

CHAPTER XLII

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC — THE GREAT ALLIANCE

IN December, 1876, I received a second invitation from Lord Rosebery to breakfast with him in New York. On parting with his lordship in 1874, his warm expressions of pleasure at having met me, and his assurances that he hoped and intended to renew our acquaintance, left no room for embarrassing misgivings on this occasion. Our meeting at the Brevoort House was very cordial. His lordship took me in his brougham to the New York Club, and there I first learned that our breakfast companions were Martin Farquhar Tupper and the chief editor of a prominent New York daily paper. Mr. Tupper and myself had held a correspondence previous to his leaving England, and the author of "Proverbial Philosophy" was apparently delighted at the unexpected meeting of his "dear friend Barnum." The occasion was an exceedingly enjoyable one, and if, as is said, laughter aids digestion, I am confident that three of the quartette were not troubled with dyspepsia after that delicious and *recherché* meal.

Among many other valuable additions to my travelling show of 1877 were six beautiful and remarkably trained black Trakene Stallions from Germany. My agents, Bailey and June, after scouring Europe in search of novelties, purchased them at large figures from James Myers, proprietor of the Great American Circus in Paris. They formed a novel and pleasing feature, and, with other startling novelties, aided to secure to me a still more profitable season than that of 1876.

On the 11th of April, 1877, my family were stricken with a heavy

sorrow in the sudden death of my daughter, Pauline T. Seeley, at the age of thirty-one years, leaving a husband and three children. This blow would have been insupportable to me did I not receive it as coming from our good Father in Heaven, who does all things right.

In July, 1877, I sailed for England with my wife, in the Cunard steamer "Russia," returning home some eight weeks later in the "Scythia" of the same line. At the request of the captains and passengers, I gave a lecture on each steamer for the benefit of the Seamen's Orphan Institution in Liverpool. I also gave my lecture on "The World, and How to Live in It," several times in the Royal Aquarium Theatre, London, in Alexandra Palace, London, Southport Winter Gardens, and in Bolton. I likewise lectured on Temperance in Hawkstone Hall, London, at which the celebrated Rev. Newman Hall presided; and I gave a similar lecture in Hengler's Circus building, Liverpool. I was glad to meet many of my old friends in England after an absence of eighteen years.

In the spring of 1877 I offered \$10,000 for the return of the kidnapped Charley Ross to his afflicted parents. But though my offer was published far and wide on both sides of the Atlantic, all efforts for his restoration proved unavailing.

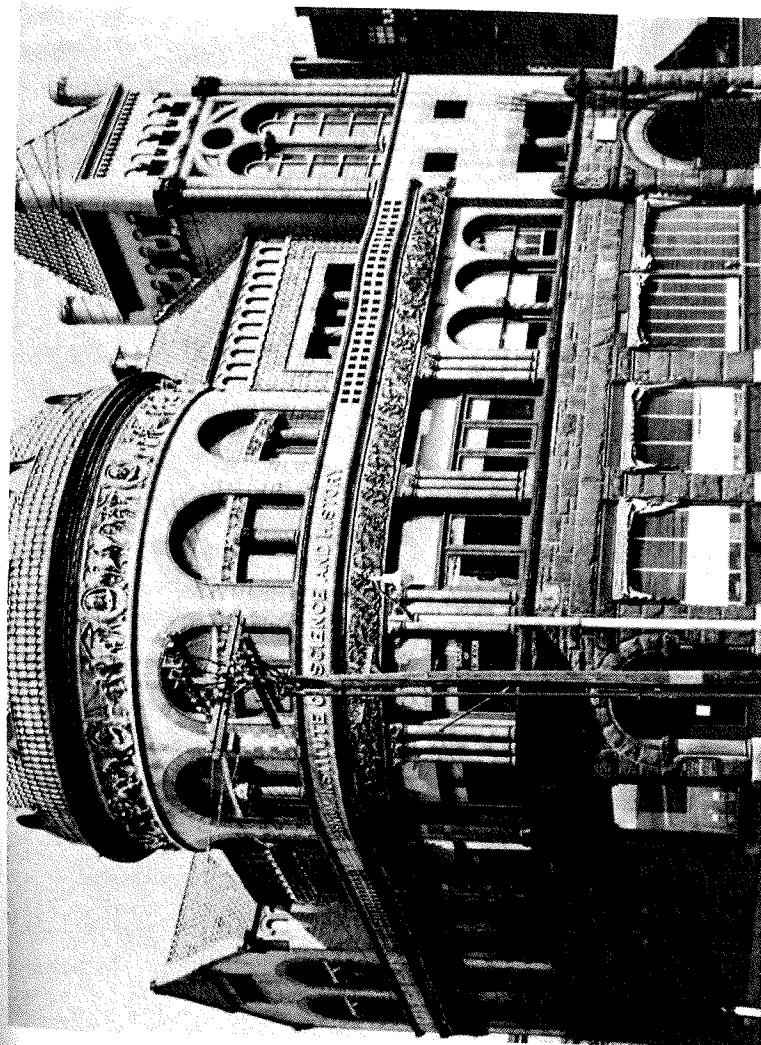
In August, 1877, I visited Des Moines, and proceeded west with my show as far as Council Bluffs, Iowa, and thence to my cattle ranch in Colorado. I gave temperance speeches in Denver and Greeley, and also gave my lecture on "The World, and How to Live in It," in the former city and at Colorado Springs.

