RIDING ALLIGATORS.

A NATIVE WHO THINKS NOTHING OF MOUNTING A SAURIAN.

According to This Man in Florida, All You Have to Do Is to Vault Lightly to the Animal's Back, Press Your Thumbs Over His Eyes and Say "G'lang."

If the ancient writers and painters who depicted men on horseback as centaurs were now living what a field they would find in Florida for originating new forms of life, provided they followed the idea developed in the production of the creature that was part man and part horse! Here, for instance, they could see men riding huge saurians across a lake without either reins or saddle, some coming from the depths of the ocean mounted on gigantic turtles weighing as much as Clydesdale horses, and others straddling a jewfish, shark or porpoise, or being towed behind an enormous sea devil in a cockle shell of a boat or in a large schooner.

Tampa boasts of a colored citizen who has no more fear of an alligator than he has of the harmless lizard, and will attempt to ride one any day for a small sum of money. His method of riding the reptile is to enter a lake or pond where the species congregates, select a large one, jump on its back quickly and, pressing his thumbs on its eyes, urge it shoreward.

An employee of the South Florida railroad, whose name I have received permission to use, informed me that he had often mounted old bulls in the lakes of Hernando county and ridden them ashore without any trouble by simply pressing his thumbs on their eyes and urging them forward with his heels or shouts. He found it far easier work to mount than dismount, for as soon as his saurian steed touched the shore it tried to seize his leg by bringing its tail and head suddenly together and rolling over and over like a barrel going down hill. This is the ordinary method employed by alligators for capturing their prey or enemies, and as its efficacy depends on the prompt conjunction of jaws and tail, the stroke may be readily avoided by a little "figuring," to use Mr. Stafford's expression.

According to Mr. Stafford, all he had to do when in want of an aquatic mustang was to enter a half dried pond, pick out the largest and laziest saurian he saw there, mount it promptly and point its head landward. The mounted animal, according to his statement, makes no fuss about moving wherever it is directed while in the water, but the moment it touches land it uses every effort to throw and devour its jockey.

It is possible to ride an alligator some distance overland by tying its muzzle, as it does not attempt to do any injury until it can throw its open mouth and long tail together by a sudden sweep to one side. Mr. Stafford, who is, I believe, a native of Florida, a veteran hunter and an expert alligator jockey, relates an anecdote which shows that saurian riding is as dangerous as Irish steeplechasing when the mount is sulky or wounded. He had ridden an alligator ashore during one of his hunting trips, and as it was rather large and its skin, as a consequence, usually valuable, he decided to kill and flay it near the pond.

After emptying the contents of his rifle into its head and assuring himself of its being dead, he drew his knife to flay it; but he had hardly touched the head ere the alligator returned to life, and seizing him by the coat sleeve commenced rolling over and over. The second or third roll took the sleeve off his coat and dislocated his arm, and on being set free in this unexpected manner it did not take him long to scramble out of reach of the furious reptile. A physician who was hunting with him set his arm in a few moments, and when that was done the jockey poured lead into his late mount until he was sure that its ferocious spirit had fled.

A man, who has shot alligators for their hides told me that the animals were harmless in winter and inclined to avoid a contest with men at all times unless they were wounded or defending their young. They are worse in the pairing season than at any other, the bulls being then unusually petulant, more than ordinarily stupid and stubborn and inclined to resent any intrusion on their grounds. Yet by boldly facing them they can be forced to run and may even be mounted and ridden ashore, provided there are no females in the vicinity.

He once tried to ride an old bull toward a landmark that loomed above all other objects on the flat shore of a lake on a dark night, and wondered why his steed tried so hard to turn away from it whenever the thumbs were lifted off the eyes, but he was able to account for it readily a few moments later, when an enraged female that was guarding the landmark, which was her nest, rushed open mouthed and grunting like an insane grizzly, and sent her conqueror precipitately to the rear and its jockey deep into the mud.

Fortunately for him the assailant was more enraged at the bull than at the jockey and followed it several hundred yards, charging at intervals and thrashing it vigorously with her tail whenever she got an opportunity. The male was driven almost across the lake before she decided to return and attack the man, but he was running on shore for dear life long before she had given up the pursuit of the steed.

The rider said he had seen many desperate charges during the civil war, but that he never was in one that so completely benumbed his faculties as the charge of that "big mouthed squaw 'gator." He thought he could ride a male saurian at any time of the year, but that no man living could retain his seat for any length of time on the back of a female that was defending her nest or was accompanied by her young.—Cor. St. Louis Republic.

THE GOSPEL CARRIAGE.

To Start Out from New Haven with Evangelists and Bibles and an Organ.

The evangelistic omnibus, or "Gospel Carriage," as it is to be called, will start out from New Haven within a few days in charge of the Rev. J. C. Collins, of that city, and another evangelist whom he will select. The carriage is to be sent out under the direction of the Society of Christian Workers of the United States and Canada. This society was incorporated about five years ago under the laws of the state of Connecticut with a capital of $6,000. Single shares are valued at twenty-five dollars. Mr. Lewis B. Tibbals, of this city, who is the financial backer of the society, told a reporter something about its work.

"It is the aim of the society," said Mr. Tibbals, "to aid in evangelistic work by furnishing carriages of this sort as well as railroad cars, wagons, tents and everything needed by the varying demands upon the evangelist. Take the small towns a little distance from the railroads and they are apt to be destitute of religious influence. The Gospel carriage will bring the evangelist to them. He will be provided with Bibles and Christian literature, which he will dispose of among the people. The car will also contain a small organ, to be used in the services.

"The Gospel carriage is the most complete vehicle for the purpose that could have been devised. It is about the size of an omnibus, but a trifle wider. It will carry four persons besides the driver and it is so built that it can be closed up tight in case of a storm. It is divided into two sections. In front is a miniature kitchen provided with cooking utensils, and in the rear are the seats with arrangements for four berths which can be let down at night. The driver's bunk is built underneath the wagon.

"In the rear of the vehicle is a folded platform, which can be let down when its use is required. Hot and cold water is provided. Mr. Collins will start out from New Haven, but I think he has not yet determined upon his route. It will be the aim to carry the Gospel into places otherwise inaccessible. If the plan is found feasible other carriages will be placed upon the road in due season."

The president of the society which undertakes this work is the Rev. Mr. Torrey, principal of Dwight L. Moody's Chicago school for the education of evangelists. It holds its annual convention next November in Tremont temple, Boston.

Mr. Tibbals is a man of middle age who has long been connected with religious work. He is the proprietor of a toy store here, but is a citizen of Florida, where he is engaged in pineapple raising. He has a plantation of 100 acres on the Indian river.—New York Sun.

At the Dinner Hour.

The national congress comprises within its bounds and metes a number of great American citizens who are not what might be called "de rigger" in society or quite comme il faut as to all the proprieties, and their families are as yet somewhat similar to them. One of these new statesmen arrived with his wife and four children one afternoon two or three days before congress opened, and took up his quarters in a swell hotel. The youngsters, and in fact all of the family, had concluded that coming to Washington was a fine thing and they enjoyed the conclusion thoroughly.

At half past 6 they went into the dining room to dinner, but "supper" as they seemed to think, and the boy among the children had both his eyes wide open. When he had been seated he spotted a gentleman across the table receiving his dessert. Then he reached for his mother with a grab.

"Gee whiz, maw," he whispered, so everybody near could hear him, "ain't it great in Washington? They've got puddin and pie for supper."—Detroit Free Press.

A Queer Marriage Custom.

In the Loo Choo islands there are some strange social fashions. A Japanese gentleman who has recently returned to the capital from a tour in these islands states that what mostly attracted his attention was some curious marriage customs. One consists in the bridegroom going round to all his friends' houses and permitting them to dress him up in any ridiculous style that they fancy. Sometimes the happy man is arrayed in a gayly painted kimono, the sleeves of which are tied up with a string laden with bells, toys and trumpets. A mask is then put on and a red hat, the "rig out" being completed by an empty kerosene tin which rattles noisily along as he walks, accompanied generally by a crowd of children.—London News.

A Rhode Island man made a net profit of $2,700 in six months by raising skunks for market. He sells the felts of the odorous animals at good figures, and manufactures skunk oil, which he disposes of to the druggists for a rheumatic cure.

Is Iron Rust a Cause of Fire?

When oxide of iron is placed in contact with timber excluded from the atmosphere, and aided by a slightly increased temperature, the oxide will part with its oxygen, and is converted into very finely divided particles of metallic iron having such an affinity for oxygen that, when afterward exposed to the action of the atmosphere from any cause, oxgen is so rapidly absorbed that these particles become suddenly red hot, and if in sufficient quantity will produce a temperature far beyond the ignition point of dry timber.

Wherever iron pipes are employed for the circulation of any heated medium, whether hot water, hot air or steam, and the pipes are allowed to become rusty, in close contact with timber, it is only necessary to suppose that under these circumstances the particles of metallic iron become exposed to the action of the atmosphere—and this may occur from the mere expansion or contraction of the pipes—in order to account for many of the fires which periodically take place at the commencement of the winter.—Iron.

One Kind of a President.

A cooking lecturer, who has brushed against the world long enough not to be surprised at strange things in business, received a letter the other day which made her confess to astonishment. She had planned to bring over her Philadelphia class of cooking teachers to visit the food show. Intending to remain in the city two days with the class, she wrote to various makers of food staples, expressing a wish that she might visit their factories with her class.

From one of them came this answer: "If you will call at our office we will be glad to furnish, as an escort to your party for a visit to our factory, our president, who has never yet visited it." The factory had been running three years, and it was started and equipped with more than $500,000 of the president's personal fortune.—New York Times.

Benevolent.

There was, not long since, a venerable and benevolent judge in Paris who, at the moment of passing sentence on a prisoner, consulted his associates on each side of him as to the proper penalty to be inflicted. "What ought we to give this rascal, brother?" he said, bending over to the one upon his right. "I should say three years." "What is your opinion, brother?" to the other, on his left. "I should give him about four years." The Judge (with benevolence)—"Prisoner, not desiring to give you a long and severe term of imprisonment, as I should have done if left to myself, I have consulted my learned brothers, and I shall take their advice. Seven years!"—Life.

Henry George's Query.

Henry George is a singularly absent-minded and preoccupied man, so much so, indeed, that he frequently passes acquaintances by without seeing them, though he may seem to be looking them straight in the face. At the same time he is often minutely observant, and when anything unusual attracts his attention he is prompt with a query. He reduced a harmless young Englishman to a state of painful embarrassment amid the crowd of a London drawing-room by looking hard at his monocle and suddenly saying, "Do you wear that because one eye is different from the other?"—San Francisco Argonaut.

Two Rules for Martial Happiness.

Lily Devereux Blake suggests as one rule for martial happiness that the wife should not always ask the husband where he is going when he goes away, and where he has been when he comes back. And as another the equal division of money, for she claims that one-half of every dollar the husband has belongs in the law to the wife.

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