



SEA KICKUP ELEPHANTS BY CLAUDE W. BOSTOCK

of the circus and menagerie family. [A Fact Story]

WE CABLED to Raji, our Singapore representative, that we had sold the elephants, tigers, and other animals, which he held for us there, to a show in America, and that they must be delivered before the opening of the circus season. He replied:

SINGAPORE, S. S.

BOSTOCK,

LONDON, ENG.

NO GO AMERICA GOTTA
SMALL JAP HOYO SAN GO LONDON
COME TIME.

RAJI

To most people the message might be as mysterious as the hieroglyphics on a Babylonian tomb. It meant to us that, contrary to our original plan to ship the animals via San Francisco, we now would

have to ship them to London, then tranship them to New York. It was an unfortunate change and involved hazards, particularly because winter had set in.

Raji was faithful, and we took for granted that the small Japanese vessel, the *Hoyo San*, was the best ship available. Raji knew that wild animals are poor sailors. They are seriously affected by the changes in climate, diet, inconveniences and noises; they suffer their greatest mortality on shipboard.

The obvious course was to insure the animals in transit. But the insurance companies that regularly handled these risks were charging excessive rates, and our profits would have been almost nothing, with the change in route. Something had to

be done. Perhaps we could find an insurance company that would give us more reasonable rates.

We learned of a company, with a gold-lettered sign reading *Livestock Insurance, Ltd., Established 1790*. We entered. If there was any business being transacted it certainly was not apparent. There were no telephones ringing, or typewriters clicking. Evidently they did not use the latter, for in one corner a clerk, dressed in a frock coat, was making copies of a handwritten letter in an old letter press. Another clerk, with sideburns, was writing in a very large, old ledger.

A picture of a large Hereford bull hung askew on one wall. On another wall were two pictures of race horses—the costumes of the jockeys indicated that their riders were gentlemen. Dust was everywhere. The ticking of a grandfather clock was the only sound.

We waited, expecting one of the clerks to ask our business, but they went on with their hushed work. We waited—we still waited. Finally we tapped on the counter. The clerk with the sideburns carefully blotted his ledger, wiped his pen on a piece of chamois, arose, and asked:

“Is there anything you want?”

We inquired if the manager was in. “Oh!” said he. “You wish to see Mr. Smithers.”

“Mr. Smithers?”

“Yes, Mr. Reginald Smithers, our managing director.”

“Would you inform Mr. Reginald Smithers that we would like to see him?” With a wobegone sort of expression on his face, he exclaimed, “Oh, I am sorry—I am awfully sorry—”

“What are you sorry about?” we asked.

“I am sorry, you can’t see Mr. Smithers now.”

“Why not?”

“It’s tea time, and Mr. Smithers is having his afternoon tea.”

In anything but a pleasant tone we said, “Listen, we are here to give your concern some business, but, if you do not want it, we will go elsewhere.”

The mention of business did not seem to affect him, but the tone of voice brought the desired result. He said, “Well, it is not quite in order, but I will see what I can do.”

The clerk retired to a door at the far end of the office, and timidly rapped and entered.

Shortly he reappeared and beckoned to us, and we entered the private office of Mr. Reginald Smithers.

The atmosphere of this room was the same as the outer office, except that it was more orderly. Over the large fireplace was an oil painting of a gentleman of the late eighteenth century—no doubt the founder of the company.

Mr. Reginald Smithers was a rotund, florid Englishman of the old school, with too-barbered hair and mustache. He radiated pompous dignity. He arose from behind an old table-desk, from which the tea tray had not yet been removed, in order to acknowledge the strictly formal introduction by the clerk, who immediately retired. A strained silence ensued.

We said, “Mr. Smithers, we have a shipment of animals—”

“Could you, by any chance, be any relation to the Bostocks, of the Bostock and Wombwell Menagerie and the Bostock Circus?” interrupted Mr. Smithers. “Yes. We have a ship—”

“Oh, that is a coincidence. You know, I have visited your show ever since I was a boy.”

“Mr. Smithers, we have a—”

“I can remember my first visit as clearly as though it were yesterday—my father took me. I was wearing—”

“Mr. Smithers, we—”

“—kilts, at the time. There was a rhinoceros, with one horn.” Then, lapsing into deep meditation, he continued: “Let me see. Did it have one horn, or two horns? I believe it was one—no, perhaps it was two.”

