

HE NEEDED NO WINGS

By
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I CANNOT approach my subject without remembering a very dear member of the Literary Club. Any thought of circuses brings to mind I. K. Pond, and, since this paper is about circuses, I am very happy to recall that I first met I. K. in the "back yard" of Ringling Brothers. One summer long ago when Ringling Brothers still played in Grant Park and their canvas and flags and music and bustle filled Chicago's lake front, I was sitting with Alfredo Codona in front of his wagon under the tent fly, which was always there, and we both saw coming through the crowd the tall, spare form of "Mr. Pond." When I had first met Alfredo and he found that I was from Chicago, he asked me if I knew Mr. Pond. He said that always, when they played Chicago, Mr. Pond took the circus people, or some of them, to a club which Alfredo called the "Cleef Dwellers." Alfredo had never completely gotten away from the Spanish or Mexican pronunciation of his youth. At that time I had to admit that I knew neither Mr. Pond nor the "Cleef Dwellers," and so, on that July day in Grant Park, Alfredo introduced me to I. K.

No one could have known I. K. Pond—and certainly no member of this Club could have known him at all—without being fully aware of his love for circuses and circus people, and I am glad that I knew him first at a circus, where I saw him many, many times. Some time later, as a guest of another friend, I met Mr. Pond again at the Cliff Dwellers, and he said to my host, "Why don't you propose Leslie for this club?" And my host, quite correctly and quite logically, said that he had not thought of it, because "Leslie is no artist." At that Mr. Pond rejoined: "Anyone who knows and loves circuses as Leslie does is an artist. You propose him, and I will second him." And so, through my circus friend, I met I. K. Pond and I became a Cliff Dweller. He wrote of circuses with a knowledge and an experience and a technical grasp which I do not have, but he could not have loved and enjoyed any circus any more than I do. Such is my justification for bringing to the Literary Club another paper about a circus.

I can think of no one who has been so unfortunate as never to have attended a circus. The big or the little circus, the city or the country circus, in a building or under canvas, a circus is essentially a part of a childhood, and I know a great many people whose love of circuses is undying. For my part I never miss a circus anywhere, anytime, and of any kind, if I can reach it at all. And I remember with affection something that I. K. Pond said not long before he died. He was standing at the Cliff Dwellers at lunchtime with a French architect, who was his guest. As they looked over Grant Park, they saw the canvas of Ringling Brothers, and our friend told the

Frenchman that he would go to the circus, and the Frenchman said, "Where is your little boy?" I. K. looked at him puzzled, and the Frenchman said, "I too always go to the circus, but I always take a little boy with me to excuse my presence." I. K. with dignity put his hand over his heart and said, "My little boy is still in here." I am sure this was true.

My first recollection of a circus is a French one. I was five years old when my mother took me to the Cirque d'Hiver. This was and is a one-ring circus in a building in Paris. For a child that small, one ring is quite enough. I have often felt in our tremendous American circuses that children are more baffled than entertained, and, as I have grown to know more of circuses, I am sure that adults cannot possibly understand all that they see.

The Cirque d'Hiver was a wonderful thing for a child. It had some of everything that we know today in a circus, but it did not have too much. I remember the lovely ladies who rode the beautiful horses, and I remember the trapeze acts. We went several times that winter, and I was always delighted by a black-faced or brown-faced clown who was a favorite. He was called by everyone "Chocolate." More recently I have wondered if he could have been the same person who was immortalized by Toulouse-Lautrec. He was, in any event, a favorite of the French children of the late nineteenth century in Paris, and he was a favorite of the little American boys who were there that winter.

The next circus that I remember was Barnum and Bailey's great show, and it played in the old Coliseum in Chicago, and I was still a little boy, and I was, of course, more than ever thrilled. I suppose I went a few

times as years passed, and then there came a time when I lost touch with the circus. As yet I had no children of my own, and, because I had never fully understood the beauty of a circus, I simply stayed away. Now that I know better, I advise everyone to go to a circus whenever he can. Later, when I was fortunate enough to renew my interests in circuses and to know many circus people intimately, I learned what I had never known—that the circus is one of the oldest art forms still surviving from a distant past. The manner of my learning and the personality who was my teacher form the thread by which these miscellaneous remarks are joined.

