

RIDING THE TAIL OF A TWO HORNED RHINOCEROS

By DARIUS DALRYMPLE

"HOW'D you like to take a 10 mile ride on a rhinoceros' tail? That's what I did."

The speaker was a shabbily dressed man who had introduced himself to a group of keepers in the Central Park menagerie as an elephant trainer or, in circus parlance, a "bull man" out of employment. There was a pause in the conversation, which had been of man swallowing pythons, dancing yaks and parrots that went insane from over-studying the foreign languages. The "bull man" looked longingly at a sandwich in the hands of one of the keepers and continued:

"Yes, sir, it's a fact, though the story is so strange that some folks joke me about it. But if they'd been back in Corning, N. Y., in '78, when my show was playing there, I could prove what I'm going to tell you."

He paused to note the effect of his words and went on:

"A two horned rhinoceros was just about as hard to find in this country in those days as it is now. You couldn't get one for love or a reasonable amount of money. The owner of the show I was with, or the old man, as we called him, had his mind set on having a rhino with two horns. His show had been running in hard luck and he really needed a new attraction to brace things up. A rival show had a collection of performing elephants that had set the country talking and we couldn't boast of much that was new in animals."

"It was the beginning of the season and we were getting ready to leave Fremont, O., after showing twice to very bad business. The old man was as blue as a dyspeptic monkey. Everything had gone wrong. Just before the afternoon performance Letty, our prize ostrich, got gay and started to chasing a couple of cassowaries that were in a paddock with her. She was almost tickled to death with the fun she was having when she stumbled and fell to the ground. There was a lot of yelling and squawking, and when we got inside the ropes and looked her over we found she had broken her right leg."

"As if that wasn't enough tough luck, four of the canvas men had to go and get into a fight with some of the freshies around town and our men got locked up. So when it came time to load up early in the morning all hands had to turn to and help. The old man was clean discouraged. 'It looks like some one has wished a hoodoo on us, Marty,' he said to me. 'If things don't change pretty soon I'll have to close up.'"

"Just then up came a farmerish looking fellow who without any round-about talk asked the old man if he wanted to buy a two horned rhinoceros. The suddenness of the proposition almost took the old man off his feet, but he said that he might consider the matter if he could see the animal. So the countryman took us to a shed back of the hotel, where, sure enough, he had a rhinoceros tied up in a stall. We looked the animal over from the tips of her two horns to her feet and she seemed to be all right. The farmer said that his brother was a sea captain and after picking the rhino up near some African port had sent her to him."

"She wasn't any use to him, the farmer said, and he wanted to sell her. There wasn't much haggling about the price. The farmer named \$100 as his figure, which was ridiculous, seeing that two horned rhino owners have refused offers of \$10,000 and more. The old man took him up quick, and when the show left Fremont, Matilda, as the rhino was called, was part of the circus."

"She was as well behaved as a kitten

till we reached Corning. We pitched our tents on a big lot on the outskirts of the place on a blistering hot day in June. The rhino had been featured as a star attraction and there was a big crowd at the afternoon performance. The heat had affected Matilda's skin and it was cracked in several places. The old man had placed me in charge of the animal and I was going to give her a good coating of oil the next day. I thought, though, that a bath in a little stream that flowed along the edge of the town would put the rhino in good condition for her oiling."

"We had got along well, the rhino and me. So when I put a rope around her neck and led her toward the water I didn't have any fear of trouble. Just as we crossed the railroad tracks a locomotive came puffing along. Then things began to happen. The man in