Trying to settle the matter we said, “It was a rhinoceros.”

“Oh, yes, I’m sure it was!” He rambled on. “Above all I enjoyed the elephants. I recollect, that on my first visit my father purchased an apple which I gave to the elephant. Do you know she fairly grabbed it out of my hand. Really, she enjoyed it so tremendously, I have made it a rule, in fact it became a custom, each year, to take an apple with me and feed it to the elephant.”

“That was very thoughtful,” we said. “Yes, yes; I am sure she appreciated it. You know, I believe that she really remembered me. Elephants have such wonderful memories. Her name was Heloise. No—no—let me think. It was Gwendoline, or—”

“Could it have been Lizzie?”

“By jove! That was the name. How extraordinary that you should know it.” He was preparing to continue in this strain when we blurted— “You insure animals, don’t you, Mr. Smithers?”

“Of course we do. That is our business.”

“Are you positive that you insure all kinds of animals?” we inquired.

“Absolutely! Why, we’ve been carrying on since 1790.”

“That’s fine. We have a shipment of wild animals that we—”

“Wild animals?”

“Yes, wild animals—elephants, tigers, orang-outangs, pythons—”

“Oh, I’m sorry! We don’t insure wild animals!”

We were about to arise and say, “Well, that’s that,” and take our leave, when he ponderously continued:

“You know I’ve often thought that the insuring of wild animals would be quite an adjunct to our business—a sort of affinity, as it were. Yes, we have been considering it for some years, but have never done it.”

“But, you don’t insure wild animals, now?”

“No. Yet I am not so sure that now is not as good a time to start as any.” At last we were getting somewhere! “Well, Mr. Smithers, would you consider insuring this shipment of ours?”

“I believe I would,” he quickly replied. “Just what animals have you?”

“We have six elephants, four tigers, two leopards, three orang-outangs, six pythons and nine small monkeys, sailing from Singapore to New York, via London.”

“My word, a Noah’s Ark, what! If you will enumerate again I will write it all down.”

When he had finished writing, he looked at us, laid his pen down deliberately, and said:

“There. I think I have everything that is necessary, and I shall be very pleased to let you know about this matter. I’ll submit it at the next board meeting.”

In consternation, we queried, “The next board meeting?”

“Yes, the next board meeting.”

“When is that?”

“Three weeks, come Tuesday.”

“Well, that’s just too bad. The boat sails Saturday.”

“In four days’ time? Oh, that is awkward, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is, Mr. Smithers, and unless you can discuss terms now, we are afraid your wild animal insurance will have to go back under advisement.” Again he lapsed into deep meditation. We thought of Atlas, with the weight of the world on his shoulders. At least he said:

"I'm sure that I can't possibly assume the responsibility of insuring the tigers, leopards and monkeys, but, the elephants—that's different—they're sort of quadrupeds—er, very much like horses. As a matter of fact, I don't see any great risk in insuring them. They live very much longer than horses; why, do you know, they live to be a hundred and fifty to two hundred years old?"

Feeling that the question of longevity of elephants might have some bearing on the rate of insurance we did not argue the point.

"Well, then, let us say we will insure the elephants," said Mr. Smithers decisively.

Five of the six elephants were between six and seven feet in height, the other about nine feet high. We stated that we valued each of the five elephants at the same price and the large elephant at double the amount of the smaller ones.

Mr. Smithers drove a hard bargain, but we eventually came to terms, executed the necessary papers and gave him our check. The *Hoyo San* was equipped with wireless, and we told him that we would keep him advised.



THREE days had passed since Raji's sailing when the following wireless arrived.

WIRELESS S. S. HOYO SAN
BOSTOCK,
LONDON, ENG.

ALL TIME BAD SEA KICKUP
ANIMALS SHE ALL SICK ELEPHANTS
SHE WORSE ONE TOO BAD TRY KEEP
THEM.

RAJI

We thought of Mr. Smithers. We hoped this news would not disturb his afternoon tea, yet felt that he should be gently prepared for a shock. We read the wireless to him over the telephone.

He said, "I'm sorry; I don't quite understand—would you repeat?"

We explained that Raji was an Oriental and in his way, he was advising us that they were having very rough seas, all the animals were seasick, the elephants were affected worst, and one elephant might die. Raji was trying to save them.

