

of the bars and hung lightly in mid-air, head downwards, with no support but her toes. Then she swung two and fro, and letting go from the bar, she seemed to soar through the air and elung to the flying or winging trapeze. On this she gave a marvellous exhibition of her fearlessness and wonderful skill, in all of which her writhing white muscles shone and every beauty of her form seemed to display to advantage.

The audience watched her in breathless silence, and when at last she had finished, there arose an apron the like of which was never heard before in Madison Square Garden.

The great volume of sound seemed not to start from any one point, but burst spontaneously from thousands of throats and filled the Garden with the roar of applause for which many a successful star would give her diamonds and the receipts of a year.

As Nita Barlotti stepped into the loop of rope to be lowered to the ground, I was at once struck with the utter absence of pleasure in her beautiful face. The hands of her attendants grasped the rope and let her down, a long cloak was thrwn around her, and she was led away.

There were two men in that audience who were evidently much interested in the queen of the flying trapeze. I had seen Maubikeck, the Lion Tamer, clad in ordinary evening dress, looking like a handsome, powerful man of the world, standing near the rope, watching the beautiful acrobat narrowly. There was a smile of encouragement on his face, and he was among the first in the applause. Then, as Nita reached the ground, a tall, black-bearded, man looking Italian forced himself through the group of attendants, and taking the girl's hand in his, led her away from our sight.

And I noticed that, although her countenance was dead to us—dead to the tremendous applause and greeting she had won from the people—when she passed Maubikeck it was to him that her beautiful head was bowed, and one bright, fleeting smile showed itself on her lips, when her eye looked into his.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Dilkine. 'Not a smile, not a bow, not a return for all the applause. She must be made of stone.'

'She did smile,' said Major Simmons, 'but not at the audience. The lion tamer got the smile—Maligni takes the girl. There's a romance there—love—bat blood—and all the other ingredients of an Italian tragedy.'

The next act fell flat, and as neither Maubikeck nor Barlotti was billed to appear a second time, we soon lost interest, and before the crowd began to get restless, we left the Garden and went home.

Don't forget Gravi-court's stag tomorrow evening,' said the major, as I was leaving him. 'You will be there, I suppose.'

'Hang Gravi-court!' I replied. 'Yes, I will be there, if for no other reason than to show the fellow I am still alive and in the arena.'

'Good!' said the major. 'And good-night.'

(To be continued.)

ON FIRE AT SEA.

SEVEN WOMEN ROASTED ALIVE.

AN HEROIC STEWARDESS.

The cheapest route from London to Edinburgh is by sea from Hermitage Wharf to Leith or Granton. The steamers are boats of about 1,200 tons, very similar to those employed in the Australian coasting trade, and a return passage costs 26s only, whereas third-class rail comes to 43 2s 8d. Naturally, during the tourist season of August and September, these vessels are crammed, and a thrill of horror ran through the community when on Monday morning it transpired one of them had been ablaze off Clacton, and that a number of women passengers had been roasted alive.

The vessel in question, the Ions, left Leith on Saturday evening, all going well till 24 hours later, as she approached the mouth of the Thames. It was then the darkest part of the night, and the Captain's feelings when flames were all of a sudden observed shooting from the midst of the fore-cabin passengers' quarters, may be imagined. The alarm given, a scene of panic, much aggravated by the smoke and heat, supervened. The men trapped in a large cabin adjoining the fore-cabin broke open another door and escaped. The women, unfortunately, were penned in a cabin which had but one available exit, and the passage that formed part of it was one of the first things to catch fire. Those who had the presence of mind to rush across promptly in their nightgowns were saved, but the remainder, caught like rats in a trap, seem to have been slowly roasted alive. It must in charity be supposed everything was done that could be done, yet, with the exception of a single woman (the stewardess), the accounts show a striking

absence of heroism. The crew pumped on the burning cabin, but when at length the fire yielded to their efforts a few incinerated remains indicated the seven victims had died hours before.

The heroic stewardess aforementioned, Miss Ledeham, was one of the first to escape from the burning cabin. No sooner had she reached the deck than the recollection of the trapped women, and especially of a little child confided to her care, rushed into her mind, and with a cry, 'It's too horrible, I must do something,' she turned again into the burning fiery furnace. That she reached the cabin and the child we know, as her body was found on the floor with her charge in her arms.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES.

A LADY'S STORY.