Almost thirty years ago I was returning from Europe on a small ship which touched at Halifax. We had a comfortable crossing except for a spell of fog. The first morning after the fog disappeared, while I was on deck, I heard some sudden orders from the bridge, and, looking in the direction in which the officer was pointing, I saw a figure in civilian clothes, overcoat and hat, fairly well up in the rigging climbing comfortably hand over hand. He was ordered down, and, when the excitement had subsided, I spoke to him. This was my introduction to Alfredo Codona. At that time, and for some years afterward, he was the leader of the headline high-trapeze act of the world, "The Flying Codonas." Many a trapeze act has called itself "the flying somebody or other," but Alfredo really flew. Many, many times afterward I saw him, and the loveliness and grace of his performance were outstanding. The title of this paper is taken from a medal which his wife showed me on that trip. It was made especially for him and was presented in Paris at a banquet in his honor. It showed his figure in flight from

the trapeze to the hands of his "catcher." It was graceful and lovely, and it had on it in French the quotation: "If he had wings, they would be in his way." My more prosaic title expresses, I hope, the same thought.

The high-trapeze performance, or act, as it is called, involves only three people. Each is vital to the success of their mutual undertaking, but only one, the "leaper" or "flier," ever receives much attention. Alfredo was the "flier" in his act, and he had been climbing the rigging on our ship not to show off but to keep his hands hard. In a two-week period of inactivity from one booking to another, the hands of a trapeze expert may become too soft, and in a long sea voyage, in those days, it was always a problem to find things to do that would keep his hands in shape. All of this he told me and much more after I came to know him. But, when I asked him why he was climbing the rigging at all, he was very eager that I should understand that it was not to show off but that it was something he thought he must do. He told me of a friend of his, a tightrope artist who, on a voyage from England to Australia, was unable to keep his feet in condition and hard enough and had to spend two weeks after he landed getting his feet hard again.

The circus is not an easy life, and, although "the man on the flying trapeze" may appear to "fly through the air with the greatest of ease," there is, in fact, nothing whatever easy about his flying through the air. When his flight is stopped, either by the trapeze, which he grasps, or by the hands of his catcher, which grasp him, he is doing an exceedingly difficult act.

A circus performer *must* perform his specialty twice a day, seven days a week, when the circus is on the road,

and he must, indeed, perform his specialty in perfect style if he wishes to stay in the business at all. There is nothing in the circus that permits a past favorite to maintain his position by the help or indulgence of the rest of the company. Sometimes an old actor can be pulled through a performance by the rest of the cast and can be kept going when, in fact, he is no longer entitled to prominence. I have even heard it said that an old musician will receive help and applause for a poor performance just for "old times' sake." With the circus it is not this way. If a horse is to be ridden in a given way and put through a given set of exercises, that must be done. There is no easy substitute. If a man is to be shot from a gun into a net, he must indeed be shot from that gun, and he must indeed land in that net properly so that he can be shot from the same gun in the next performance. And, if a trapeze artist is to make a triple somersault from his trapeze into his catcher's hands, he must indeed do just that. The tightrope artist who has been hired and billed to perform, among other specialties, a forward somersault on the tightwire must do that. One of my good friends, in a period of illness, kept in his act on the road, and one bad night he missed his forward somersault five times, hitting the wire and cutting himself each time. Each time he recovered from the ten-foot fall to the ground, came onto the wire again, and with the sixth effort made his somersault and kept his hold on the wire.

Through all the tinsel and sparkle and music and excitement of the circus it is only fair to remember that every performer, young or old, sick or well, gay or miserable, must and will complete his or her specialty

satisfactorily twice a day. There is no substitute for competence in this field. Competence must always be present, and the best of friends cannot "pull you through your act." The circus must always operate in this exacting climate!

When we met Alfredo, he promised to take our children with him through the circus, and, when he came to Chicago, he did so. I think every child has been thrilled by a circus, as I was. Some, however, are more fortunate than others. But, when I was five, I had never met a clown or spoken to a lovely lady in yellow tights, studded with sequins, her graceful wrists bound with tape, and her smiling face bent low to me. I had never petted the beautiful horse that the lady rode. I had never ridden in a Roman chariot. I had never been upon an elephant, and I had never known that supreme triumph which my children knew when Alfredo and Clara, his wife, and Lalo, his brother, from the high perch over the center ring, turned in unison and bowed and smiled and waved to my little girls. Whatever all the rest of that audience may have thought of these smiles and bows of "The Flying Codonas," my little girls knew that they were for them alone. And so, after that first summer in Chicago when we renewed our shiptime acquaintance with Alfredo and his troupe, he was our close friend until his death, and through him I learned much of circuses and met most of the headliners of ten to twenty years ago.

