty-three pieces, each fitting into the other. The apparatus weighs about 4cwt., and cost

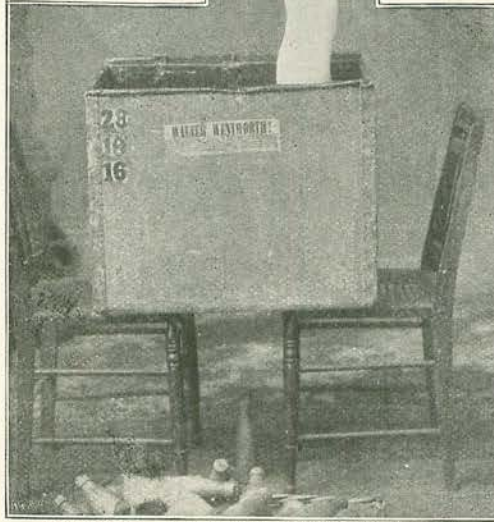
considerably more than £300; it is 34ft. in length, fitted with rings for the boys' feet, and is 3ft. 6in. wide.

"Seven long months of careful, anxious training took place," remarked Mr. Vol Beck to me,

"before I could trust my children to walk upside down as you see them now, eighty or ninety feet from the ground. They can walk or run backwards and forwards at the rate of four miles an hour if necessary," he went on; "and they can cover 200ft. of 'ground'—or, perhaps, I should say air—without stopping for a moment."

And, certainly, the boys seem very much at ease during this novel act. On the occasion of the

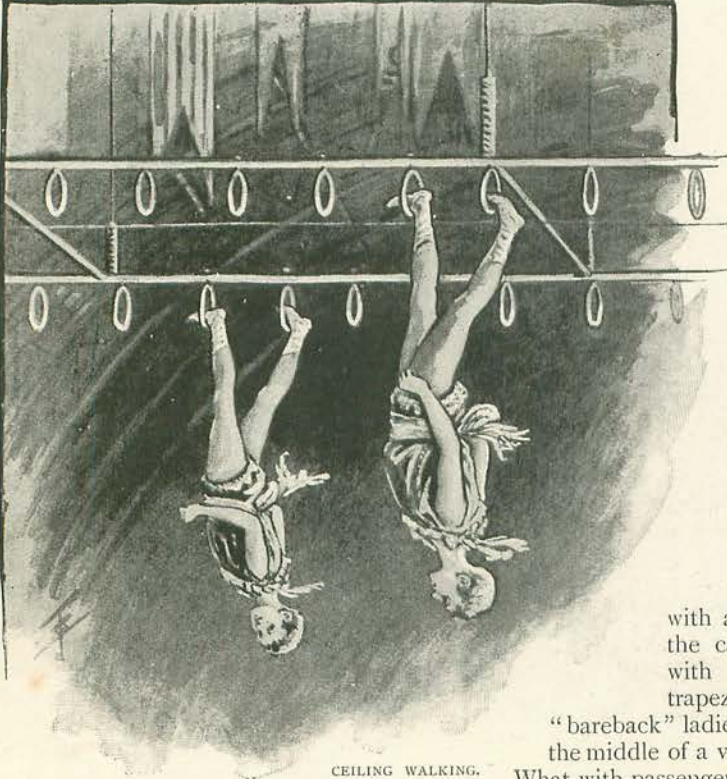
private performance they gave before THE STRAND MAGAZINE artist and myself, they



WENTWORTH ASSERTING HIS PRESENCE IN THE BOX.



WENTWORTH'S WIFE, "MISS GRANTLY," THE ALBINO PRINCESS.



CEILING WALKING.

or perhaps ten able-bodied men. She was born at Neuilly, near Paris, and performs with her husband, who is in the same respect-compelling line. Her greatest feat was the lifting of eight men weighing altogether 1,700lb.; the lightest individual on this occasion weighed fourteen stone, and two among them turned the scale at twenty-one stone each. Truly a moving spectacle, this raising of gross, material men by a true, strong woman to her own exalted ethereal level.

And Madame tells funny stories. Travelling with a circus some years ago, the caravan in which she sat with five other "artistes"—trapezists, *haute école*, and "bareback" ladies—came to a standstill in the middle of a very steep hill in Cornwall.

What with passengers and circus accessories, the horse was quite overcome, so he just stopped and, while awaiting further developments, commenced to browse peacefully at

skipped alternately backwards and forwards with surprising celerity, considering the position and altitude; and the rapidity and confidence with which they hooked their feet in the rings, chatting as they went, was nothing short of marvellous.