Several interviews were obtained with passengers and others who were on the Ions at the time of the catastrophe.

Mrs Henry Thompson, of London, who was in the cabin at the time the fire broke out, said:—'We had had a most pleasant voyage until the fire broke out. I was in my berth at the time, and remember that there were about fifteen or sixteen other ladies and children in the compartment. I was asleep, and was awakened by knocking at the door and hearing the sailors running about shouting that the vessel was on fire. I jumped out, and, wrapping myself in my cloak, ran up the hatchway on deck. I remember seeing a person in a berth, and I woke her up as I ran along. I was assisted on deck by a sailor. Before I came up I saw several ladies attempting to dress themselves, and I think this must have been the cause of their deaths, because though I just managed to scramble up on deck, I think all the others had to make their escape by way of the cook's pantry, which adjoined. I remember quite well seeing the stewardess rushing around the compartment waking people up, but I think she also stopped to dress herself or to do something. When I got on deck the captain and the crew were doing all they could to put out the fire and to rescue the persons in the burning compartment. Considerable excitement prevailed for a long time, and most of the ladies were more or less alarmed when the lifebelts were handed round, and other preparations made for leaving the ship, but throughout the captain and his officers behaved in the most admirable manner, doing everything they could to maintain good order and stay the alarm and excitement of the passengers. Four ladies were in the cabin all night with their things on, and they were able to get out quickly, but I think more would have escaped if they had not stopped to dress.'

ABOUT THE BRAVE STEWARDESSES.

The assistant steward informed a reporter that the scene was a most heartrending one, the screams from the women's quarters on the port side of the ship being agonising in the extreme. The first indication that the women were in peril was given by Miss Ledeham, the fore-cabin stewardess, who rushed on deck screaming frantically. She was in her night attire, which was in flames, and it was in the attempt to rescue a child that the stewardess perished in the flames. She was seen to rush through the flames, and was not seen again alive. The boats were lowered by Gunner McElvenna and the cook, whilst the crew were endeavouring to get the fire under control. The duration of the fire was quite four hours, but it was not till the flames had been subdued that the fate of the women was known. The assistant steward explained how it was the women perished whilst the male passengers escaped. The fire broke out in the lamp-room, and immediately ignited the men's quarters on the starboard side. The door of the passage connecting the cabin with the fore-cabin was forced open, and it was by this means that the men gained the deck. There is no passage from the women's quarters to the fore-cabin, the only exit being by the front door. This passage-way, however, was soon enveloped in flames, so the women and children were unable to escape.

The chief steward said there was some doubt as to the passenger whose name is given as Miss Noseman, as on some labels the name had been spelt differently. The identification of the dead girl was uncertain. It had been stated that she was a daughter of Mrs Raymond, but he knew Mrs Raymond well and was certain she had no child with her when she came on board. Her name he thought, was not on his list, and Mr Bird had ascertained that she was not his daughter. Miss Ledeham the stewardess, he added, belonged to Forest-gate, London. She had been on the Ions for some considerable time, and was very popular with the crew, while he had never known a passenger say a word against her.

OFFICER AND PASSENGER.

An officer of the ship, in the course of an interview, stated: 'I was in the engine-room when I heard the captain's bell ring "Full speed astern." I ran on deck and

called up the chief engineer. The first thing I saw on getting on deck was a flame coming from the gentlemen's cabin forward. We at once got the hose under way from the engine-room. The ladies came running out of their cabins, and so did the gentlemen. We played on the ladies' saloon, the gentlemen's saloon and on the dining-room. I saw a woman and child in the ladies' room—this was an hour before the fire was put out. They were lying with their faces down, and about fifteen feet inside. The lady appeared to have knocked against the bulkhead when rushing out. Before this we did not expect we should see any bodies, excepting that of the stewardess and the child she went back to look after, for we thought they might all have got out. This was not so, however. We entered the saloon later on, and, passing by the bodies of this woman and child, over whom we spread some canvas, came to other bodies. The last we found was the stewardess, who was clasping the hand of the dead child.

A passenger who was on board states that when the flames were seen issuing from the ladies' cabin the engines were stopped at once, and in a few minutes water was being poured into the cabin by means of two hydrants. There were about seventeen ladies in the cabin, which was on the port side, the gentlemen being quartered on the starboard side. It is supposed, the passenger says, that the fire broke out in the dining-room. What little wind was blowing was on the starboard bow, thus driving the flames towards the cabin in which the unfortunate ladies met their death.