I have said that the circus is a very old art form, and, of course, it is. Also it is a respectable institution. I believe it is safe to say that circuses were respectable long before the stage. From the fact that the circus

performer must do his best twice a day, it is obvious that the circus is not conducive to dissipation. The circus people have tremendous self-respect. They believe that the circus is the oldest entertainment form, the finest, the most skilful, the most respectable, and the most worth while. They are so sure of this that they never bother to mention it.

That first day when Alfredo showed my children around the back yard of the circus and introduced them to so many thrilling people, he took us to supper in the mess tent. Now the mess tent is as good a place as any to make clear the fact that the circus is guided by tradition. No one knows when the gradations of circus social or professional importance developed. They have always been there, and they are so recognized that in all circus activities performers of a given category are together no matter what their relationship may be. In the mess tent the clowns always sit in one place and together. The equestrian acts are together; the tumblers in another section; the aerialists in another. Frequently, of course, circus people marry into different categories. An equestrienne may marry a ticket-taker or a tumbler. They will not sit together in the mess tent. They come to the door together, and the wife joins the equestrians, and the husband sits with the business force, or whatever other grouping includes his activity. The circus has these traditional conditions which everyone seems to know and to which no one seems to object.

The circus, as everyone knows, is largely self-contained. Even when showing in a big city, the circus generates its own electricity with its own mobile plants. It has its hospital, its mess tent, its cooking tent, and

now of course its own air-conditioning equipment as well as its own generating equipment. Long ago before the first World War, I can remember hearing that the German general staff had assigned some of its officers to travel with Ringling Brothers to learn their methods of management—of packing, moving, and installations. I cannot vouch for the truth of that story, although it is possible. I do, however, know one extremely interesting story along that line. In the early days of the first World War, when it was planned to send American naval air units to be ground-based in France, a friend of mine, a reserve commander in the Navy, happened to pass through an engineering office in Washington where he saw what he later described as "two acres of draftsmen." He asked what they were doing, and he was told that they were designing portable generating equipment to be self-contained and self-propelled in use for the Navy ground installations. He advised the captain who was showing him through to drop the matter, to go at once to Baltimore, where Ringling Brothers was showing, and to take from them one of their generating units. "Ringling Brothers," he said, "have solved that problem better than you can, and they did it long before you ever thought of it." This proved to be true, and the generating units which went with those installations to France were patterned almost exactly upon the units developed by Ringling Brothers for its own circus purposes long before the war need arose.

Old as the circus is in tradition and history, mechanically at least it is always sharply up to date. The lighting equipment, the air-conditioning equipment, the use of mechanized transport, the use of mechanical means for

raising and lowering canvas—all these strictly engineering ideas have been pioneered by circus people. Fluorescent dyes and fabrics and fluorescent make-up material were used in the circus before they were used anywhere else in the entertainment world. For all its tradition, the circus is never out of date and never satisfied, and some of its changes, especially on the mechanical side, are a little disappointing.

One morning at about three o'clock I met Alfredo in Grant Park when the Big Show was about to set up. The trains had been getting in since midnight, and one of the two performers' trains, made up entirely of Pullmans, was parked by the lake a little north of Randolph Street. We walked together to the lot, and things began to arrive. In those days the elephants really had to work for a living. Most of the heavy loading, pulling, and hauling was done by elephants, or at least the heaviest was. The circus in those days had a lot of what was called "working stock." This, of course, meant horses and mules that worked and not the glamorous and lovely horses and ponies of the show itself. It was fun to see a big double team of horses bring a heavy wagon up to the lot. Sometimes the wagon would bog down in the mud, and then almost instantly, and apparently without command, a big elephant would lean against the rear of the truck, the teamster would shout, and the truck would be on its way. Elephants seem to work so easily and so gently, but, as my little daughter once said, "Their pants never fit." The circus still has elephants, but they don't do much outside the performance, and it has fewer and fewer horses, except for the performing horses and for the so-called "Wild West" horses which

perform in the so-called "Rodeo" which most circuses have added to the traditional performance as a sort of caboose. More and more there is no working stock on the lot.

A Caterpillar is probably better than an elephant and certainly stronger, but it isn't as much fun to watch it work. More and more the material is moved by Caterpillars, and the big wagons come in and are "spotted" and unloaded and taken away without the straining horses and the gently leaning elephants and the shouts of teamsters.