Here is a lady with much dependent upon her, yet she bears up wonderfully well. Across her shoulders is a 700lb. bar-bell, on each end of which is a hanger-on whose attentions are frequently almost beyond endurance. This is Madame Elise, a professional strong lady, who is, on occasion, the sole support of a young elephant weighing half a ton,



MADAME ELISE, THE STRONG LADY, AND HER HANGERS-ON.

the wayside. Persuasion with a boat-hook was tried, but in vain, so Madame Elise, seizing a bit of rope, hastily alighted, harnessed herself to the heavily-laden van, and dragged it in triumph to the brow of the hill, where her place was taken by the ungallant brute.

Next is seen a party of Poona snake-charmers—a terribly dangerous performance, this, in spite of fallacies prevailing to the contrary. I interviewed the man who is playing the "tumri" while the cobra dances—Syad Jamal, of Sholapur. Strangely enough,

this, he have seen many bite, then die and get black face," remarked Syad Jamal's interpreter; and no wonder, since either the double-spectacled cobra-de-capello of the town, or the nâgsarap of the thicket can, when fresh and angry, lay a strong man dead within two hours.

The newly caught snakes, some only as big as a lead pencil, and others roft. long, are taken home and placed in blanket-lined baskets. For days they eat nothing; but after a week or so the charmer takes his



INDIAN SNAKE-CHARMERS.

his philosophy was practically identical with that of Ricardo, the lion tamer. "He says," remarked my interpreter, in guttural tones, "that in Chapter 17 of the Koran is written: 'The scroll of every man's fate is tied on his neck at birth.'"

I learn that this profession remains in one family for centuries. Water-snakes, cobras, and pythons are used, and they are caught in the warm month of May, when the reptiles emerge from their holes. The hunting party in the hill districts are armed with forked sticks, with which the snakes are struck down when they erect themselves to bite; and on curling round these sticks they are thrust into a bag carried by a boy. Before this is done, though, the expert catcher seizes the deadly reptile with three fingers—two at the throat and one on the back of the head—and deftly cuts out the two poison fangs with a penknife, the operation lasting from ten to fifteen minutes. "While do

tumri—a villainous instrument, seen in the photograph, and with the squeal of a bag-pipe, only more so—and on playing this the cobras begin to lift their horrid heads from the baskets, whereupon each reptile receives one egg and a pint of milk. The water-snakes are fed on whitebait, and the larger reptiles receive a chicken every fortnight. These snake-charmers, who are also jugglers, occasionally buy their snakes from the fakirs, paying from 1s. 2d. to £1 each for them.

"Tell him," said Syad Jamal, anxiously, "that we are beggars by birth and education, depending on the merchants for food and shelter; thus all our earnings are clear profit, or nearly so. And, also, that I have received as much as £20 for a performance from the Nizam of Hyderabad, besides gold and silver bracelets, and turbans of cloth of gold." Here the sâmp-wallah, or snake-charmer, fixed his mysterious eyes on me, probably to see if I was properly impressed by these details.

I desire to gratefully acknowledge here the very courteous assistance rendered me in preparing these articles by the following well-known caterers for public entertainment: Mr. Ben Nathan; Mr. Josiah Ritchie, of the Royal Aquarium; Mr. Read, of the Agricultural Hall; and Mr. Maurice De Freece, Manager to Messrs. Warner & Co., of Wellington Street.

Some Peculiar Entertainments.

II.

BY FRAMLEY STEELCROFT.

IT was, I suppose, the apocryphal feat of William Tell that suggested this item of sensational "business" to the crack rifle-shot, Mlle. Diana, who appears in this picture, and recently fulfilled a London engagement. But the analogy is not complete. It is no loving, fearful father that takes aim at the "apple" (in this case an evil-smelling, hollow globe of resin), but just a Winchester rifle of uncertain habits, and addicted to the vagaries and cussednesses common to all firearms.

In the first place, the resinous ball is suspended in mid-air by a string, and then the stand is rigged up with its rifle. The latter is then sighted by the expert with scrupulous care, so as to cover the pendant globe. After this has been done, Mlle. Diana takes up her position, rifle in hand, exactly beneath the "apple," and blazes away at the trigger of the other gun. Simple, isn't it? The discharges are practically simultaneous, and the lady's dark hair is in most cases instantly powdered with particles of the shattered ball of resin. I say "in most cases" advisedly, because it sometimes happens that the bullet passes over or at the side of the "apple,"

and on one occasion the rifle-ball actually passed between the globe and Mlle. Diana's scalp, the weapon having been aimed a shade too low.

"I must say," remarked the lady rifle-shot, "that it wants a lot of nerve to face and fire at that rifle. You see, the slightest deviation in sighting may be fatal; and then, again, the cartridge may be a poor one, causing the rifle to hang fire. In such cases the first thing to be done, of course, is to get out of the line of fire without a moment's delay, for the rifle may go off immediately on its own account, as, indeed, it has done more than once."

