

PAGE OF READING FOR THE FAMILY

THE NOMADIC CIRCUS



Circus Clowns Cater to the Popular Fancy.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

IN MIDSUMMER the circus season is at its height. Since early spring troupers have been donning their costumes daily, and trained animals from every corner of the globe in colorful trappings have delighted young and old.

Geographically, the circus has been a great educator. Long before automobiles, motion pictures, and radio broke down the barriers between isolated regions of the United States and the advancing world outside, the circus was taking its artists, its comedy, its music and its nomadic college of zoology into almost every state and territory. The world's largest circus might even advertise that it carries the original New York cast, because it takes on tour precisely the same show that opens in Madison Square Garden.

Whatever else the peripatetic amusement venture is or is not, the fact remains that it is real. There are no circus "doubles" to perform the difficult feats, and there are no substitutes for those who may not feel "up" to the ordeal of two shows a day, "rain or shine." Years ago leaders in this field of entertainment learned that the formula for permanent survival included a whole-hearted attempt to give the public something it never had beheld before, surrounding it with a dazzling array of sustaining attractions. This hard-and-fast rule has persisted through the years, amid a procession of magic names: Jumbo, Tom Thumb; Chang, the Chinese Titan; Zachinnl, human cannon ball; Tom Mix, whose Rough Riders carry the spirit of the old West to every state in the Union; Gollath, monster sea-elephant; Ubangi savages from Darkest Africa.

Because the circus is nomadic in its quest for business, it always has been of necessity a fighting institution. Therein lies one of its major bids for fame. Like a gay explorer who finds each day's journey a fresh problem to tackle, the circus struggles against a perfect maze of daily entanglements that threaten to ensnare it like a colossal Gulliver. The circus has battled the weather and it has fought grafting officials who threaten to dig up some excuse for fining or tying up the show unless complimentary tickets fly thick and fast.

Huge Daily Overhead.

The managements for years have fought the argument that they take too much money out of town. People overlook the fact that every big circus spends a large sum in every city in which it plays. The daily overhead of the largest circus is in excess of \$15,000, and a considerable share of it is spent locally for lot and license, straw, lumber, ice cream, soft drinks, billing locations, and food for 600 horses, 36 elephants, four herds of camels, hippopotamuses, and other large appetites in the menagerie, as well as for the three meals a day of the

show personnel, whose gastronomic requirements would stagger the chefs of a huge hotel. The commissary uses daily 250 pounds of butter, 200 pounds of coffee, 25 bags of table salt, almost a ton of fresh meat, 200 gallons of milk, 1,500 loaves of bread, 200 dozen eggs, half a ton of vegetables, a barrel of sugar, 50 pounds of lard, etc.

Mud is by all odds the outdoor showman's worst enemy. It sucks at the wheels of his wagons until elephants must be pressed into service to extricate them, and it dampens the spirits of his prospective customers. Wet weather is bad for monkeys, apes, giraffes, and cat animals, which are subject to throat and lung congestion. Add to this the fact that canvas triples its weight when wet. Conquest of the golden fleece could be little more difficult than the task that confronts a circus manager who must drag his nomadic city from the clutches of the mire in time to play a matinee performance in a town a hundred miles away.

In the old days, before movement by railroad was general, traveling was much worse. Springtime found country roads impassable. Fourteen horses were needed to pull a hippopotamus den when circuses traveled overland in wagons. Circus laborers still shout "China!" occasionally when the train roars into the city of exhibition. This is a circus term of another generation. When a driver, seated atop the first wagon in the caravan, sighted the show's destination, he called "China" to indicate that after an all-night struggle they literally had dug their way through.

Rivalry Used to Be Fierce.

Previous to 1929 most of the big circus units battled with one an-

other up and down the country from Maine to California and from Canada to the Gulf. Sometimes they employed the most vitriolic phrases in characterizing rival circuses as worthless. When electricity first was used to illuminate a circus tent, competitors solemnly warned the public to stay away from that show "because electric lights are known to be extremely dangerous and blinding to the eyes!"

Most interesting were the "paper wars" conducted by the big and little shows prior to the late summer of 1929. The big circuses often bought advertising space on barns and buildings in the dead of winter, so that the location would not be snapped up by rival concerns. Some of the shows had a playful little habit of covering each other's posters when two shows saw fit to play the same city on the same day or a few days apart.

One of these paper wars became so intense when two circuses chose to book a California city within a few days of each other that the barns and billboards of the surrounding countryside were plastered with a covering of circus pictures 28 sheets deep. The opposition brigade of circus number one went out each morning to cover the advertisements of the rival show. The brigade of circus number two went out every evening to recover with its own billing. They watched each other so closely, these tireless advance men, that each knew when the other's crew left town to cover paper in the country.

At last one of them played a master stroke. Two nights before the first show was due to arrive, the brigade hired a hearse, climbed inside with posters, paste, and brushes, and quietly left town to do their work without attracting the attention of their competitors. The advance advertising cars of the big shows carry large crews of ambitious workers who often average a posting of 10,000 to 12,000 sheets of circus lithographs a day. A crew of 30 men can bill a large city in a single day, so well do they understand their work.

White Elephant Competition.

Sometimes the tented enterprises tried to duplicate their rival's ace attractions. Barnum once imported a sacred white elephant from Siam. It wasn't pure white, but rather a cream color, and it cost a lot of money and trouble. Adam Forepaugh, then Barnum's leading competitor, copied the Siamese albino by applying a generous coating of white paint to unclothed parts of a gray pachyderm. His elephant was so much whiter than Barnum's that the public decided Forepaugh had the real article—until one day during a street parade in Philadelphia, when a cloudburst exposed the imposture.