Another circus improvement which I lament is the stake- or post-driver, a sort of miniature pile-driver mounted on a truck which drives tent posts and pegs and stakes as though they had been suddenly pushed down by a giant thumb. I have no doubt that this is better, but it isn't as much fun as the young and husky roustabouts who used to stand in a ring with mauls about a post and drive it, each one striking in turn as the movement ran around the circle. This was fun to watch and amazing in its precision, but I suppose the small pile-driver is surer and quicker, and it may be cheaper. I could detail other mechanical improvements which the circuses have made, but they all serve merely as a part of the setting and the background of the performance itself, which is of course the reason why the circus exists.

After the circus has set up and all the equipment is in position, the performers begin to arrive. For each of the stars or important acts, there is a numbered wagon. The wagon carries the costumes of the people in the act and serves as a dressing-room for them. A marquee

or tent fly is set up behind each wagon, and the wagon doors stand open. Stairs are put to the ground and chairs arranged, and each group or individual is then "at home." Some of the most pleasant experiences we ever had in circuses were passed in the back yard sitting with Alfredo by his wagon or visiting his friends. Most of the social life of the circus goes on in the back yard before the matinee and between the matinee and evening performance. For those who are not headliners there is a men's and women's dressing tent, and there is a clowns' tent, and everyone comes and goes in various stages of dress and undress. Many acts are rehearsed over and over in the back yard, usually in ragtag costumes or almost none.

As the performance time approaches, more and more people appear in the costumes which they will wear; scenery, equipment properties, and a multitude of other things are carried back and forth and lined up. The elephants and the show stock will begin to appear in preparation of the "Spec." This is circus talk for the "spectacle" which opens each performance by moving twice around the ring. Almost everybody is in the Spec. Once, even I drove a Roman chariot in the Spec. Alfredo had invited us and provided a box, and my wife and little girls had been visiting with the clowns when Alfredo showed them to the box and said he had to tell me something. When they had gone, he rushed me to the dressing-room and covered me with what purported to be an oriental costume. He said I was to be a sultan, and he piled on my head a bulbous silken hat about three feet tall; it was draped, as indeed I was, in ropes of synthetic pearls. Alfredo said I was to ride in the Spec,

and he led me to a Roman chariot with three horses and told me to get in. I implied, somewhat sadly, that I did not see how I could drive three horses under the best of conditions, and certainly not at all when dressed in yards and yards of imitation silk and pearls and crowned with a three-foot headdress. With that he introduced me to the driver, a small, gnarled, saddle-colored little man who spoke to me briefly in a sand-paper voice. Short as I am, he was a foot and a half shorter. I was to stand at the front of the chariot, and he would stand behind and against me, his arms under mine, driving the horses.

Thus equipped and escorted, I rode in the Spec, preceded by elephants, camels, and heaven knows what all, and followed by a rabble of beautiful women and strong young men. The Indian jugglers and the Japanese tumblers and everybody—all were in the Spec. Ahead of me on a litter between two camels was some woman in an oriental costume. I had no idea who she was or why she was there. The Spec, as I have said, usually goes around the ring twice. The first time around, when we passed my family in the box, I was relieved that they did not see me. But the next time my luck failed, and my daughters' shrill squeals could be heard even over the shouts of other children. I said out of the side of my mouth to my driver, "That is my family. I think they are giving me the raspberry," to which he replied, "Dey generally does." Whether this was a comment on my family in particular, or families generally, or on life as a whole, I never knew. I felt that my driver was a cynic, and I know that he was not happy.

After the second time around we stopped, and I didn't

know what to do, but my driver, pointing to the oriental lovely in the litter, said, "Get out and help dat dame out of de hammock." I hurried to do this. Two blackamoors in flapping pants had arrived from somewhere with a small pair of stairs upon which the lady dismounted, and she said, "Give me your hand!" And so I helped her down. She said, "Come with me," and we went hand in hand to the center ring, and she bowed and I bowed to half of the people, and then she said to me, "Pirouette." To this moment I doubt that I ever have pirouetted, anywhere, but somehow I turned, she took my other hand, and we bowed to the other half of the people and to each other. I then put her back into her litter and mounted my chariot, the band started again, and the Spec moved out. So I learned that anything can happen in a circus.

As the Spec leaves the tent, it disintegrates rapidly. People hurry to change costumes for their own acts. The performing stock is moved either in readiness to come in for various acts or back to the tent, and things quiet down.