In November, 1877, I was elected to represent Bridgeport in the General Assembly of Connecticut. My majority was 212, although the political party with which I am identified is usually 700 in the minority. It was a personal sacrifice to me to leave my home to help make our State laws at Hartford, but I did not feel at liberty to refuse the demand upon my services, and I endeavored to fulfill my

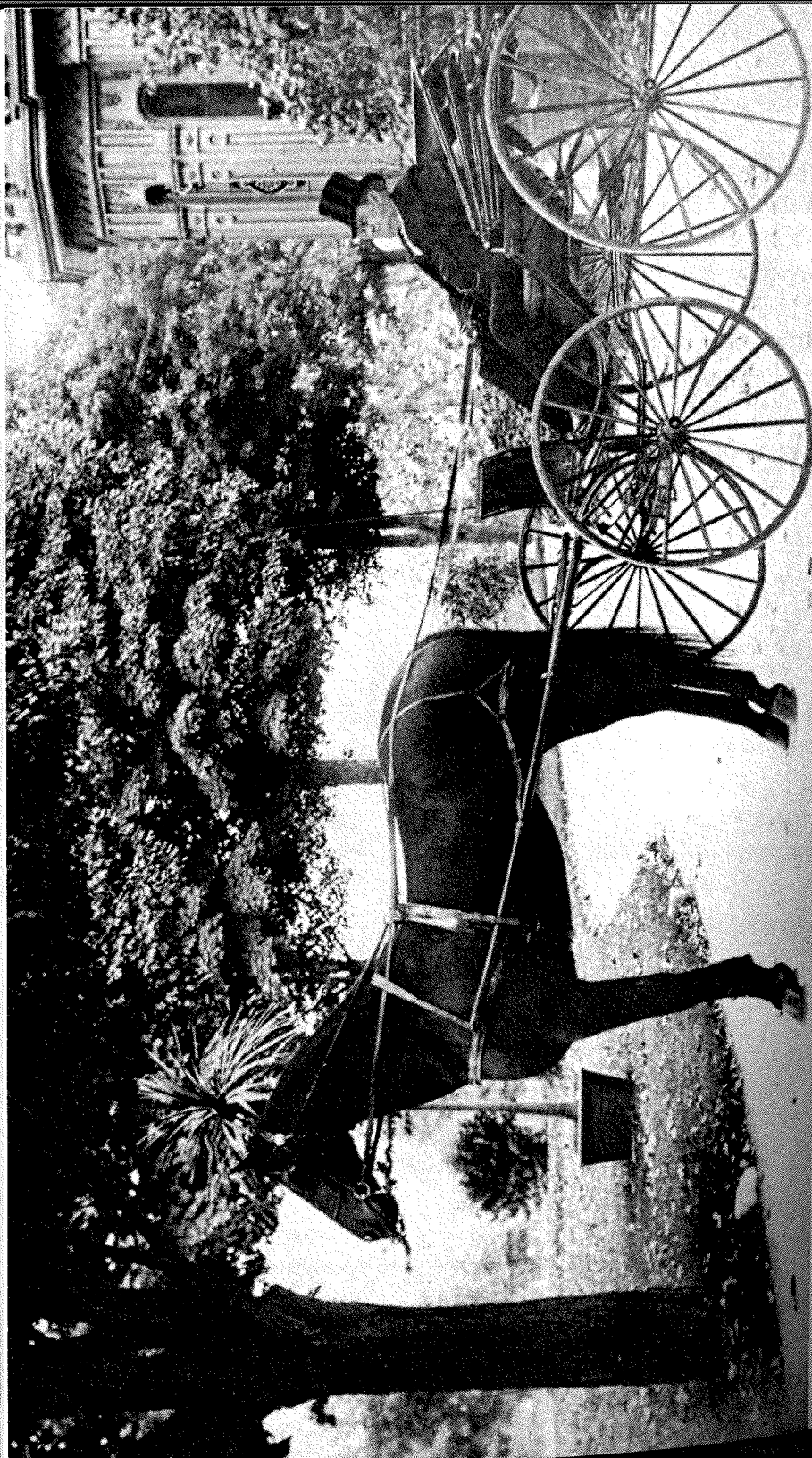
duty as a citizen of the Commonwealth without undue exertions party-wise. The Speaker, Hon. Chas. H. Briscoe, offered me the choice of chairmanship of half a dozen standing committees. I told him that on the two former occasions when I was in the Legislature I was Chairman on Agriculture (having plowed with an elephant), but I should now prefer to be one of the Committee on Temperance. He appointed me chairman of that committee. We succeeded in getting several favorable changes in our liquor laws, yet, like Oliver Twist, we asked for more. During the winter I gave a number of lectures in the vicinity of Hartford.