"Seasick elephants!" Mr. Smithers exclaimed, dumfounded. "I never heard of such a thing!"

"Yes," we informed him, "they are prone to seasickness—and it often proves fatal."

"Well, this is a surprise!" gurgled Mr. Smithers, and after a pause asked, "You'll keep me informed, I hope?"

"Have no doubt; we will keep you informed," we replied.

The following morning sad news lay upon the desk.

WIRELESS S. S. HOYO SAN
BOSTOCK,

LONDON, ENG.

ELEPHANT SMALL SHE GONE
DIE CAPTAIN PUT OUTSIDE.

RAJI

Sideburns still was working on the ledger, when we entered the offices of Livestock Insurance, Ltd. Mr. Smithers read Raji's wireless.

His expression was bewildered.

"Oh, my word, this is unfortunate!"

"Yes, it is unfortunate, but to be expected."

"Expected?" He asked in surprise. "Did you expect the elephants to die?"

"Certainly not, but it was something we had to consider as a part of the game. If there had been no possibility of such a contingency, there would have been no need for such insurance."

"Quite so, quite so. Your point is well taken. One out of six— Yes, I suppose it is all in the game. I'll have the treasurer draw a check for you."

"Don't you want a confirmation by the captain?" we inquired.

“That’s not necessary; I’ll get the papers when the ship arrives.”

The next twelve days were interspersed with radiograms from Raji to the effect that the rough weather was continuing, and it was seriously affecting the condition of the animals. We did not refer these to Mr. Smithers, but we rushed to his office upon receipt of the following:

WIRELESS S. S. HOYO SAN
BOSTOCK,
LONDON, ENG.
TYPHOON TERRIBLE COME UP
NOW GOT ELEPHANTS SWIM DECK
ONE ELEPHANT SWIM OUTSIDE
TRY KEEP ARM HAVE BROKEN.
RAJI

It was easy to picture the drama that had taken place—shipping crates, smashed by the waves; frantic elephants loose on the deck, the ship buffeted by tremendous seas; Raji striving desperately to repair the crates and anchor the elephants—his arm broken in the effort—one of the elephants washed overboard, as he stood helplessly by. And the storm still raging.

This scene faded from mind and we momentarily forgot everything, even our own financial loss, as we contemplated the probable reaction of Mr. Smithers to this news.

“What? Another?” exploded Mr. Smithers, holding his head as we gave him the wireless. “Oh! This is unfortunate! I’m flabbergasted!” he ejaculated, and sank back into his chair. Distress came to his face as he puzzled over the message, “What does the beggar mean by ‘elephants swim deck’?”

“He means that the elephants are awash on the deck and one of them has been washed overboard,” we explained.

“Washed overboard? Awash on the deck? What are the elephants doing on the deck?”

“Why, it’s customary, during shipment, to place all wild animals on the

top deck, generally up forward.”

“On the top deck? On the bow of the vessel? Why place them there; why not below?”

“Well, if the animals were below, the cargo might shift and the cages break, permitting them to escape. It might cause a panic and seriously interfere with the operation of the ship.”

“I’m amazed,” said Mr. Smithers. “I never thought of such a thing. I don’t wish to appear ignorant, but would you explain what your man Raji means by ‘now got’?”

We explained that Raji had sent his message during the storm and “now got” meant that the typhoon was still raging.

“What? Then it is possible that others might—”

Before he had finished a knock on the door heralded the entrance of Sideburns. He handed us a wireless.

“Your men said this message was important.”

Dead silence permeated the atmosphere as we opened the wireless and read:

WIRELESS S. S. HOYO SAN
BOSTOCK,
LONDON, ENG.
GOT ONE ELEPHANT MORE
SWIM
OUTSIDE CAN NO KEEP.
RAJI

Without a word we extended the message to Mr. Smithers. With one hand on a perspiring brow, the other raised as if to ward off an impending blow, he gasped.

“What, another! Don’t tell me there’s another!”

We nodded and thrust the message into his hand. He read slowly, then moaned.

“Oh; this is unfortunate! I’m nonplussed! I don’t know how I ever will explain this to the board! I hate to think of it!”

We admitted that it was unfortunate

and tried to console him with the fact that three of the elephants were still alive. He was reminded that we, too, were suffering a loss, and, while on the subject of loss, he could send us a check at his convenience.

