

ZOOHOOT, SAN DIEGO

26(3) 1953 P. 8

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Coquette

To say that Sally is not well educated would be nothing less than understatement. She's downright illiterate. It's perfectly obvious that she reserves the use of her ocular organs for the purpose of making all eyes at her keepers. As far as books are concerned, she's just not interested. And to be an African Black Rhinoceros in every respect, she could do with a brief review of the literature on the subject.

"One of Africa's five most formidable game animals" is the manner in which almost every text on the Dark Continent's fauna describes the rhino. The exact numerical position that the species is accorded on the list varies from one book to another, but it always appears somewhere in the top five. Sally, due perhaps to her complete disinterest in self-improvement, wouldn't even place in the first fifty.

Natural history texts as well as hunters often characterize the rhino as being vicious, antagonistic and perpetually ill-tempered, but not one of these epithets could be applied to Sally. She has the dispo-

sition of a pet feline and sometimes behaves disgustingly like one. The result is ludicrous. She simpers and fawns against her keepers, and her facial contortions where they are concerned run the gamut from coyness to complete and inutterable adoration.

In keeping with her nature, she reacts in a kittenish manner to any object which might possibly be construed as a toy. A palm branch, placed in the pen by her keeper, will keep her blissfully happy for an hour. She may hold it in her mouth, delicately suspended from her pointed, prehensile lips, and lash it from one side to the other as she runs the length of her enclosure, or she may let it drop to the ground whereupon she proceeds to harry it with her stubby front horn. Or she may even decide to trample it into the dust with determined but tender thoroughness. In lieu of a palm frond, she seems almost as pleased with a long, floppy shred of eucalyptus bark. The latter, however, lacks the durability of a palm leaf and can be pulverized or torn to shreds in a matter of seconds. Consequently,

her joyful cavortings are sometimes necessarily of short duration.

But it must be said in Sally's favor that she is not dependent on material things for her joie d'vive. No indeed! Even without the benefit of toys, Sally can frolic with enviable abandon.

One moment she may be standing perfectly still in the center of the enclosure, to all appearances half asleep, with her ears sagging slightly. Then a minute later, she tosses her head high in the air (although still attached to the body), stomps her feet militantly, and is off like the wind, barreling down to the opposite end of the pen. This may go on for only a few seconds, or it may last for several rounds of the enclosure, but in either case the thudding of her dainty feet may be heard as far

away as the Koala pen.

In her relations with human beings she is usually gentle and affectionate, although upon occasion she may playfully attempt to mash her patting hand against the concrete wall of the enclosure. But it is done entirely without malice, so that I am sure. She dearly loves her keepers—and any others who visit her regularly. In short, human attentions leave her ecstatic.

I might point out, if for no other reason than to assure our readers that zoo enthusiasts are not completely irrational, that all contact with Sally occurs through the bars. No one, not even Gabe whom she worships, enters the pen. After all, no human being in possession of his faculties wants to be gored or trampled even if it is performed in a loving manner.

Book Review

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PIG: By Ida M. Mellen. Exposition Press, New York, 1952. \$3.75. 157 pp., illustrated.

To Ida M. Mellen, pigs is not just pigs. The opening sentence in her foreword leaves no doubt as to her point of view: "The pig seems to me the least understood and the most worthy of consideration of any of the farm animals, and this book, the first of its kind, is the result of a lifelong interest in the pig and years of special observation of its biological aspects and practically unknown personality." In the ensuing one hundred and fifty odd pages, Dr. Mellen sets about proving that friend porky is much, much more than a mere "live manufactory of lard and bacon."

First she considers the pig's place in the animal kingdom, its alliance with the hippopotami and peccaries; then she touches briefly on the diversity of forms of wild swine. Next she treats the distribution of the domestic pig, and it is from this point on that Dr. Mellen really gets into her stride. She covers its physiology, its psychology, its habits, its instincts, its voice and language. She concludes her tribute to this familiar denizen of the barnyard with a section devoted to its place in the history of mankind.

Dr. Mellen's "Pig" makes for good reading from beginning to end, but is it the last section of the book that is perhaps the most entertaining of all. It is comprised of all sorts of porcine miscellanea—myths about ghost pigs, the "how" of pig-sticking; and the suitability of swine as shepherds, sled teams, and truffle grubbers.

As is true of most natural history works, there are statements in Dr. Mellen's book to which other naturalists, myself included, may take exception, but I feel that such points are of relatively minor significance. What is important is that Dr. Mellen has compiled a wealth of valid data and serves it to her reading public in a most appealing fashion. Her text is factual without becoming weighty, and it is "popular" in approach yet not guilty of over-simplification.

She succeeds admirably in her attempt to encourage due (and keep overdue) respect for the pig. Let us rarely abused or neglected for centuries, it emerges from her pages almost a noble beast and surely deserving of a better reputation than it has. One definite point in its favor, as Dr. Mellen writes, is that while "individuals of many species of animals are born insane as among human beings . . . congenital insanity has never been reported in the pig."

—KEN STOTT, JR.