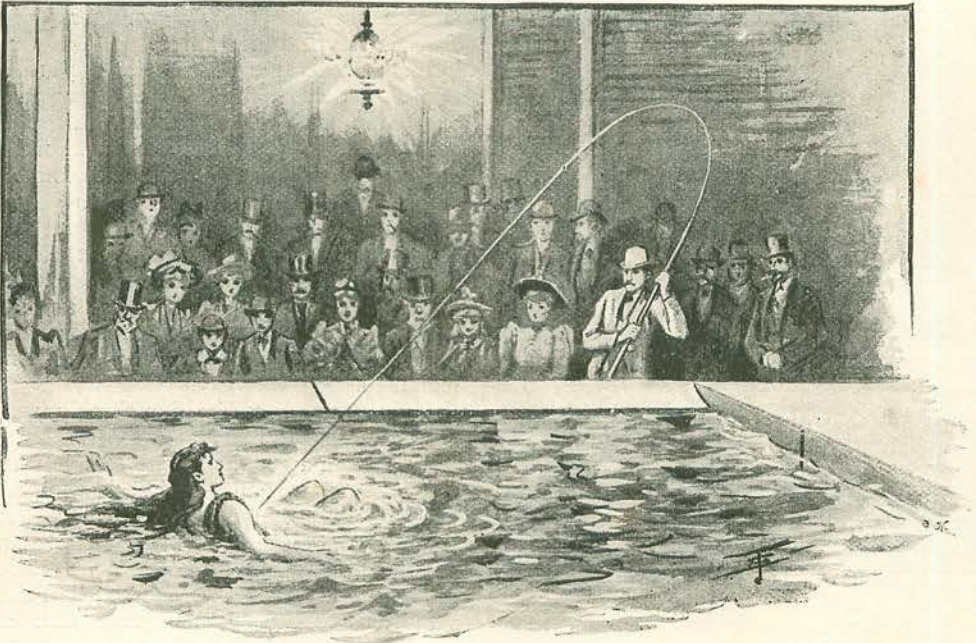
Now, was ever such an opportunity given an experienced angler as that suggested by my next picture? And he *is* an experienced angler—perhaps I ought to say a professional angler—who has played bigger salmon in the Fraser River than ever Scotland produced. And surely this is a novel angling contest—Rod *z.* Woman. I witnessed the interesting event in a specially-arranged swimming-bath, the "fish" being the well-known expert, Miss Annie Luker, whose father trained Captain Webb, and who is herself engaged at this day in imparting the natatory art to a couple of thousand London Board School children.

Miss Luker's biggest feat was a swim from Kew to Rotherhithe.

This angling contest is tremendous fun. The salmon-line is hooked in the lady's belt, and she certainly gives fine play. Sometimes the line breaks, sometimes the rod. Occasionally the fair "fish" is too much for her would-be captor, who, *nolens volens*, is drawn into what is emphatically *not* his element. If Miss Luker is landed in the corner within



Mlle. Diana shooting the "apple" from her own head.



A NOVEL ANGLING CONTEST—ROD V. WOMAN.

ten minutes, however, the victory is given to the angler, who, it is significant to note, does not stand at the shilling side of the bath. This is, of course, in order that when the "fish" allows herself to be drawn quite close, and then dashes away through the water, splashing frightfully, the sixpenny public only get the benefit of whatever moisture may be going about.

A very different kind of entertainment is provided by the blindfold child pianist, Jennie Gabrielle, a Birmingham girl, who, at the age of seven, could positively play anything that was set before her. A few years ago the child was taken to the Gaiety Theatre to see a burlesque, and next morning she surprised her parents by sitting down to the piano and playing off the whole score—songs and all.

Not only is Miss Gabrielle blindfolded by any member of her audience who may wish to undertake the task, but the keys of the instrument are completely covered with silk; and yet, under these difficult conditions, you may give her elaborate pieces from such masters as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Bach, and Schubert, which will be rendered with surprising accuracy and delicacy of touch.

Chimah was born in Ning-po fifty-seven years ago, and, briefly, he may be described as a diminutive man with monstrous ideas. I saw him in Kohl and Middleton's Museum

at Chicago. As a rule, the showman gives an exhaustive and sometimes exhausting description of each individual freak in the show. The bearded lady beams benignly, while the



JENNIE GABRIELLE, THE BLINDFOLD CHILD PIANIST.



CHIMAH, THE CHINESE DWARF.

length of her hirsute appendage is measured for an appreciative public ; and the armless man paints dexterously with his toes, what time the showman indicates the beauties of the landscape that is growing under his artistic foot. But Chimah needs no one to tell his story. His height is exactly $24\frac{1}{2}$ in., and in his best days he received nearly £500 a week ; for, to the potent attraction of his diminutive stature, he added the great reputation of a *raconteur* skilled in the lore of many lands. Also, he smoked cigars nearly as big as himself ; and his appetite was prodigious. I have seen him eat a great dinner, whereof a pound-and-a-half of steak was but a part. Last summer Chimah bought a farm of 20,000 acres in Ohio, and celebrated his establishment thereon with a big house-party, Cliquot, the sword-swallower, referred to last month, being among the number of invited guests. The tiny Chinaman is very fond of jewellery, owning quite a fortune in diamonds and rubies ; and he is extremely religious, after the manner of his kind. He worships his ancestors—as, indeed, he ought, seeing that they did a big thing for him in bringing him into the world so small. At home Chimah's hobby is singing, and he is for ever practising duets with his wife, the midget Princess Josepha,

who is seen by the side of her gigantic sister in the next illustration.

Lady Amma, the French giantess, and her two sisters stand next on my programme, and, mind, they *are* her sisters. In this case age—and appetite—is in an inverse ratio to size. The smallest of the three is known as Princess Josepha, and is thirty-two years of age ; there are not nearly so many inches in her stature, however. The next sister is shown with the giantess and the dwarf simply to emphasize Nature's strange freak. There is nothing abnormal about her, though—"just an or'nary cuss," as her unfeeling showman remarked.

Lady Amma herself, although only twenty-two years old, is nearly 7ft. 9in. in height ; and yet I am assured that she eats less than an ordinary woman. I last saw her in Harry Davis's Museum, in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where she had a special conveyance built for her convenience. The curious thing is, that her eldest and smallest sister, Princess Josepha, fell in love with and



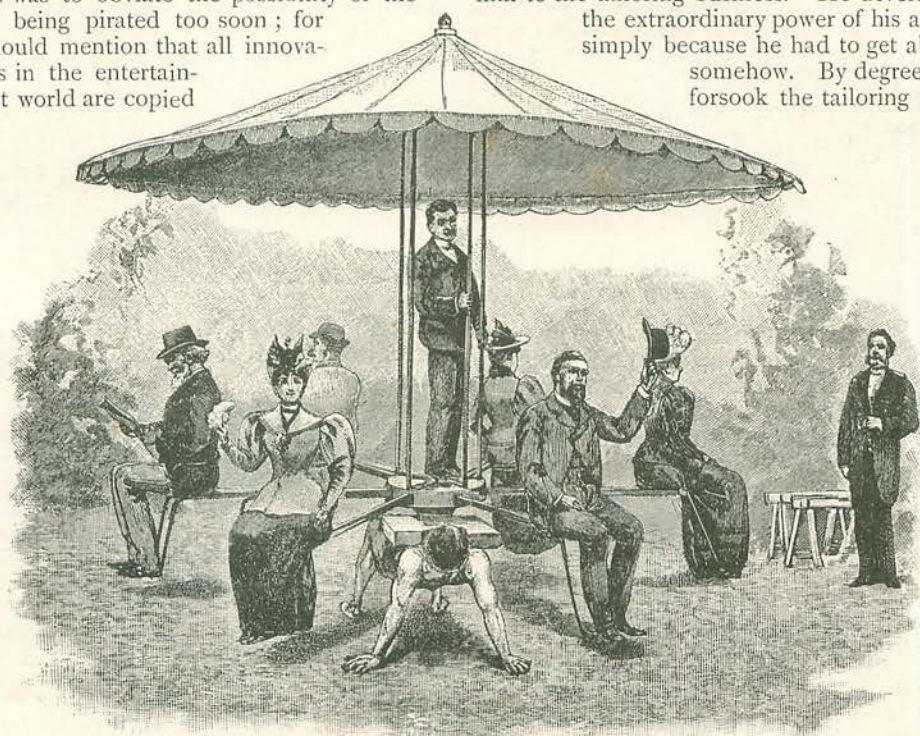
LADY AMMA, THE FRENCH GIANTESS, AND HER TWO ELDER SISTERS.

married Chimah, the extraordinary Chinese dwarf whose portrait is seen at the top of the preceding page.

The next illustration depicts the "strong-man" craze *in excelsis*. The individual upon whom all this responsibility rests is one Milo, a young Italian, whose novel turn was first introduced to a British audience on August 24th, 1891. The roundabout which he supports on his chest was made by half-a-dozen different people, and fitted together by Milo himself, who is something of a mechanic. This was to obviate the possibility of the idea being pirated too soon; for I should mention that all innovations in the entertainment world are copied

14ft. in diameter across the ornamental top; it cost a trifle over £50.

Next comes Jules Keller, the upside-down man, whose arms are to him what legs are to more ordinary folk. He is a Polish Jew, thirty-three years of age, and is a giant of strength from his waist upwards. Keller has managed to support himself, independently of his lower extremities, with very great success. His legs, although outwardly almost perfect, contain no bone, or next to none; consequently his people very properly apprenticed him to the tailoring business. He developed the extraordinary power of his arms, simply because he had to get about somehow. By degrees he forsook the tailoring plat-



MILO, THE STRONG MAN, SUPPORTING A LOADED ROUNDABOUT.

sooner or later by unintelligent performers whose creative power is a minus quantity.

Without passengers, the apparatus weighs $8\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.; loaded, more than a ton. Although only seven persons are being carried in the illustration (and notice the gentleman saluting as though he were doing a smart thing) it is possible to accommodate a round dozen on the machine, by means of extra seats placed on the bars. Moreover, on occasion, a barrel organ is placed in the centre and slowly ground by a dismal-looking Italian, who seems utterly unconscious of the fact that he is rendering himself and his music a heavy burden to at least one of his neighbours.

The roundabout is about 12ft. high and

form on which he had squatted for years, and took to another and far more profitable stage.

Amazing as it may seem, the "upside-down man" can take a clear leap of 4ft. over an obstacle on his hands; and he can in the same way jump down from a platform 9ft. high. I saw him do this, and noticed that his tremendously powerful arms yielded as he struck, letting his chin almost touch the ground in order to break the fall. Keller's elastic "step" cannot be described. In Vienna he walked on his hands for a wager against a young athlete, and beat him; of course he had a little start, and his opponent walked after the manner of men.



JULES KELLER, THE "UPSIDE-DOWN MAN."

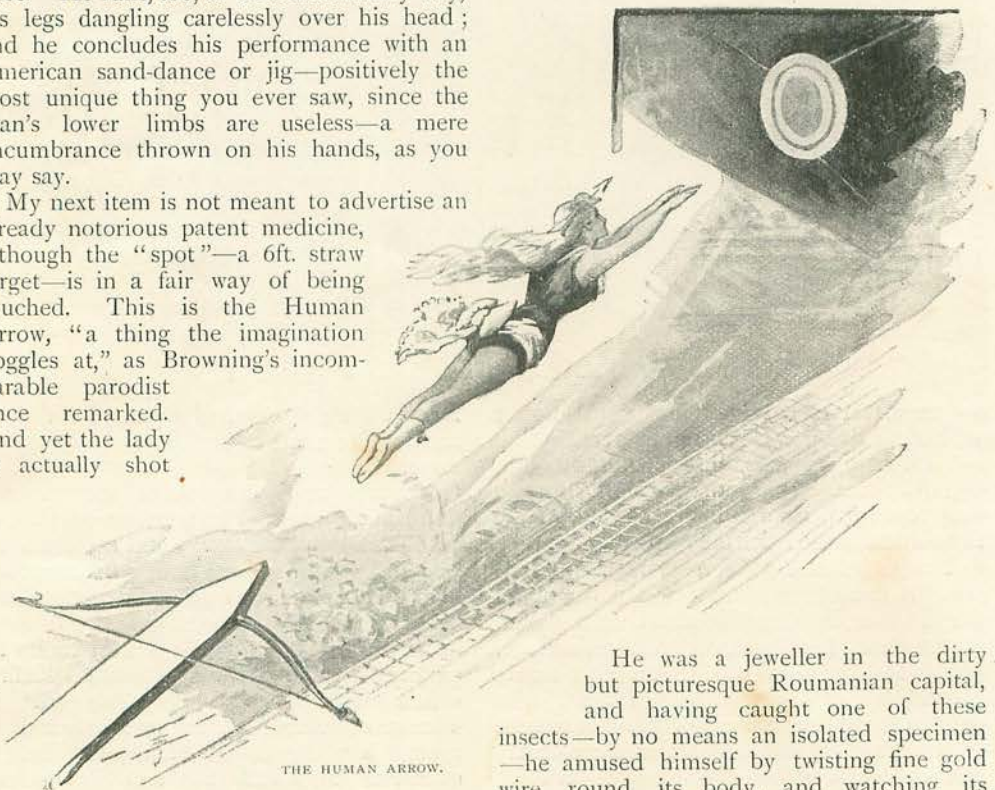
In the photograph Keller is seen going up one side of a double ladder at a fine springy pace. He runs, too, in an extraordinary way, his legs dangling carelessly over his head; and he concludes his performance with an American sand-dance or jig—positively the most unique thing you ever saw, since the man's lower limbs are useless—a mere encumbrance thrown on his hands, as you may say.

My next item is not meant to advertise an already notorious patent medicine, although the "spot"—a 6ft. straw target—is in a fair way of being touched. This is the Human Arrow, "a thing the imagination boggles at," as Browning's incomparable parodist once remarked. And yet the lady is actually shot.

from a monstrous cross-bow, and traverses some 30ft. of hot, vitiated atmosphere before striking the target.

I think it was Dr. Johnson who remarked, speaking of a dog that walked on its hind legs, "the thing is not well done, but the wonder is that 'tis done at all." So with this startling feat. You can't expect the girl to be sent hurtling half a mile against a brick wall. The distance is short, the regulation net is used, and the target, on being touched, retires as gently and gracefully as the "Arrow" herself does shortly afterwards. Then, again, I must confess that powerful springs have more to do with this aerial flight than the string of the bow.

Fleas, like the poor, are always with us; of course, I refer to performing fleas. And I was fortunate enough to light upon the only original discoverer, inventor, trainer—call him what you will—of these interesting creatures. He is a Roumanian (a native of Bucharest), so that you may say, "Here is another irritating Eastern question sprung upon us," more especially since the "Professor" (all he professes is fleas) obtains his stock in the wilds of Bethnal Green.



THE HUMAN ARROW.

He was a jeweller in the dirty but picturesque Roumanian capital, and having caught one of these insects—by no means an isolated specimen—he amused himself by twisting fine gold wire round its body, and watching its

struggles. These must have been diverting, for the idle assistant presently fixed his captive flea in a little box beneath one of those peculiar eye-glasses used by watchmakers when inspecting the works of a watch. This was the nucleus of a show which, in its palmy days, brought its lucky owner £40 a day in the European capitals.

When the young jeweller, encouraged by his fellow-assistants and his master's patrons, resolved to give up his calling and go into the trained-flea line, his people very properly objected; and, indeed, finding him obdurate, they shut their doors against him when he chanced to be in their vicinity—"In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt"—if the quotation be not irreverent.

I asked the Professor how he fed his insects. He promptly pulled up his coat-sleeve and bared his arm. "I lives on dem, an' dey lives on me"; and he laughed heartily at what was evidently a stock witticism.

The fleas are shown on a circular, white-topped table. They are "stabled," as the Professor puts it, in a shallow box filled with cotton wool. As the insects themselves could not be photographed in their performance, I reproduce here a facsimile of the showman's "play-bill." The draughtsmanship may not be anatomically correct, but beyond question it is funny. The tiny vehicles are of brass; and for harnessing, fine gold wire is used. Wire is also used for chaining up the odious "house-dog," and it figures likewise in the balancing-pole of the tight-rope performer, the swords of the duellists, and the tackle of the windmill.

Noticing the dejected aspect of the "house-dog," I asked if the fleas lived long at this sort of work. "Ubbowd doo year," was the reply. The only remarkable incident the Professor recalls took place in Berlin, at the time when the insects were kept in a glass bottle. One morning, just as the show was about to commence for the amusement of a crowd of ladies and gentlemen, some awkward individual knocked the jar, "stock" and all,

on the ground. "Dat dime," remarked the Professor in tones of reminiscent sadness, "my badrons garried away de vleys, an I ad to ged zum more."

The dangerous "Monte Christo" diving feat, which forms the subject of the next two illustrations, is performed by Baume, the swimming expert, who has already saved more than twenty lives from drowning. Baume first appears clad in a shabby suit of clothes, which, however, conceals the smart diving costume he wears beneath. He is then hoisted by means of a rope and pulley

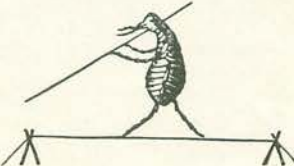
PROFESSOR LIKONTI'S WONDERFUL ROUMANIAN

FLEA CIRCUS

MUST BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED.


PATRONISED BY ROYALTY, NOBILITY, AND CLERGY.


Come and see the
LIVELY FLEAS
Dance a Ballet,
Fight a Duel with
Swords,
Walk the Tight
Rope a la Blondin

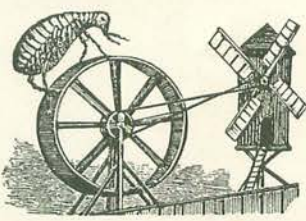


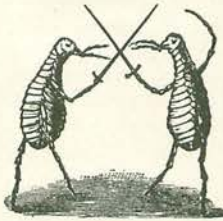
The
SMALLEST PERFORMERS
in the World
Interesting alike to
Old and Young, Rich,
and Poor.

Harnessed like
horses, and drawing
and driving
Hansom Cabs, Mail
Vans, Funeral Cars,
Cabriolets, Milk
Cars, Artillery Fleas
firing a Cannon.









"PLAY-BILL" OF THE PERFORMING FLEAS.

to the platform, seventy or eighty feet above the tank and the audience. Here the diver is bound hand and foot, and then enveloped in a sack which is tied over his head.

All that remains for the gratification of an expectant public is a well-judged leap into the tank of water below, and a subsequent re-appearance—unfettered and free from the sack; in short, "without encumbrance of any kind," as the advertisements have it. This is far easier said than done. The leap is one of over 70ft., and that very much in



THE MONTE CRISTO DIVE—FALLING.

the dark, not to speak of the transformation beneath the water. When all is ready, the shapeless bundle bends over to glance at the bright spot far below; this is the tank, containing 7ft. of water, on which powerful beams of lime-light are flashed. Finally, Baume gives the sack a hitch up, in order that it may not get entangled in his legs or be caught by the rush of wind during the descent, and then he takes a long breath before leaving the platform. On striking the water (the mighty splash very literally damps the ardour of many of his incautious admirers) the diver executes a somersault, during which he unties his bonds, and kicks the sack upwards off his body. A man is in waiting to seize the sack the moment it reaches the surface. The next thing Baume has to do beneath the water is to divest himself of his outer garments—the shabby suit aforesaid—and then he is free to rise to the surface, amid thunderous applause, climb the iron ladder at the side, and finally retire breathless and dripping.