“Quite so; quite so,” he conceded.

Bidding him a fond cheerio, we again departed from the private sanctum of Mr. Reginald Smithers.

The *Hoyo San* finally reached Port Said. From this point onward we anticipated no further trouble. But, we had our fingers crossed. None the less the weather jinx hovered over the *Hoyo San*. Three days out of London, the ship ran into severe gales and exceptionally cold weather. Then:

WIRELESS S. S. HOYO SAN
BOSTOCK,

LONDON, ENG. SEA KICKUP
GOT ICE ONE ELEPHANT BIG
CATCHEM COLD VELLY SICK.

RAJI

“*The big one!*” Mr. Smithers shouted into the phone, as we apprised him. Then he inquired, “Are colds serious?”

“Not always; unless they go into pneumonia,” we replied.

“Pneumonia? Do elephants contract pneumonia?” he asked in surprise.

“Oh, yes; and they seldom, if ever, recover from an attack.”

“My word!”

Mr. Smithers was rapidly adding to his early knowledge of elephants.



HE GAVE the necessary approval of the arrangements we had made for quartering the elephants at a stable near the docks, during the interval between the arrival of the *Hoyo San*, and the sailing for New York. His approval was necessary because the insurance taken on the elephants covered this period. We advised him that we would have an eminent veterinary with us to meet the ship upon its arrival.

It was a cold, bleak morning as we stood awaiting the arrival of the *Hoyo San*. Eventually she hove in sight and her battered condition was apparent. There were great gaps in the deck rails, a smashed lifeboat hung from a single davit, and two others were missing, swept away.

“She does look like she has had a little what for, doesn’t she?” remarked Mr. Smithers as the ship docked.

Raji, as badly battered as the ship, greeted us on board.

“Come all life, this have the worse trip,” were his first words.

We didn’t wait to exchange commiseration, but hastened with the veterinary to the principal concern of the moment—the big elephant.

Although Raji had piled blankets heavily over her, the elephant stood shivering—a bad sign. The veterinary ordered her immediate removal to the warm quarters we had provided. In our anxiety about the elephant we had forgotten Mr. Smithers, and only became conscious of his presence when he stepped up to the veterinary and very solicitously asked.

“What do you find the matter with her, Doctor?”

“All of the symptoms indicate that she is verging on pneumonia,” was the reply of the veterinary.

“Pneumonia?” Mr. Smithers lamented, “you couldn’t be mistaken, Doctor?”

Anticipating the necessity of a quick unloading, we had brought with us a very large, strong, teakwood shipping crate. Into this we quickly and carefully loaded the elephant and lowered her to the dock. The veterinary advised that the elephant be walked the short distance to the stable in order that she be given some exercise—that would stir up her circulation. Whether this had been too much for her, we did not know, but she lay down the moment she entered

the stall.

She took the veterinary's prescriptions willingly, and she was given brandy and water, sweetened with sugar, as often as she would drink it. She was covered with blankets and straw and we did everything possible to relieve her suffering. The elephant passed away at four the next morning. And the veterinary, Raji and ourselves, retired for a much needed rest.

Mr. Smithers had left us at the dock, to return to the mad rush of business at his office, and was not aware of the death of the elephant until we called upon him.

In his most affable manner he greeted us with:

"How is our patient this morning?"

"She died at four o'clock this morning!"

"Dead?" he asked, as if he had not heard correctly. "Do you mean to say she is actually dead?"

"Permanently dead," we assured him; "the doctor's diagnosis was correct, it was pneumonia."

"Well I never! She seemed to walk all right. I can't believe it," he rambled on.

We silently proffered the veterinary's certificate.

"Well, of course, there can be no doubt upon reading this."

Wearily he rang for Sideburns, to whom he gave the certificate.

"Give these gentlemen a check in settlement of all claims to date. Another beastly elephant has bunged off."

While waiting for the check, we informed Mr. Smithers that the veterinary reported the two remaining elephants as being in excellent condition; whereupon Mr. Smithers brightened perceptibly.

Mournfully, Sideburns approached, bearing our check, which he gave to Mr. Smithers. Mr. Smithers signed the check and passed it to us, remarking musingly—

"I'll have a time of it with the

board."

"We don't wish to presume, Mr. Smithers, but, what do you intend to do with the body?" we asked.