In April, 1878, my great travelling show opened for a fortnight at the American Institute building, in New York, and then proceeded to Philadelphia. The show, as usual, was transported through the country on nearly a hundred railway cars of my own, preceded a fortnight in advance by my magnificent advertising car, carrying press agents, the "paste brigade" of twenty men, and tons of immense colored bills, programmes, lithographs, photographs, electrotype cuts, etc., to arouse the entire country for fifty miles around each place of exhibition to the fact that "P. T. Barnum's New and Greatest Show on Earth," with its acres of tents and pavilions, could be reached by cheap excursion trains on certain days specified in the bills and advertisements. The show went East to Bangor, Maine, and West to Illinois, reaching New York and opening at Gilmore's Garden in October, for seven weeks to crowded houses.

In the summer of 1878, I expended some twenty thousand dollars in the purchase and reclamation of a large tract of salt marsh adjoining Sea-side Park and the grounds of Waldemere on the west. This marsh had been inaccessible from time immemorial, annually producing plentiful crops of mosquitoes. The times were hard, many laboring men in Bridgeport were suffering for want of employment, and although it was evident I should never be reimbursed for half my expenditures, I could see that the improvement would be a great



THE BARNUM MUSEUM, BARNUM'S GIFT TO THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
Loan Collection of Elizabeth Sterling Seely



BARNUM IN HIS CARRIAGE IN FRONT OF WALDEMERE

Loan Collection of Elizabeth Sterling Seely

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public benefit, and remembering the dykes of Holland which I had so frequently seen with astonishment and admiration, I determined, as I told my neighbors, to "cheat my heirs," by expending a good sum *pro bono publico*. I built this dyke straight across a channel which let in the tide-water every twelve hours and covered an immense tract of low salt meadow. I made the dyke seventy feet wide at bottom, and of sufficient width on the top to form a fine street leading from one of our city avenues to the beach on Long Island Sound. This gives nearly a mile high and dry front on the salt water connecting with Sea-Side Park.

In November, 1878, I consented, much against my will, to accept another nomination to represent Bridgeport in the General Assembly of Connecticut. I was re-elected by a majority of several hundred votes.

Up to 1880, no travelling show in the world bore any comparison with my justly-called "Greatest Show on Earth." Other show-managers boasted of owning shows equalling mine, and some bought of the printers large colored showbills pictorially representing my marvellous curiosities, although these managers had no performances or curiosities of the kinds which they represented. The cost of one of their shows was from twenty thousand to fifty thousand dollars, while mine cost millions of dollars. Their expenses were three hundred to seven hundred dollars per day, while mine were three thousand dollars per day. The public soon discovered the difference between the sham and the reality, the natural consequences of misrepresentation followed; the small showmen made little or nothing, some went into bankruptcy each season, while mine was always crowded, and each succeeding year showed a larger profit.

My strongest competitors were the so-called "Great London Circus, Sanger's Royal British Menagerie and Grand International Allied Shows." Its managers, Cooper, Bailey & Hutchinson, had

adopted my manner of dealing with the public, and consequently their great show grew in popularity. On the tenth of March, 1880, while in Philadelphia, one of their large elephants, Hebe, became a mother. This was the first elephant born in captivity, and the managers so effectively advertised the fact that the public became wild with excitement over the "Baby Elephant." Naturalists and men of science rushed in numbers to Philadelphia, examined the wonderful "little stranger" and gave glowing reports to the papers of this country and of Europe. Illustrated papers and magazines of this and foreign lands described the Baby Elephant with pen and pencil, and before it was two months old I offered the lucky proprietors one hundred thousand dollars cash for mother and baby. They gleefully rejected my offer, pleasantly told me to look to my laurels, and wisely held on to their treasure.

