

A Mother's Testimony



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FOR THE CHILDREN

GUINEAGATOR AND ALLIPIG.

By FLORENCE A. EVANS.

GUINEAGATOR and Allipig were a pair of young alligators. They had been given their rather unusual names by their owner because the animals had been bestowed upon her while she was mourning the untimely demise of a pair of guineapigs.

It was soon found, however, that interesting as the new pets were, it was none too easy to make them comfortable during our cold, Northern winter; so they were passed on to us, as we had a conservatory in which an even heat was maintained at all times, and where, it was argued, the palms and other tropical plants would make it seem homelike to them.

So thoroughly chilled had the alligators been before coming to us that it took them months to regain their accustomed activity. They were about fifteen inches long, and above they were black with bright yellow markings, while their under parts were yellowish white. Their eyes were yellowish green with vertical pupils like those of a cat. When under water they seemed to prefer to keep their eyes closed, which, as they possessed two sets of eyelids, the inner closing from the side, and the outer one from bottom to top, was quite easy for them to do.

During this period of inactivity the alligators refused all food, even choice morsels of fresh fish, and, when we rubbed these latter on their respective noses, would retire into their pan of water and scratch the nose vigorously. Fearing that so long a fast might prove harmful, we pried their mouths open and fed them by force.

As spring came nearer they grew much more lively, and when we placed them out on the floor they would run with almost incredible speed. Once while enjoying a promenade, Allipig almost met with disaster, for our new puppy who had wandered into the room, picked him up and began to chew him, when he was himself seized by the nose. And then ensued a few minutes of pandemonium, for the puppy yelped and danced about, and the alligator hissed and swished his tail, and it was a matter of some difficulty to separate them. The puppy nursed a sore nose for several days, and Allipig sulked over his outraged feelings.

raged feelings. When the warm, bright May weather came, the two alligators were placed in our fountain, a change of residence which seemed to give them the liveliest satisfaction, and they expressed their pleasure as well as they were able by their croaks of "Goonk, goonk." They would bask for hours on some rocks which projected above the water, or swim lazily about, croaking to announce that they were ready for more food when any one approached. The only thing that disturbed them was when any of the dogs of the neighbourhood came for a drink, when they would retire under the hollow iron-work in the centre of the fountain, hissing until the intruder departed. Once Guineagator sallied forth when our puppy was quenching his thirst and gave him such a nip that he retired with howls of dismay and refused to approach the place for some time thereafter.

Once we heard a tremendous fluttering and chirping near the fountain; we discovered that a robin, while attempting to drink from the lower basin, had fallen in, and been set upon by the two alligators who were just starting to devour him alive. We rescued the bird and found that he was not yet seriously hurt, though most of the feathers on the under part of his body were gone and he was bleeding from several bites.

When pieces of meat were left up-

When pieces of meat were left upon the rocks they would often turn themselves broadside to them, and, with a skilful blow of the tail, knock the food into the water. With whatever was given them to eat they would at once hasten into the water, evidently with the intention of drowning it, an instinct derived from their ancestors who fed on living animals. Once a pickle-jar filled with living tadpoles was emptied into the fountain. These tadpoles at once began to swim round and round the edge of the basin, all going in the same direction, and the alligators soon took advantage of this fact to make a hearty meal. Opening their mouths with their curious, white, immovable tongues, to the utmost extent, they took up positions on the inside of this living circle, now and then closing the gaping jaws to gulp down whatever number of tadpoles happened to be swimming through at that particular moment.

lar moment.

By this time the alligators had grown so large and strong that we stood in some awe of their sharp teeth, and their food was presented to them on the end of a long steel knitting-needle. Allipig one day seized this, as well as the piece of meat which it held, and we had some difficulty in recovering it. This greediness was the cause of our two pets being banished, for on a later occasion, one of them fastened his sharp teeth in the finger of a member of the family who was about to feed them, and our mother declared that such dangerous pets must be given away. So we offered them to the New York Aquarium, where they were glady accepted.



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