

WAYS OF ALLIGATORS

THE SAURIAN AT CLOSE RANGE IN HIS FLORIDA HOME.

How the Female Lays Her Eggs and Cares For Her Young—A Mother Will Fight Anything That Threatens Her Babies. Diet and Luxuries of Alligators.

One of the sights most eagerly watched for by the newly arrived Florida visitor, as he glides over the lakes and rivers of that genial land, is the alligator. A few years ago this desire was easily gratified, but the great saurian is comparatively rare nowadays along the older routes of travel. This is due partly to the bullets of the visitors and partly to the shots and traps of the more legitimate alligator hunter, who finds in that pursuit the chief means of support for himself and his family.

It is in the dense fastnesses of the inland swamps and everglades that alligators may be seen in great numbers on a bright day, basking in the sunshine. They are gregarious and love to assemble in such places, where they bring their two rows of strong teeth together with a prodigious clatter and roar with a noise that resembles thunder.

The female makes her nest in the sand near the water's edge, scraping a hole with her paws and dropping the eggs in a regular layer. Then she scrapes grass, leaves, mud and sand over them, on these places another layer, and so continues alternate layers until the nest contains from 30 to 40 eggs. As the hole is rarely deep enough to hold all these, the result is a decided mound easily detected by the experienced hunter, who finds ready sale for the eggs as curiosities. They are white, hard shelled and rather larger than a hen's egg. If he prefers to await their hatching, he secures a fine lot of little alligators, for which also there is always a ready sale.

While she thus leaves her prospective children to the doubtful guardianship of the earth, the mother does not desert them. Patiently she keeps watch over the nest in which they lie, never allowing that mound of sand to be long out of her sight. How she knows exactly when the little folk are ready, like the emancipated chicken, to step out of their shells and take their first peep at the world, who shall say? But, all the same, it is a fact that, however far afield her excursions may previously have been, the day and the hour of that happy event in her family circle find her on the spot ready to gather the little ones under her wing, as it were, and lead them to their future home in the water that lies before them.

This watchful care the mother continues until her babies are old enough to forage for themselves and their scales are firm enough to enable them to dispense with her protection. The extent to which the young alligators or crocodiles require this watchful care can hardly be realized by those that are not familiar with their habits, for the little ones are terribly persecuted by birds and beasts and even by their kinsmen, the bull alligators, which sometimes eat a dozen or two of their own children at a meal. The mother on such occasions has been known to turn and fight the unnatural monsters with such fury as to put them to flight. It is not only the bull alligator that she will attack when alarmed for the safety of her young—she often holds the most experienced hunters at bay until her little charges have time to flee to a place of safety.

The sight presented by the mother, surrounded and followed by a whole brood of her little ones, is a pleasing one, but let an enemy come in view and the scene ceases to be pleasant. In the twinkling of an eye the little ones dash away into the mysterious shadows, and the placid mother becomes transformed into a raging fury, fairly churning the quiet waters into waves in her mad rush to do battle with the intruders. Without this incentive of maternal affection, however, it is but seldom that an alligator or a crocodile attacks a human being.

The lower animals are less fortunate. Cattle in the far south, where the open ranges and shallow waters extend a tempting invitation to roam, are sometimes seen with shortened tails, an abbreviation for which the wily alligator is responsible. Pigs rooting too near the water's edge and unobservant of the log-like form lying close at their side are often caught by a lightninglike sweep of the alligator's formidable tail.

But the most cherished of all tidbits to an alligator is a nice, plump dog. The saurian's peculiar attraction toward this animal is so well known to hunters that they frequently imitate the yelp of a dog to entice their prey within range, and the call never fails of its purpose. The squeal of a pig is almost as effective.

These dainty bits, however, are rather in the line of luxuries. For a steady, everyday diet the alligator depends upon fish, and it hunts those localities in rivers or lakes where its natural prey most abounds. It catches the fish by diving swiftly under a passing shoal and snatching two or three in its open jaws as it passes through the shoal. Then, rising to the surface, it tosses them in the air, for the purpose of ejecting the water that has entered its mouth along with the fish, and adroitly catches them in their descent.—Helen Harcourt in Philadelphia Times.

Latitude of Tint.

She colored deeply. A girl in an ordinary story would have blushed red.

But she was in a problem story with poster illustrations.

Accordingly, in view of the uncertainty, she merely colored.—Detroit Tribune.

It is a certain rule that wit and passion are entirely incompatible. When the affections are moved, there is no place for the imagination.—Hume.

Smalls were once thought to be a cure for constipation.

