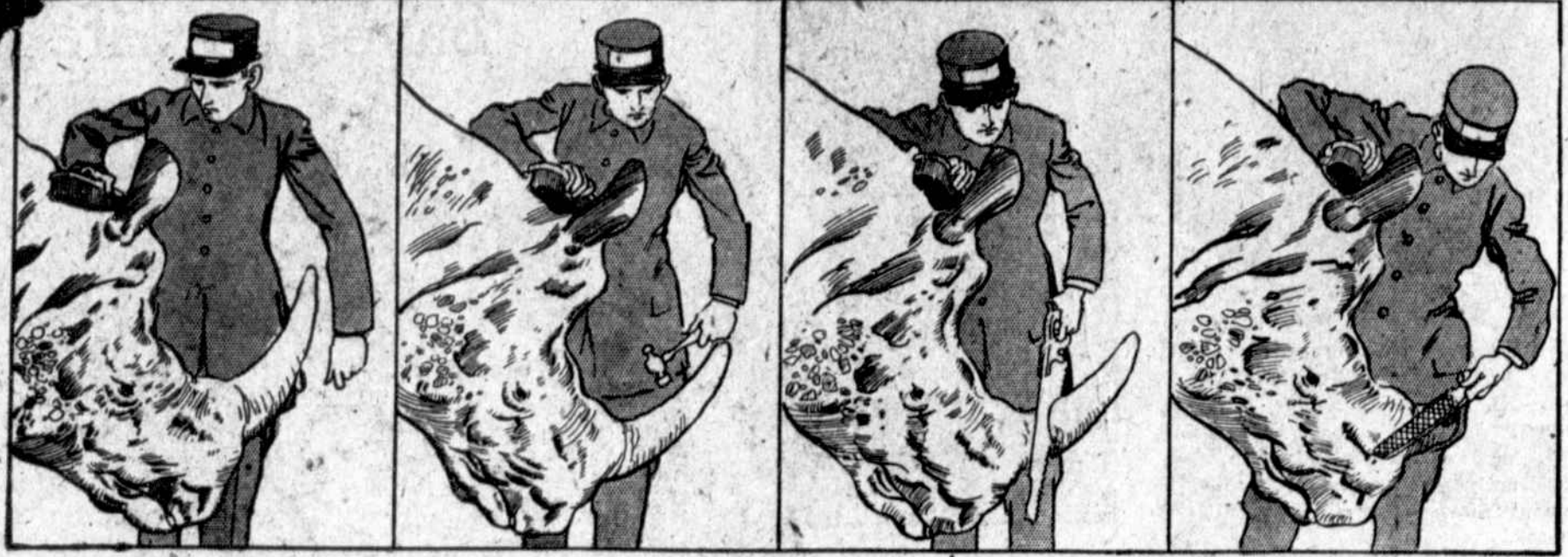


# Manicuring the Circus Rhinoceros

Two Weeks of Patient Petting of the Dangerous Beast to Get Him in a Humor to Permit His Thick Horn to Be Sawed, Filed and Sandpapered ---and This Must Be Done Every Year

How the Circus Animal Attendants Wheedled "Bill" Into Allowing His Horn to Be Sawed Off.



1. The Keeper Goes into the Enclosure and Scratches the Rhinoceros Vigorously Behind the Ears With a Coarse Wire Scrub Brush, Which Delights the Animal.

2. After the Creature Has Come to Look Forward With Pleasure to the Soothing Strokes of the Scrub Brush the Keeper Begins to Tap and Thump the Horn So That "Bill" Will Associate the Activities on His Horn With the Soothing Caress of the Wire Brush.

3. After Two Weeks of Such Attention the Keeper Then Brings a Saw into the Cage and Saws as Much of the Horn as He Thinks the Animal Will Stand at That Time Without Realizing Just What Is Really Going On.

4. When the Horn Has Been Sawed Off the Keeper Then Files the Sharp Edge With a Farrier's Rasp and Sandpapers and Polishes It. "Bill" Can Then Be Put Into His Summer Cage Without Tearing Off His Horn in the Bars.

THE rhinoceros is the prima donna of the circus. Every zoological garden has elephants, bears, lions and tigers. A few have giraffes and a hippopotamus. But nowhere on earth is there a live East Indian armored one-horned rhinoceros except in the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus, which has recently opened its annual season at Madison Square Garden, New York.

It is lucky that the rhinoceros has what ex-President Wilson called "a one-track mind." He can think of only one thing at a time, and it is because his keepers know this fact and have found a way to take advantage of it that it has become possible to carry the huge beast around the country in his small cage during the tour of the circus.