As I grew to know Alfredo better, I realized that the circus people respected and loved him deeply. Everyone had a special greeting for Alfredo. Over the years I found out why. He was always ready to help anyone. His act was the headline act, and he was highly paid. He was constantly helping others less fortunate, even to the extent, on one occasion, of paying for the funeral of one of two brothers who was killed in an accident, and finally arranging to bury the brother in his own cemetery lot until arrangements could be made for the

return to Europe. No one ever came to Alfredo for a favor in vain.

I asked him once how he came to be in a circus, and he told me something of his life. He was born into the circus. It seems that most circus people are born into the circus. Actually he was born in Mexico. His father, a Mexican, had a small itinerant circus which moved from town to town and included a good many of his family and a few others. To hear Alfredo, it must have been a pretty moth-eaten circus. They would get to a little village or town and find living quarters, and then his father would depart to locate a place to set up the tents. As Alfredo said, with a smile, he sometimes found a place to slake his thirst. On this particular evening, Alfredo's mother was busy. She had not been taking her place in the act for some time, and Alfredo was born about an hour after they reached the little village. So, indeed, he was born into a circus, but he said his family had been circus people for generations. That is true of so many of the people on the lot.

Many of us have been proud of our fathers, and Alfredo was indeed proud of his. His father was a high-trapeze artist, and he started Alfredo on his own more famous career. Once, in telling of him, he said with simple pride, "He could make a pirouette in his leap and take out his watch and look at it and put it back without seeming to hurry and never miss his catch." I never met the senior Codona, but he was a splendid and remarkable man, and he raised two fine boys, Alfredo and Lalo, his catcher.

Lalo was big, where Alfredo was little. Lalo's hands were big and his shoulders broad. The catcher in a trapeze act is the man who swings from the lower trapeze

by his knees, head down, his arms swinging and waiting for the leaper to come for the catch. Without the catcher nothing works, but, when he works well, he never seems to be important. Alfredo told me that he and his brother tried the triple somersault daily for more than three years before they ever made it once. In the triple somersault the hands of the leaper are caught by the hands of the catcher, and there is not much leeway or slack. The thing must be done with complete accuracy. In the two-and-one-half, the feet and legs of the leaper may be caught by the catcher, and there is a little more room to spare. Sometimes it seems that the fine points of circus artists are almost entirely lost. Few people see them, and fewer still understand them.

I once asked Alfredo what was so good about his act and why he was the headliner. He and I had seen Veloz and Yolanda dance the night before, and he said simply that most dancers perform the same steps—a waltz is a waltz, a two-step is a two-step, and a rumba is a rumba. Veloz and Yolanda were supreme because they did what almost all of us could do, but they did it supremely well. "That is all there is to my act. Others do the triple and everything that I do, but I do it the best." This was a simple statement of fact, and he was perfectly modest in saying it. I have seen dozens of the trapeze men working since I came to appreciate his act. Some of them do the same things. Most of them do almost the same things, but the finesse and grace of a perfect act are very unusual, and I have not seen them since I last saw Alfredo fly.

As it is with trapeze artists, so it is with others in the circus. A good act may follow the same routine as a second-rate act, but the good act is done perfectly, with

grace and finesse and apparent ease and lack of effort. Most of the audience does not know the difference between the good and the bad, but the performers do and their colleagues do.

Many times I have talked to these people and found gradually that all of them have a modest but very strong self-respect and self-confidence. When Con Colleano told me the difference between a front and a back somersault on the wire, I knew why most people see no difference. It is this: In a backward somersault, almost as soon as the feet have left the wire, the turn is sufficiently complete so that the performer can see the wire. Through almost 300 degrees of his turn he sees the wire toward which his feet are moving. In a forward somersault, once the turn has begun and his head goes down, he never sees the wire until his feet are on it. It is this, of course, that makes it difficult to perform a forward somersault.

So Conny taught me about wire work, and he also taught me about bull-fighting. Although he is an Australian, he always performs in a Spanish costume, and I need hardly say that his theme song is from *Carmen*. He dances beautifully on the wire, and, when I once made a disparaging remark about bull-fighting, he took me to task. For an hour or more in front of his dressing wagon he showed me what bull-fighting is and explained to me that it is, after all, only a very formal and very traditional ballet dance carried out in the presence of the bull, and he demonstrated many steps and passes and positions with the grace and momentary rigidity which characterize proper bull-fighting. When next I saw a bullfight, I remembered that lesson in the back yard from Conny, and I understood better what I was seeing.