Folling a Malignant.

A malicious person, who took pleasure in giving pain, tried to mortify Dr. Guthrie, the eloquent Scotch preacher. But the young minister—the incident happened at Arbriol, his first parish—took the wind out of his sails and left him bobbing in the shame of failure.

The malignant man had been very ill, and being an attendant at the parish church, the minister, as soon as the doctor would permit, visited him. The man expected the call and was prepared for it. It was at a time when the controversy that resulted in the formation of the Free church was raging throughout Scotland, and a scurrilous pamphlet had been published against Dr. Guthrie, which he had heard of, but not seen.

The malignant man, who had secured a copy of the pamphlet, thought to mortify his minister by getting him to take it home and read it. No sooner had the clergyman finished praying with him and risen to his feet to go than the man said:

"Oh, Mr. Guthrie, here is a pamphlet about you!"

Guthrie, seeing malice gleaming in the man's eyes, and suspecting the truth, asked, "Is it for or against me?"

"Oh," he replied, "it is against you."

"Ah, well, you may keep it," answered the minister, with a laugh. "Had it been for me I would have read it. I never read anything that is against me!"

"Never did a man look more chaffed than he," said Dr. Guthrie, relating the incident. He added, "My answer is one which, if given in similar circumstances, would put an end to much mischief."—Youth's Companion.

Victors Supply Hard Boiled Eggs.

There is a strange custom attendant upon local elections which has existed in Brown township, Delaware county, O., for the last 30 years. It is that of eating 40 dozen hard boiled eggs on election night at the expense of the successful candidates.

Neither the bill of fare nor the number of eggs is ever varied. Each year a committee is selected to secure the eggs and prepare the feast. When the count is finished, the eggs are passed around and the banquet begins. The persons who are elected foot the bill. Party feeling never interferes with this part of the election proceedings, and it is an unwritten law that the feast is to be furnished. But one man ever dared to brave popular sentiment and refuse to pay his share of the expense. He had been elected by a good plurality, but was turned down at the next election for no other reason than his want of respect for the custom. The election for the township is held at the little village of Eden, where the greater part of the township is gathered on the night of the feast. No one knows how the ceremony originated.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Jay Gould's Orchids.

"Shrewd as Jay Gould was in every branch of finance," a flower merchant said to me the other day, "he had no idea whatever of the value of orchids—his great hobby. The old orchid collection up at Irvington has run down now, but during Gould's lifetime it was one of the finest in the world. The amount of money that had been spent on it, however, was enormous. Careful, conservative buying by an orchid expert would have gathered it together at almost a fraction of the sum actually paid out. Many exquisite and rare varieties were numbered in it, it is true, but an excessive price was paid for the most of them."

"The old financier's ways in this were well known, and people with fine orchids to sell seldom failed to get the sum they asked. Actually, he used to pay as much as \$50 at times for orchids that were hardly worth a quarter of that. In London he had agents constantly on the lookout for rare plants of this species, and he paid them prices that they could have obtained nowhere else."—New York Herald.

Documentary Evidence.

"If I ever have a daughter she shall be taught to speak every known language, but not to write one," declares John Drew in "The Squire of Dames."

The average parent does not half appreciate the necessity of pointing out to his daughter the dangers that may arise from the too free use of her pen. Men are taught in their business life to be careful what they put on paper, and this same caution ought to be part of every girl's education. One prudent New York society woman, who has enjoyed life to the full, is very fond of saying, "My motto has always been, 'Avoid documentary evidence.'"—New York Journal.

Obliging a Lawyer.

A celebrated criminal lawyer, having just defended a noted assassin so brilliantly that the wretch was acquitted in the face of overwhelming evidence, steps up to the judge. "A word in your ear, your lordship."

Judge—Well, what is it?

"I would ask that the prisoner be detained in jail until tomorrow morning. I have to cross a lonely field on my way home, and the rascal happens to know that I have money about me."

Obliging Judge—Oh, certainly.—Strand Magazine.

Vegetable Paper.

The ancient Mexicans made a good article of paper from the pith of the maguey plant. By pressure the fibers were condensed into a tolerably strong fabric, which received ink and color very well. Many specimens of the Mexican paper are to be found in the world's museums, and in the National library in the City of Mexico there are great numbers of manuscripts and documents composed of this paper.

Proof Positive.

The First Girl—So you think they are engaged?

The Second Girl—I am sure of it. Why, she has stopped speaking of him as Tom West and always refers to him as "mister."—Embossage.

He Knew His Rights.