Even then skeptical show-goers refused to believe that Barnum's white elephant was any more genuine than the one they had seen exposed. Somebody asked Barnum what he was billing as his chief attraction that season. He smiled and replied, "I've got a white elephant." Then and there he supplied a distinctly American angle to the age-old white-elephant allusion that to this day is used to describe something expensive which cannot be disposed of to any advantage.

The big shows fought each other until the summer of 1929, when a great consolidation was effected. Now six of the largest tent shows, all Ringling-owned, contend for patronage in friendly rivalry and try to keep out of one another's way.

Most outsiders think that every circus picks its complete route at the beginning of each season. In reality, they are routed only about six weeks in advance. Agents must study crop and factory conditions, epidemics of disease, and proximity of rival attractions, and must arrange to send the circus where

BEDTIME STORY

By THORNTON W. BURGESS

ANOTHER GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK

YOU remember the game of hide and seek Danny Meadow-Mouse played with Buster Bear? You remember what a very dreadful game it was for Danny? But hard as it was for Danny, it didn't begin to be as hard as the game Lightfoot the Deer was playing with the hunter in the Green Forest.

In the case of Buster Bear and Danny, the latter had simply to keep out of reach of Buster. As long as Buster didn't get his great paws on Danny the latter was safe. Then, too, Danny is a very small person. He is so small that he can hide under two or three leaves. Wherever he is he is pretty sure to find a hiding place of some sort. His small size gives him advantages in a game of hide and seek. It cer-



Lightfoot Listened and Watched.

tainly does. But Lightfoot the Deer is big. He is one of the largest of the people who live in the Green Forest. Being so big, it is not easy to hide.

Moreover, a hunter with a terrible gun does not have to get close in order to kill. Lightfoot knew all this as he waited for the coming of the hunter of whom Sammy Jay

warned him. He had learned many lessons in the hunting season of the year before and he remembered every one of them. He knew that to forget even one of them might cost him his life. So, standing motionless behind a tangle of fallen trees, Lightfoot listened and watched.

Presently over in the distance he heard Sammy Jay screaming "Thief, thief, thief!" A little sigh of relief escaped Lightfoot. He knew that screaming of Sammy Jay was a warning to tell him where the hunter was. Knowing just where the hunter was made it easier for him to know what to do.

A Merry Little Breeze came stealing through the Green Forest. It came from behind Lightfoot and danced away toward the hunter with the terrible gun. Instantly Lightfoot began to steal softly away through the Green Forest. He took the greatest care to make no sound. He went in a half circle, stopping every few minutes to look and listen and test the air with his wonderful nose.

Can you guess what Lightfoot was trying to do?

He was trying to get behind the hunter so that the Merry Little Breezes would bring to him the dreaded man-scent. As long as he could get that scent he would know where the hunter was though he could neither see nor hear him. If he had remained where Sammy Jay had found him, the hunter might come within shooting distance before Lightfoot could have located him.

So the hunter with the terrible gun walked noiselessly through the Green Forest, stepping with the greatest care to avoid snapping a stick underfoot, searching with keen eyes every thicket and likely hiding place for a glimpse of Lightfoot and studying the ground for traces to show that Lightfoot had been there.

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Average Net Worth of Families Up

Special Survey Shows Home Mortgages Reduced.

Minneapolis. — The average insured family has 30 per cent more cash in the bank today than it had in 1933, and has reduced the mortgage on its home by 10 per cent in the same two-year period, according to a survey of 10,000 policy holder families by the Northwestern National Life Insurance company in Minneapolis.

An average reserve of \$356 per family of cash on hand and in banks, was reported as of the spring of 1935 in response to the insurance company's questionnaire; this compares with \$464 per family at the present time, an increase of \$108, or 30 per cent.

A reduction in the size of the average mortgage from \$3,464 was shown in the reports. Approximately 49 per cent of the policy holders investigated were home owners; the average home valuation was \$5,301. Half of the homes owned were clear of encumbrances;

the remaining 50 per cent were mortgaged.

The average amount of life insurance owned per family was \$7,710 in 1933, and \$8,199 in 1935, an increase of 6.3 per cent.

The average net worth of each family, including the equity in home, but exclusive of life insurance, was \$2,955 in the spring of 1933, and had risen to \$3,440 two years later, the survey showed, an increase in average wealth of 16 per cent. The 10,000 families were selected at random from policy holder lists.

A special survey of urban housing conducted in 61 cities by the United States Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce showed a reduction in the average mortgage on owner-occupied homes of 3.29 per cent from 1933 to 1934. The fact that the reduction for the two years from '33 to '35 totaled 10.22 per cent in the insurance company's survey would seem to indicate that the average family is paying off its obligations at an increasingly rapid rate, the report concludes.

10,000,000 in Abyssinia

Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, has a total area of 350,000 square miles and a population of 10,000,000, consisting of Semitic Abyssinians, Somalis, Arabs, negroes and Indians. Very little land is cultivated, the idea of landed property scarcely being known. The rainfall, 30 to 40 inches, heaviest in midsummer, provides much of the water for the annual overflow of the Nile in Egypt.

Do You Know—



That cigars a yard long are common among the Indians of the Amazon hinterland? They are inveterate smokers and the long cigars are smoked by the whole tribe, each cigar being passed from mouth to mouth.

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