Of all the various animals of the great circus the rhinoceros is the nearest to the strange, grotesque, extinct monsters of prehistoric times. He has the same small brain, much the same unwieldy bulk and the same extraordinary armor-plate hide which his ancestors wore millions and millions of years ago, before even the most primitive man walked the earth.

In his "Outline of History" H. G. Wells mentions the fact that a kind of rhinoceros, the "Titanotherium," was the dominant beast on earth in the Eocene period, near-

ly forty million years ago. "Bill," as the circus rhinoceros is called, has a little more intelligence than that ancestor but is still one of the stupidest animals living.

"Bill" is not the handsomest animal in the show and yet there is something so attractive about his hideous figure with little eyes and rough hide that it attracts to him a loving companion who sticks to him devotedly throughout his life. Indeed, the strange fascination of the red-billed tick-bird for the rhinoceros is one of the most extraordinary things in zoology.

As soon as the young rhinoceros has finished nursing from its mother there begins a devoted companionship between the young animal and this bird of the tropics. Somewhere from out of the jungle thicket a red-billed tick-bird flies to the rhinoceros and flitting around and around its head

causes the dull-witted intelligence of the beast to take notice of it. This being accomplished, the bird perches on the rhinoceros's nose and begins a series of dances and hops in front of the stupid eyes of the great beast. The bird then continues its familiarities up and down the skull and horn and neck and back of the creature until the bird and the beast have become well acquainted.

From that hour on to the end of life the bird and the animal are inseparable. It is true that this association has a utilitarian basis, for the rhinoceros is greatly worried by ticks, which the bird devours. But out of this profitable partnership a real affection grows up.

The bird finds shelter from the fierce mid-day sun under the shadow of the rhinoceros's belly. If the night is cold the same huge bulk provides a warm spot for the bird.

When the bird is raising a family the rhinoceros considerably remains in nearly the same spot until the young ones are hatched and started in life. Natives state that so great becomes the affection of the rhinoceros for his companion bird that when the bird dies the big beast will lie down and moan and finally die of grief. While this may be a native exaggeration, it has undoubtedly a certain foundation. Hunters have found that when they shot a rhinoceros the attendant bird would not go away, even though in danger of death or capture.

"Bill," the circus rhinoceros, was caught so young that he has perhaps learned to live without his bird, but it would be interesting to see what would happen if he met his childhood friend.

During the winter "Bill" lives a lazy life in a big enclosure at the winter quarters of the circus at Bridgeport, Conn. The walls are smooth and there are no bars or doors for the animal to catch his horn in. But when the circus goes on its tour the rhinoceros must spend the season confined behind the bars of a cage. In his restless uneasiness the great animal would catch his horn in the bars of the cage and crack or split it, setting up an inflammation of the bones of the skull which would bring on brain fever and death.

The circus keepers, therefore, are faced with the unpleasant task of sawing off "Bill's" thick horn which grows about a foot long every winter. The rhinoceros is a creature of enormous strength and easily irritated.

The greatest danger to a man entering the animal's cage lies in getting between his head and the wall. The beast has a habit of almost constantly swaying his head from side to side. Any man who comes between this swaying head and the side of the cage is likely to be smashed as easily as a man squashes a fly.

Now, the problem was to saw through five inches of horn on the tip of his nose without getting killed. How was it possible to do this sawing without catching his eye and drawing an annihilating smash from his nose?

This problem was studied for months from every angle by the chief keeper of the circus animals, Tom Patterson, and his assistant, Arthur Rooney. They made several attempts to tie him and also to reach in through the bars with the meat saw and narrowly escaped broken limbs or even worse accidents.

Eventually they solved the problem by a profound study of rhinoceros psychology. In this they were aided by the various experimental psychologists and other scientists who frequent the winter quarters of the circus in order to obtain from the animals information which will enable them to unravel the mysteries of the human mind.

When the rhinoceros is angry he is likely to remain angry for weeks. On the other hand, fortunately, when he is pleased he stays that way equally long. Intelligent keepers had discovered that nothing pleased "Bill" more than being tickled at a certain spot behind the ears. That is where his friend, the bird, tickles him.

As the time for cutting the horn drew near the keeper devoted every morning to getting "Bill" into a good humor. He fed the animal twenty pounds of juicy beets beyond his ordinary breakfast. Then, armed with a large wire brush he started to scrub the brute behind the ears.