It was at the Soldiers' Club in Cairo

that I witnessed the very peculiar entertainment given by the King of Clubs—Tom Burrows, champion club-swinger of the world. Burrows was born at Ballarat, in January, 1867, and came to England in 1891, when he became teacher of boxing and club-swinging at the Royal Military Gymnasium, Aldershot.

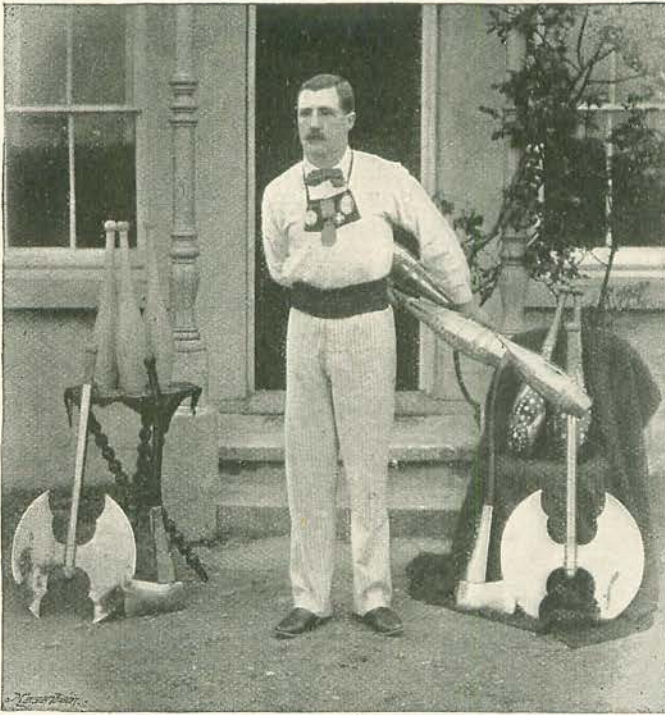
On March 20th, 1895, Burrows swung a pair of clubs for twenty-four hours at our famous camp; and it was in order to break this record that he gave an exhibition in Cairo before Lord and Lady Cromer, the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener, and many other distinguished folk.

The champion made the following conditions for the undertaking: (1) The clubs were to weigh 2lb. each, and to be 24in. long; (2) To swing at least 50 complete circles each minute; (3) No rest or stop allowed during the 25 hours; (4) No artificial aid of any sort allowed; (5) To swing no fewer than 70,000 complete circles in the record; and (6) That there should always be at least two judges present to watch the swinging.

Burrows commenced swinging the clubs at 9.18 on Wednesday evening, every person in the distinguished gathering being filled with admiration at the graceful way in which he manœuvred



THE MONTE CRISTO DIVE—GETTING OUT OF THE TANK.



SWINGING CLUBS FOR 26¼ HOURS WITHOUT REST.

his clubs—circling, curving, twirling. From thence onward through the evening, and throughout the whole of the night, and all next day, this athlete swung the clubs without stopping for a moment; until a mighty burst of cheering at 9.18, on Thursday night, proclaimed that he had equalled his Aldershot feat. At 10.18 further enthusiastic cheering greeted Burrows, having established a world's record of twenty-five hours' continuous swinging.

Still, the indomitable fellow went on, until he finally stopped at 11.33, on Thursday night, having swung the clubs without one moment's cessation for twenty-six hours and fifteen minutes.

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But surely thirty-five years' manipulation of marionette strings is also something of a record; this is claimed by Mr. R. Barnard, who had the old witch and her satellites in hand when this photograph was taken. The smaller figures are, in the first place, secreted in the witch's pockets, so that the operator had to control no fewer than fifty strings at once while putting this one figure through its performance.

These marionettes have quite a charming little portable theatre of their own, besides scenery to the value of £150. Altogether Mr. Barnard possesses seventy figures, which cost, undressed, about £2 each. And although the clever little man knows no more about art than he does about the integral calculus, yet he carves the heads himself out of yellow

pine, while his wife dresses the perfect puppets; and the result is creditable in the highest degree to the taste and skill of both. A surprising amount of attention is paid to small details of dress. The satins and silks used in the dresses of the "ladies"



THE OLD WITCH AND HER SATELLITES—A MARIONETTE FIGURE WITH FIFTY STRINGS.



MOUNTING THE LADDER OF SWORDS.