The back yard is fun—always—but is most fun at night. It is well enough lighted, and it has more than ever the air of a carnival. One night in the dressing wagon I met a friend of the Codonas from Central America. He was an Austrian in whose little circus they had worked long ago. We talked a little, and then there was a quick and almost whispered conference in Spanish. Then Lalo broke out in English: "Sure—he might buy one." In the dimness of the wagon the Austrian put into my hands three small, dried, long-haired, human heads. This was my first experience with severed human heads, and three of them were indeed a handful. For two of them, the asking price was a hundred dollars each. At a bargain one rather "as-is" head could have been mine for a mere fifty dollars. My resistance was in good working order that night, so I left the little man with his three heads intact. All the life of a circus goes up and down and along in the back yard.

No one can think of circus people of the last thirty years or of Alfredo without remembering Lietzel. She was Alfredo's second wife. They met in the circus. Each had his own act. Each was a star. Alfredo, I am sure, thought Lietzel was a far greater artist than anyone else had ever been, and her admiration for him was unbounded. It is a long while since anyone has seen Lietzel high over the center ring hanging by a single arm whirling herself vertically over and over and over, heels over head, round and round and round, the drums ruffling with each revolution, and finally Fred Bradna, the equestrian director, beginning to count. She always did it at least a hundred times. Theirs was, I am sure, a love match, and it was a match of talented people who

had no jealousy, each of them delighting in the excellence of the other's performance.

In the winter a great many American circus people worked in European one-ring circuses or carnivals. One year Alfredo was working in Berlin with his act, and Lietzel was working alone in Copenhagen. She had completed almost a hundred revolutions when her rigging broke. She never worked with a net, and she lived only a few hours after that fall in Copenhagen. Alfredo flew over from Berlin and saw her before she died, and he made the next matinee performance in Berlin. "The circus, too, must go on."

Many children like Alfredo are born into the circus, but they may not always follow their parents' specialties. A child on the circus lot will, of course, learn many things early. Almost any circus child is a tumbler, and many of them are jugglers. Their parents and their parents' friends are always working with them. Many a little boy or girl has developed very early some little knack which justifies his inclusion in the family act. Others will join the act of some neighbor family, and in this fashion they are gradually worked into the life into which they have been born and in which they will probably remain. Alfredo, although he had no children of his own, trained many young people and brought some of them into his act. His brother Lalo had a little girl who might have been in the act except that it broke up after Alfredo was injured.

Sooner or later some circus people have some injury. Frequently it is not incapacitating, but for a high-trapeze man to have a shoulder which will not stay in place is a calamity, and Alfredo went that way. The

time came when he could no longer leap. No doctor seemed to offer him any hope of keeping him working, and for two seasons he went out as equestrian director. This is a formal title for what most laymen call the "ringmaster." He really runs the show. He times it and sees that it goes according to schedule. He watches everything and makes any sudden change that is necessary. It was while Alfredo was equestrian director that I rode in the Spec. After the second season he decided not to go out any more. He said, "I have flown too long to be happy walking on the ground." If he couldn't be in the air over the show, he preferred not to go with it at all. Like so many circus people, he had been reasonably frugal and had acquired a competence.

His third wife, who was originally an equestrienne and came from a family who for generations had been in circuses in that capacity, went for a while into her old act, from which he had taken her, at Lietzel's suggestion, to make her a part of his own act. He followed the circus occasionally and stayed at home part of the time. The last Easter before his death he spent the week end with me. He went to New York to see the Big Show open in Madison Square Garden, and then he went to his home in California. One day I read in the paper that he was dead. The Big Show was playing in Grant Park. The early-afternoon editions told of his death, with all the tragic details. I went through the back yard and talked to many of his friends. There was no word of criticism, only sorrow and love for a man as kind and helpful and generous and gentle as they had all known him to be. To his colleagues, Alfredo was the bright, gay spirit of the circus world of his day. He told me once, when he could no longer fly, that he

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would have preferred to die as Lietzel had died. But his rigging was all made by Lalo, the catcher, his brother, and it never broke. For those who believe that today's press is without heart or soul and will never miss a chance for sensation, I like to remember the notice of his death which appeared in *Variety*, the trade paper of show business. Here at least is a case where kindness and respect outweighed the chance for a sensation, and here in this hard-boiled trade paper there were no cruel details, and a dignified notice told merely of the death of a man who *needed no wings*.

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