A little bowlegged Jap about 4 feet high made the conductor on a Market street car feel very uncomfortable yesterday. The Jap got on the car at Powell street, and in payment of his fare gave the conductor a transfer. He glanced at it and observed that it had been punched an hour before.

"Fare, please!" he growled as he held out the transfer.

"I have gave you one transfer," said the Jap very calmly and deliberately as he stared ahead like a wooden Indian.

"That was punched an hour ago."

"I cannot help if the conductor punch a wrong hole," declared the Jap.

"But it is not good. I want your fare."

"If it is not good, why he gave it me?"

"Will you pay your fare?"

"No."

"Then you will have to get off."

"I neither pay any more nor get off," declared the Jap deliberately, and his face never moved a muscle.

"Then I will have to throw you off."

And the conductor stopped the car.

"You are afraid to put me off, if you even could. The law says you must take transfers, and your employer says you must take it, too, if you cannot make a man pay again. You cannot make me pay again."

The conductor gave the bellcord a jerk, and the little Jap continued to stare out the window opposite.—San Francisco Post.

Was Grateful to the Preacher.

"The man who said, 'Tis the unexpected that always happens,' was a preacher, I'll guarantee," said a clerical member of the Lunch club. "At my time of life I ought not to be stunned by anything, but after service a good woman of my flock did manage to take my breath away. I was preaching about the Father's tender wisdom in caring for us all," he said. "I illustrated by saying that the Father knows which of us grows best in sunlight and which of us must have shade. 'You know you plant roses in the sunshine,' I said, 'and heliotrope and geraniums, but if you want your fuchsias to grow you must keep them in a shady nook.' After the sermon, which I hoped would be a comforting one, a woman came up to me, her face glowing with a pleasure that was evidently deep and true. 'Oh, Dr. —, I am so grateful for that sermon,' she said, clasping my hand and shaking it warmly. My heart glowed for a moment, while I wondered what tender place in her heart and life I had touched. Only for a moment, though. 'Yes,' she went on fervently, 'I never knew before what was the matter with my fuchsias.'"—Chicago Interior.

Persian Peasants.

There is probably no peasantry in the world so ground down as the Persian. The agricultural laborer there, as in China, never tries to ameliorate his condition, for the simple reason that if he earns more, more is taken away from him by the rulers of the land. The general condition of the laboring classes, however, does not seem to be so bad as might be supposed. In a country so vast (550,000 square miles) and so thinly populated (5,500,000 in all), a small and sufficient supply of food is easily raised, especially with such prolific soil at the command of the poorest. At Shiraz there are two harvests in the year. The self, sown in summer and reaped in autumn, consists of rice, cotton, Indian corn and garden produce, and the tchatoi is sown in October and November, and reaped from May till July. This is exclusively wheat and barley. Here also grow grapes, oranges and pomegranates, for which latter Shiraz is famed.—Outing.

Blood Showers in Olden Times.

In the "Annals of Remarkable Happenings in Rome" mention is made of 14 different showers of blood, or blood and other substances mixed, which occurred between the years 819 A. D. and 1170.

In 1223 we find record of a shower of blood and dust which covered the larger part of Italy. In 1326 a "snow" fell in Syria "which presently turned into large brooks and pools of blood." A monk who wrote in the year 1251, and whose manuscript is now preserved in the British museum, tells of a three days' shower of blood "all over southern Europe." Burgundy had a blood shower in 1361, and Bedfordshire, England, witnessed a similar phenomenon in the year 1450. In 1686 hailstones fell in Wurttemberg which contained cavities filled with blood or blood red liquid. The last "blood shower" on record occurred in Siam in the year 1802.—St. Louis Republic.

The Butcher.

Customer—That meat that I bought here last, Mr. Cleaver, was frightfully tough.

Butcher—Do you know, marm, that one reason why there are so many poor teeth nowadays is because they do not have enough exercise?

Customer—But that steak couldn't be cut with a knife.

Butcher—Yes, there is some mighty poor cutlery in the market now. Did you say five pounds, marm?—Boston Transcript.

The Soured Bachelor.

"I wonder," said the vealy boarder, "if there is any truth in the theory that the advancement of woman to an equal intellectual plane with man will destroy her beauty."

"Of course there is," said the soured bachelor, "and there are more pretty women than ever nowadays."—Indianapolis Journal.

Honor in Chicago.

If the name of the man who first thought of sending floral tributes to Chicago aldermen could be discovered, he would take first place on the roll of fame as the great American humorist.—Chicago Record.

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