A GUNNER'S NARRATIVE.

Gunner McElvenna, 'V' Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, stationed at Woolwich, said:—'I was returning from furlough on the Ions. We left Leith at about 8.30 on Saturday night, and all went well until about a quarter past one o'clock this morning. We were then in 'The Swin,' off Clacton. We had all retired to rest at about ten on Sunday night. Shortly after one o'clock I heard the chief officer call, "All hands on deck," and loud tramping of feet overhead. I roused all the others in the men's side of the fore-cabin. All the beds were full, and there were a lot of passengers sleeping on the floor. When I got up I smelt smoke, and on opening the cabin door a sheet of flame burst in. I immediately closed the door again, and tried to find some other way out on to the deck. By this time all the others in the cabin were awake, and we could hear screams coming from the women's quarters, which were at the other side of the dining-hall, which adjoined our cabin. There was a small light in our cabin, and I groped my way about and found a door leading to the fore-cabin. This, with the cook, I forced, and, followed by the other male passengers from the fore-cabin, made my way to the fore-cabin. There was no sign of any flame there, and we soon saw that the fire was confined to the cabin. We all went aft. Some of us had a few things on, and some were nearly fully dressed. When we got to the bridge we saw several of the women folk rushing about, and the flames seemed to be coming mainly from their cabin. They all tried to get out by the front door leading to the deck, but I saw several of them driven back. There was no chance of entering the cabin, as it was blazing furiously at this time. When we got to the bridge I assisted the cook to get the boats ready while the crew were getting the fire out. A length of hose was soon at work, but it was nearly four hours before the flames had been sufficiently subdued to allow of an examination. We had seen one passenger running about saying he had lost his wife, but had no idea of the truth of it. When the chief officer went into the cabin he saw a sickening sight. There were the remains of four or five women strewn about the place. None of us knew how many lives had been lost until we got to London. The gentleman who had lost his wife was in a terrible state. We had all the boats and lifebelts ready ten minutes after we got the alarm if they had been needed, but they were not. The lamp-room joined our cabin, and all on board think that the fire originated there. I can't speak too highly of the captain and the crew, though some of the passengers were in a great hurry to get on the lifebelts.'

'What makes men of mature years wear so sad an expression?' 'Probably they are so mortified to think they have forgotten all they thought they knew when they left school.'

'I go faster than you do,' said the rim to the hub. 'You wouldn't go at all it were not for me, you ungrateful thing,' said the hub. 'Listen to those fellows,' whispered a spoke to his neighbour. 'they would be for ever in a fight if we did not keep them part.'

Turner's picture, 'The Trout Stream,' was purchased, September 28th, by a Manchester (England) collector for 4,800 guineas.

STEADY !!

There is a Run on our Blends. While we are glad to see it, And happy to keep pace with it, We want to point out THERE IS NO NEED FOR ALARM.

THE QUALITY

ALWAYS THE SAME.

And will be just as good next week as this.

We hold an IMMENSE STOCK, and there is ENOUGH FOR EVERYBODY.

Please keep calm, WE WON'T FAIL YOU.

Yours faithfully,

EMPIRE TEA COMPANY.

W. & G. TURNBULL & CO.,

Proprietors.

MERCHANTS IN NEW ZEALAND WRITING TO CEYLON TO OBTAIN SURATURA TEA.

THE following copy of a letter was written by the exporters of Suratura Tea to the Wellington agents:—

"Colombo, 2nd Sept, 1895.

"Dear Sirs,—There seems to be a great deal of correspondence between dealers in your Colony and merchants here re Suratura Tea, and we have on more than one occasion heard them, highly spoken of in Colombo. We mention this as we think it will be as well for you in self-protection to register the mark (if you have not already done so) as early as possible, as we ourselves have known the labels of other well-known brands very closely, if not almost, copied, and we feel sure were this to happen to Suratura, and inferior teas sold under a similar, or perhaps the same name, it would be very detrimental to all parties concerned. Of course, we refuse to ship the tea (Suratura) to any firm but your good selves, and shall always endeavour to protect you at this end as far as is in our power.—Yours, etc., . . ."

The endorsement made to obtain this wonderful Tea is proof of its public appreciation and quality.

The duty on Suratura is charged at 6d per lb. the old rate being 5d.