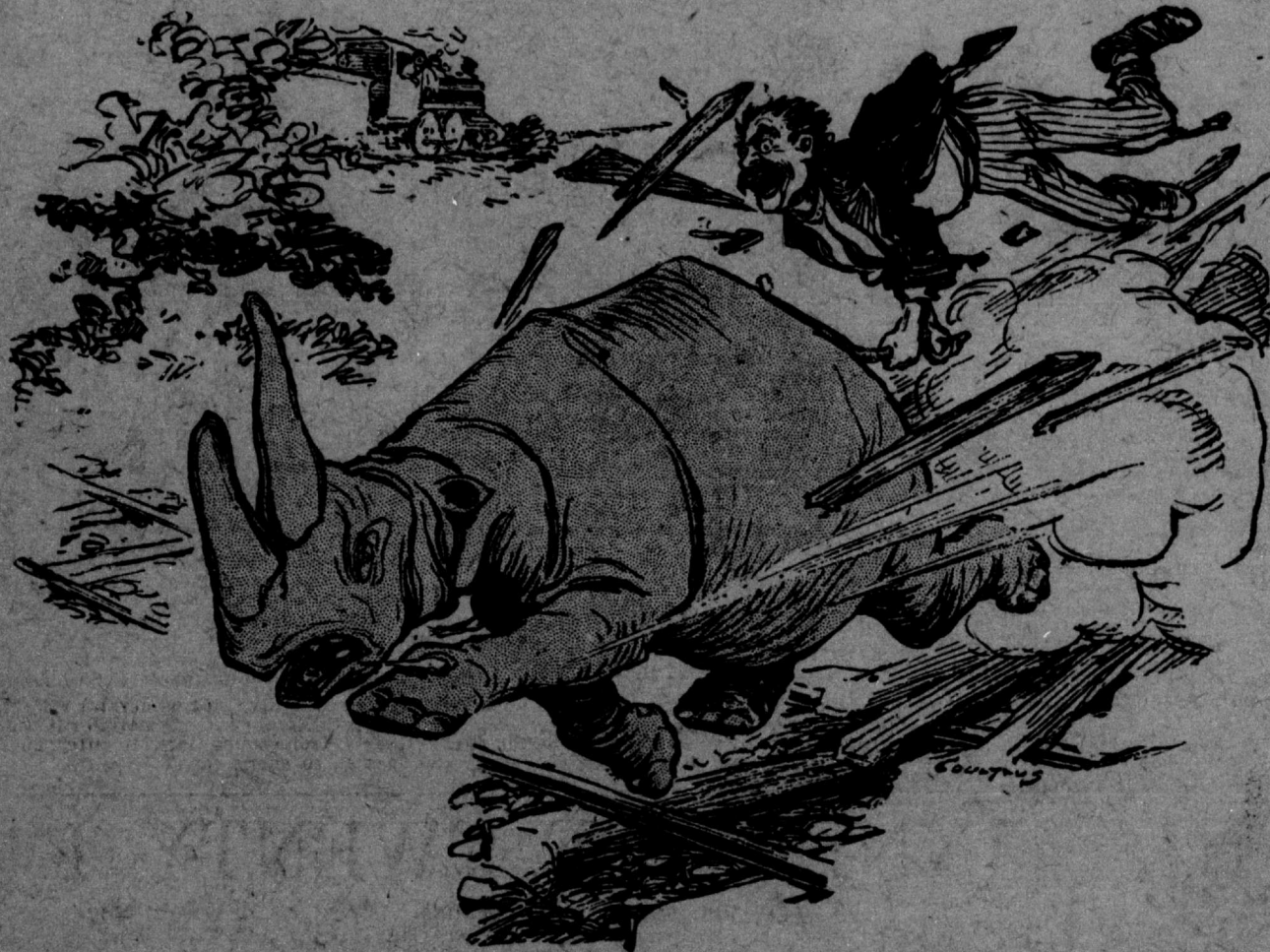
down. She went through a barbed wire affair that caught in my clothes and ripped most of 'em off my back. I thought she would get tired, but she didn't and we went on and on. My arms ached till they felt like they would drop off. Ahead of us I saw a farmer starting with a hay rake to head her off. But she didn't head. As soon as she caught sight of the man she galloped madly toward him and he dived head first into a haystack."

"That seemed to satisfy Matilda, because she lumbered right along without trying to dig him out. Once in a while she turned her head halfway around and glared at me. Say, there was so much wicked fury in those eyes of hers that I was tempted to let go of her tail at once. But we were going so fast that I figured I would be as safe in hanging on as dropping off."

led from the road into a patch of woods.

"She lumbered along, not paying any attention to the branches of trees that almost blocked the path, till we came to a footbridge over a creek. This was where Matilda showed that she was nothing after all but a clumsy brute with no sense, for she tried to walk across that narrow plank. We both went splash into the water and that seemed to bring the brute back to a more quiet state. For five minutes she didn't make a move, and I lay in the water, too far gone to do anything but give thanks that she had halted."

"And now comes the odd part of my story. When the rhino fell into the water she landed against the bottom of the creek, head first. When I got to my feet I felt for my elephant hook and found that I still had it hanging



FENCES DIDN'T STOP HER FOR A SECOND

the cab, out of mischief, I suppose, pulled the whistle string when he saw the rhino, and Matilda was startled for fair. She gave a loud bellow and a jerk that yanked me off my feet. The rope slid out of my hands, but I caught hold of her tail as it flashed by me and hung on for dear life."

"I was pretty strong in them days and I was bound not to lose my grip on an animal that the old man valued almost as much as he did the whole show. Along the banks of that little stream the rhino tore, with me hanging to her tail. Sometimes my feet touched the ground, but more often they didn't. Shooting the chutes at Coney Island wasn't nowhere compared to that ride of mine. The trees flashed by so fast I couldn't hardly see them. And all the time the brute kept up her unearthly bellowing."

"Fences didn't stop her for a second. When she couldn't jump them she crashed into them and knocked them

"Across the field we scooted till we came to a road. Matilda bolted up the road, raising so much dust that I was partly blinded and didn't see a wagon till we were within a few feet of the thing. Bump! She went into the wagon, which was loaded with apples. The whole cargo was dumped out into the road and with it two men on the seat. I suppose those men thought I was out for an afternoon of pleasure, because they yelled 'Why don't you stop her?' as we whirled past."

"By this time I had about made up my mind that the rhino was taking a short cut back to her old home in Africa. As long as I had gone so far I reckoned that I might as well go the whole distance with her. While I was wondering if she would stop long enough to give me a chance to write a letter to the old man and tell him that I hadn't stolen Matilda, she suddenly switched off into a path that

to my belt. I gave Matilda a few jabs and she squealed. Then I happened to glance at her head and almost fell down, for her horns were missing. I looked again and saw them floating on the water a few feet away."

"Well, I did some thinking and discovered that Matilda's horns had been cemented on. She was no more a two horned rhinoceros than I am. She had the stump of one horn remaining and that smart fellow in Fremont had given her two to boost her value."

The bull man stopped talking and looked covetously at the sandwich which one of the listeners still held.

"I picked up the rhino's horns and strapped them back on her head again. I didn't have any trouble in getting her back to Corning, and I never told the old man about the horns, because I knew it would break his heart if he found out that his two horned rhinoceros was not a two horned rhinoceros."

RELATION OF MOON AND TIDES

If you have ever lived by the seashore you must have noticed that the tides as they come and go are very irregular. They do not rise to the same height nor fall to the same depth, and although they are always a little later every day they are much later on some days than on others. The whole thing looks like a matter of chance, yet we can tell the exact minute that the tide will be high or low, and exactly how high it will rise or fall any day for the next thousand years at any spot on earth.

The men who calculate the tides in advance for the benefit of sailors and others know that the rise and fall of the tides are caused by the attraction of the sun and moon, and when these both attract at the same time and in the same direction they can pull much harder than when one is pulling one way and one the other. As astronomers can tell exactly where the sun and moon will be for any time in the future, they can also tell when they will pull together to make the high tides.

This attraction is what we call gravity. If you have heard the story of Sir Isaac Newton and the apple you know that he called the force that

makes everything attract everything else to it "gravitation," and the bigger the thing the bigger the attraction. The earth being bigger than anything on it attracts everything to its surface, and that is why such a little thing as an apple makes a dive for the earth the moment it lets go of the tree.

Anything bigger than the earth would attract the earth, but the further off it was the weaker would be its pull. Anything nearly as big as the earth and close to it would attract the earth just as the earth would attract it, and it is this mutual attraction that keeps things in their place in the sky. If the sun did not attract the earth the earth would fly off by itself in a straight line. The earth keeps the moon in place the same way.

The moon is not big enough to pull the earth out of its regular path, but it is able to pull anything that it finds lying round loose on the earth if it is big enough. This is what the moon does to the water in the sea. The sun pulls at the sea in the same way, but it is so far off that it can not pull the sea toward it as much as the moon does, but still it gives it a lift.

Of course you know that when the moon is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun, rising in the east

as the sun sets in the west, we get what we call the full moon and with it comes a higher tide than for several days before.

When there is no moon, it is because we do not see it because it is on the same side of the earth as the sun, but just as soon as it gets a bit on one side, we see the edges of it and call it the new moon and notice that it follows the sun into the west at evening.

As the tides are always highest at full moon and new moon we call them spring tides because they seem to spring up toward the moon, but when the moon gets to be half full, or is half gone, it is to one side of the earth.

You might think that as the moon was pulling one way and the sun the other there would be no tide at all, but the moon pulls about two and a half times as strong as the sun, because it is so much nearer to us, and this allows it to give us a little tide, which we call a neap tide, which means nipped, or not allowed to rise to a full height.

Do not run away with the idea that the high water is directly under the moon all the time, because it is not. It takes time for the moon to exert its pull, and on account of the friction of the water on the surface of the earth

the top of the tidal wave does not catch up to the attracting moon until some hours after the moon has passed on.

The time that elapses between the passing forward of the moon and the arrival of the high tide varies in different places and is technically known as the "establishment of the port," so the next time you hear or read of that you will know what it means. In the port of New York this time is 3½ hours, says the Sun.

There are some very curious things about the tides. Those that start on the west coast of South America travel always toward the west. The deeper the ocean the faster the tidal wave goes, and it takes about 12 hours for it to reach New Zealand. In a day and a quarter it gets to the cape of Good Hope, where it meets the Atlantic tides from Cape Horn, and together they move toward the United States, which is reached in about 40 hours.

Another very curious thing about the tides is that they always take longer to run out than to come in, and this difference in time is sometimes made greater by the form of the coast. In Philadelphia, for instance, it takes two hours longer for the tide to go out than for it to come in.