(there are $2\frac{1}{2}$ yds. in that of the fairy) cost from 3s. 11d. to 5s. 11d. a yard; and then there are numerous costly items of under-clothing, lace, spangles, bead and bugle trimmings, and innumerable miscellaneous "properties." I was confidentially assured that the columbine wears silk stockings and twelve or fourteen petticoats; and also that the clown has to be repainted once a week, owing to the tremendous lot of knocking about he receives at the hands of impossible policemen.

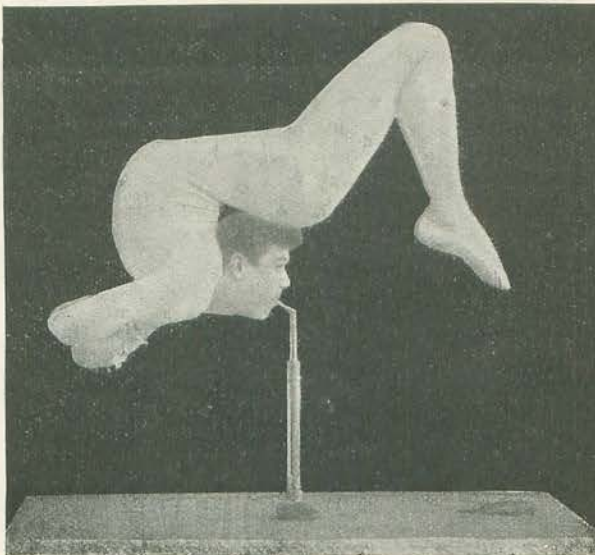
The string used is bought

white at eighteen-pence per ball, and then dyed by a special process. Of course, the strings get entangled sometimes, but the ready wit of the operator, who stands on the narrow platform above the scene, hardly ever fails; and when such awkward incidents do occur, dialogue and business are swiftly changed to meet the emergency. I can only say that Barnard's marionettes constitute a miniature theatre and variety show combined. The figures are infinitely more amusing than many *lions comiques* who drive from hall to hall of an evening, and far less vulgar.

Talk about a sharp climb up the ladder of fame! Just look at this Japanese girl—one of the Chyo-chis family—who made her *début* in the City of Mexico, as a sword-walker, six years ago. As will be seen in the photograph, the rungs of the step-ladder consist of Japanese scimitars, and there is no mistake about the keenness of their edge. The lady tells me that the secret of the thing lies in gripping the edge of each sword in a fearless way with the toes, and stepping up briskly when the bare foot is properly placed. Of course, the slightest cutting or sawing movement must be avoided. And she needs no apostle to admonish her to

"walk circumspectly."

I have now to introduce with becoming gravity the Boneless Wonder—one Ames—a man with an accommodating vertebra. Nor am I jesting when I assert that this contortionist has quite a bump—one of those hard, permanent bumps—on his chin, caused by strumming upon the latter with his heels whilst in the position shown in the photograph. The bump, which I had an opportunity of carefully examining for myself, might be truthfully translated by an astute phrenologist or



AMES, THE BONELESS WONDER.

physiognomist as indicating an extremely pliable disposition.

In the picture, Ames is seen performing his most extraordinary feat. An adjustable iron rod, terminating in a leather mouthpiece, is fixed to a massive table, and on this the acrobat raises his body over his head, resting his whole weight on his teeth, and folding his arms with an appearance of placidity he must be very far from feeling.

But, plainly, we cannot all be "boneless wonders." Not unto everyone is it given to perform such feats, and certainly not unto Mrs. Johnson, a lady of strongly marked individuality, whose portrait next appears. The last time I had the pleasure of meeting this substantial person was at Huber's Museum, in Fourteenth Street, New York, where she was in receipt of seventy-five dollars a week. Mrs. Johnson was a remarkably healthy woman, and one who exasperated her lecturer beyond everything by correcting him forcibly when in the midst of his harangue to the crowd. Like the less bulky members of her sex, she was amazingly fond of dress and

jewellery. In the photograph she is wearing her favourite robe—acres of black silk, with raised flowers worked in gorgeous colours.

The most stringent regulations ever made by a flint-hearted agent could not keep Mrs. Johnson indoors; probably this is why her salary dwindled from 200 dollars a week down to a paltry seventy-five. She *would* assert herself—not a difficult thing, you would think, at any time—and she took long walks very early in the morning. Then, of course, with that superhuman energy that springs eternal in the breast of man when free shows are available, people got up early and followed her at a respectful distance. This latter was as it should be, for the great lady was of uncertain temper, and if she took it into her massive head to

assault anyone (as she once did the unfortunate dog-faced man—himself no chicken), it would mean utter annihilation, Mrs. Johnson being 7ft. high and weighing 28 stone. Curiously, no one ever thought to ask why Mr. J. was not on the spot to share the glory and the seventy-five dollars.



THE FAT LADY, MRS. JOHNSON.