I found that I had at last met foemen "worthy of my steel," and pleased to find comparatively young men with a business talent and energy approximating to my own, I met them in friendly council, and after days of negotiation we decided to join our two shows in one mammoth combination, and, sink or swim, to exhibit them for at least one season for one price of admission. The public were astonished at our audacity, and old showmen declared that we could never take in enough money to cover our expenses, which would be fully forty-five hundred dollars per day. My new partners, James A. Bailey and James L. Hutchinson, sagacious and practical managers, agreed with me that the experiment involved great risk, but, from the time of the Jenny Lind concerts, the Great Roman Hippodrome and other expensive enterprises, I have always found the great American public appreciative and ready to respond in proportion to the sums expended for their gratification and amusement.

In November of 1880, while in New York on business, I was suddenly attacked by an almost fatal illness, and laid for many weeks between life and death, unconscious of the tender solicitude shown

me by countless good friends in this country, and the cable messages of inquiry that came thickly from others in foreign lands; the knowledge of which will be ever a bright and grateful memory. Dr. Chapin, then on his death-bed, sent a messenger daily; reporters besieged the house at all hours, and contributed bulletins of my progress or relapse to all the principal New York papers; while the Associated Press kept the remoter public informed by telegraph of my condition. When strong enough I went to Florida, to recuperate in that delightful climate, returning in April to take up my old avocations with the old zest and little less than the old strength.

The Barnum & London Circus opened in New York March 18, 1881, heralded by a torchlight procession through the city on Saturday night, March 16th, which was witnessed by more than half a million of people and pronounced the most brilliant display ever seen in America. Electric and calcium lights illuminated the whole. Windows were sold in New York, along Broadway, for five dollars, eight dollars and ten dollars, from which to view the pageant. So certain were we that this great street pageant and the marvellous combination of novelties to be produced throughout the season would totally eclipse any former show enterprise, that on Saturday, March 26th, we brought, in drawing-room cars, from Washington, D. C., and Boston, and all the principal cities on those routes, the editors of all the leading papers. These gentlemen, nearly one hundred in number, witnessed the torchlight procession Saturday night, and our opening performance at the Madison Square Garden Monday night, March 28th. They were lodged at hotels at our expense, and by us returned to their homes on Tuesday; a very costly piece of advertising, which yet yielded us a magnificent return in the enthusiastic editorial indorsements of so many papers of good standing, whose representatives had seen our show and exclaimed as did the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, "The half was not told me."

Very early in the travelling season of 1881, we enlarged our

already immense tents three different times, and yet so great was the multitude that attended our exhibitions—many coming on excursion trains twenty, thirty and even fifty miles—that at half the towns we visited we were unable to accommodate all who came, and we turned away thousands for want of room. In every town we were patronized by the *élite*, and frequently the public and private schools, as well as manufactories, were closed on "Barnum Day," school committees and teachers recognizing that children would learn more natural history by one visit to our menagerie than they could acquire by months of reading.

In Washington President Garfield told me he always attended my shows, and when Secretary Blaine said, "Well, Barnum! all the children in America are anxious to see your show," the President smilingly added, "Yes! Mr. Barnum is the Kris Kringle of America."

For years showmen had asserted that I did not own my show; others assumed to be my relatives and representatives. Determined to put down these false assertions and assumptions I sued the *Philadelphia Sun* for \$100,000 damages in April, 1881, for saying that I merely hired out my name. The publisher, convinced of his error, retracted the statement and apologized. I withdrew the suit, having obtained all the redress I desired. In May, 1881, the desire to acquire, for my show-season of 1882, attractions which only my personal negotiations could secure, I revisited England, sailing in the "Scythia." After four pleasant weeks I returned in the "Gallia," successful in the object of my journey and invigorated by that finest of all tonics, a sea-voyage. Desiring to aid in beautifying the village of Bethel, it being my birth-place, from which a busy checkered life has never alienated my interest, I presented to my old companions a bronze fountain eighteen feet high, made in Germany; the design a Triton of heroic size, spouting water from an uplifted horn. It was a gala day for Bethel, the streets and resi-

dences were decorated with flags and bunting, a procession of police, fire companies with their engines, bands of music, citizens and invited guests in carriages, etc., paraded the town, and they formed in line around the square newly adorned by the fountain. From a grand stand many speeches were made, and as my old friends would not permit me to be merely a listener and looker-on, and as reminiscences of the old days presented themselves thickly in my mind, in wide and often amusing contrasts to the customs and conditions of to-day, I addressed them.

Our Great Barnum-London Show closed its season at Newport, Arkansas, November 12, 1881, from whence it came direct to its winter quarters, at Bridgeport, arriving on the morning of November nineteenth. The entire show travelled, during the season of thirty-three weeks, 12,266 miles.