"Body! What body?"

"The body of the elephant."

"The body of the elephant!" he exclaimed, astounded. Then, in his broadest accent asserted, "Why, I'm not going to do anything with the bally thing."

"You'd better do something with it; you can't let a dead elephant lie around."

"The disposal of the body is entirely up to you. It's your elephant."

"Oh, no; it *was* our elephant when it was alive, but, since it is dead, it becomes your elephant."

"Oh, that is annoying, but really, I have no use for a dead elephant."

"Neither have we," we hastened to declare.

"I can quite understand that, but it's customary for the relatives to take care of a body."

"The elephant's relatives are back in Siam and we don't think they would be interested."

Mr. Smithers, becoming exasperated, wailed, "What can I do with a dead elephant?"

"We usually bury them, but, of course, you can use your own judgment."

"How do you bury an elephant, may I ask?"

"Oh, buy a plot of ground—"

"A plot of ground, what for?"

"To bury the elephant in; then again, you don't have to buy the ground if you know some one who will allow you to bury it in their garden."

"I don't know any one who would want a dead elephant in their garden."

"We didn't think you would; that is why we suggested your buying a plot of ground."

"Granting, we buy a plot of

ground— what then?"

"Then you hire ten or twelve men to dig a hole large enough."

"Ten or twelve men? How long will it take them to do it?"

"It should not require over three days."

"Three days!"

"Yes, then a couple of days to cover the body. Altogether, five days should be enough."

Mr. Smithers, retaining his dignity—"Twelve men, five days—"

"And, don't forget, it *is* necessary to hire a very heavy truck, with a windlass, to cart the elephant to the burial ground. You will need some extra men for that."

"You know, this is becoming irksome! Why the necessity of the extra men?"

"Because that elephant weighed about five tons, and now it is dead weight." Indignantly, Mr. Smithers said, "I know it is dead weight, I'm well aware of that fact, but, why the extra men?"

"They will have quite a little difficulty in getting the body out of the stable. First they must take down the stall, re-erect it; they will have to take off the doors of the stable, and if the opening is not large enough, take out a part of the building."

Mr. Smithers almost collapsed. "Why can't it be buried at sea?"

"Certainly, that can be done. All you have to do is secure a permit, charter a boat, truck the elephant from the stable to the boat, load it, have the ship put far enough to sea, weight and dump the carcass overboard." We paused to figure. "That will cost only about two hundred pounds."

"Incredible! I never knew elephants could be such a bother!"

"Oh, yes," we pointed out, "you were lucky that the other elephants died at sea."

"Lucky? Well, of course, I've never looked at it in that way. Perhaps you are right. I suppose I'll have to bury this one, but it's not within my province to buy a plot of ground. I'll have to take the matter up with Sir George."

"Sir George?" we questioned.

"Yes, Sir George Washburton. He is our chairman. Would you excuse me while I use the telephone?" He gave a number. Some one answered.

Mr. Smithers, with great dignity said, "Oh, is that you, Hatfield— This is Smithers. I would like to talk to Sir George about a matter of grave importance. ... I would not disturb him, otherwise . . . quite, I'll hold on . . ."

A short silence, then came "Oh, good morning, Sir George, I'm sorry to bother you. I have a matter of importance about which I am in doubt . . . Well, Sir George, is it within my province to buy a plot of ground ... to bury an elephant? ... Sir George, I resent that; I haven't indulged in years. . . . Well—Sir George — I took it upon myself to insure six elephants . . ."

He related the details of all that happened. Evidently Sir George was speaking, for Smithers listened intently and then said, "I'll ask them, Sir George." Turning to us he asked, "Would you make arrangements for the burial of the elephant if we imburse you for it?"

"Certainly," we replied.

Mr. Smithers, again into the phone; "Yes, Sir George. . . . Quite!"

Consternation suddenly appeared on his face as he listened. He asked "Did I understand you correctly? Did you say a wreath? Yes; yes, I understand; a wreath— with a card to the elephant's grave? . . . Yes, I'll take it down."

He drew a pad toward him, took his pencil in hand and then; "I'm ready, Sir George. How do you wish the card inscribed?" He repeated and wrote. "In

memory of my first and last insurance of elephants, signed Mr. Reginald Smithers. Quite so; very good, Sir George. I'll charge the wreath to my account."