"Bill" almost gurgled with pleasure. For two weeks this treatment was kept up until he was in a perfectly sweet temper. Next the keeper alternately rapped the horn and wielded the brush so that the animal would associate the two centres.

Then one morning, after the keeper had finished tickling "Bill" with the wire-brush, he tactfully produced a two-foot meat saw and started sawing off his horn. The rhinoceros was so much occupied with his other pleasures that for half an hour he did not notice that part of his head was being sawed off.

After that half hour some horn dust dropped into the animal's eye. He began to move his head and the man with the saw had to make his escape. Next morning the operation was resumed again after the usual endearments. This time the tip was sawed off completely.

Now there remained a rough, circular surface with a sharp edge. The beast's nose could not be left in this condition. Next morning, after the customary petting, the keeper took a full-sized farrier's rasp and filed off the sharp edge surrounding the stump of the horn.

On the following day the keeper, after making "Bill" happy as before, went to work with sandpaper and carefully polished the stump of the horn. By this clever method, working from an hour to half an hour at a time for two weeks the keeper got the rhinoceros's horn in a condition in which it would not hurt him.

The piece of horn removed weighed four pounds and measured five inches across at the base. It has to be cut off every year, and the operation was performed just before "Bill" was placed on exhibition before an interested public at Madison Square Garden.

The Indian rhinoceros's four-inch-thick skin is arranged in sections like ancient armor and protects him so effectively that there is no animal on earth that can hurt him. Indeed, it is said that he can kill an elephant or a tiger as easily as he can tear up a big tree. With his armor and his 4,000 pounds of bone and muscle his charge is irresistible.

The armor shows the rhinoceros's evolutionary relationship to other classes of animals. For instance, the rhinoceros represents a stage between the crab, which has a hard shell instead of a skeleton, and the ordinary mammal which has a hard skeleton and a soft outside. The only other existing mammal that has a shell is the curious armadillo, and even he is less prehistoric than the rhinoceros.

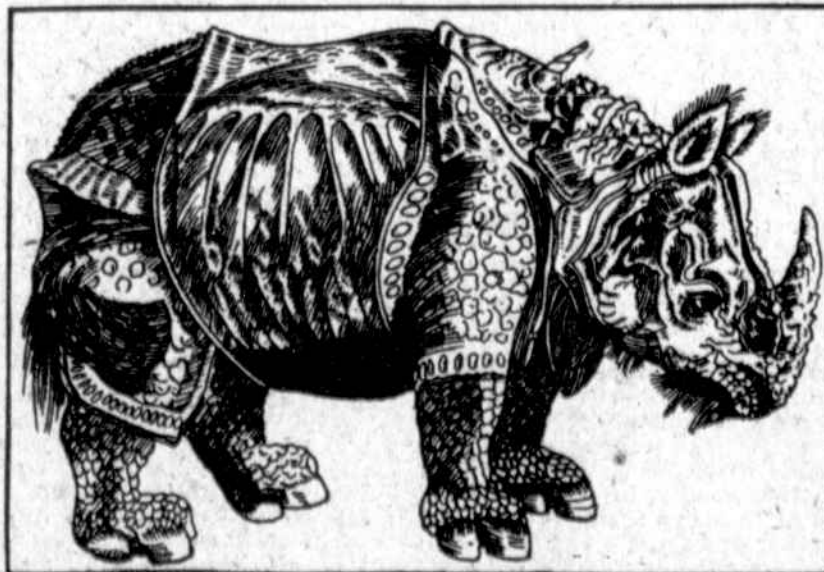
This one-horned rhinoceros is now stated on excellent scientific authority to be the original of the mysterious unicorn, so often mentioned in the Bible and other ancient records. The Book of Numbers, for instance, says: "He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn."

The writers of the Bible had doubtless heard reports concerning the one-horned rhinoceros from distant parts of Asia and Africa, and correctly called it a "unicorn," or "one horn." They heard of its terrific strength, but they could scarcely have seen one or obtained much exact information about it. Hence their rather vague and mysterious descriptions.

In time the unicorn became a symbol of virtue, strength and innocence. Its horn when powdered was said to be a remedy for every disease. When the great Pope Gregory XIV. was dying, in 1590, the Monastery of St. Mary of Guadeloupe sent him a unicorn's horn from among its treasures.

The tip of the horn was actually sawed off and administered to the Pope, but it failed to save him. This horn is now preserved in the New York Museum of Natural History.

Curious Drawing of a Rhinoceros.—From a Middle-Century Book on Zoology.



"Bill," the Prima Donna of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey