

Hazel. She is two years older than I am. With love from Cousin Edna to all the other cousins, I remain, yours truly, Cousin EDNA.

[Dear Cousin Edna.—I am glad your badge arrived in good order, and that you like it; blue is one of my favourite colours, but I don't think I have one particular favourite. What kept you away from school for those three days? did you have a cold? I must try and remember the date of your birthday, so as to be able to wish you many happy returns of the day, but there are so many cousins now that I am afraid I will be mixing their birthdays up. Haven't you got a name for your little white kitten yet? If you come to town to live you will miss Hazel very much, won't you? But I expect you will soon make plenty more friends in town.—Cousin Kate. P.S.—Will you remember to write only on one side of the paper next time. Edna.—Cousin Kate.]

Treed By Alligators.

GIRL'S ADVENTURE IN A SWAMP.

To read of being "treed" by either a boar or an angry bull is common. To read of being treed by alligators is not common. Then, too, the victim in the first instance is generally a man, while in the instance to be related the victim was a woman, and the writer of this account. It happened a number of years ago, when alligators were more plentiful in Florida than they are to-day.

One lovely afternoon I started out about two o'clock, unaccompanied, as was generally my choice, except by a small dog. My destination was the swamp-land which lay in a certain section of the hummock; my object the photographing of eypress trees just as they grew out of the black mud in a region not unlike that of "The Great Dismal Swamp." The way I pursued was lonely enough, but I was not afraid. The few natives and negroes that passed me as I walked leisurely along gave a pleasant greeting, for all knew me and my camera.

I plunged into the forest, and forced my way along a faintly marked trail, dodging several rattlesnakes which resented my intrusion, and at about four o'clock found myself on the border of as desolate a region as the most ardent swamp seeker could wish. It was a dreary stretch of shadowy, ghost-like trees, their branches woven into an almost jungle-like impenetrability by a tangle of parasitic vines, many of which were several inches in diameter, and which hung in fantastic contortions from the tops, often of the highest trees.

"Quite the place for a whole army of alligators," I said, half-aloud, as I picked my way along a narrow strip of land that reached out into the water. "However, it is no time for thinking about that, for the sun is getting low, and I must make haste."

It so happened that out of this strip there grew several straggling trees. One of these had been broken off, probably by some storm, and its top lay bent down so that its branches interfered with the tripod of my camera outfit as I endeavoured to pass beyond. I grumbled a bit at the inconvenience, not dreaming how important a part this broken tree was to play in my day's experience.

The tree passed at last, only a few moments were needed to set up the camera, to focus, and to take the picture; yet even these moments I begrudged, especially the 20 seconds required for the exposure of the plate, for the gloom seemed to increase so rapidly that a most uncomfortable apprehension seized me.

I noticed, too, that Dandy, the dog, was oddly attracted, for he barked and whined with great uneasiness. My nervousness increased. This was indeed a hideously lonely spot to be in, especially for a woman, and night was coming. There was that long walk home, and only a faintly outlined train to follow. Truly, never before had I been so foolhardy.

Overpowered by a rush of emotions, I snatched together my camera, threw the long carrying-strap round my neck, snatched up the tripod, and turned sharply to retrace my footsteps. I nearly fell headlong. Poor Dandy, in his terror, had hidden beneath my skirt, and his little shivering body was the cause of my stumble. I tried vainly to make him get up; but he only shrieked with fear, and crouched at my feet.

Just then, not five feet distant from where I stood, a great brutish head protruded from thatinky water—a sight

never to be forgotten! That black and moss-grown skull, those evil eyes, with their blood-chilling stare—so near that I could have touched the creature!

Appalled, I drew back shuddering, and crying out to Dandy, who again nearly overthrew me as he leapt, I clambered over the branches of the fallen tree, leaving my tripod behind in my flight, with the intention of running back to the mainland.

I was too late. Already attracted by the cries of the dog—alligators are very fond of dog flesh—three of these great brutes had crawled out from their hiding places in the swamp, and now lay stretched upon the bit of land over which we must pass in order to reach the shore. Yes, even as I paused bewildered, and with my heart in my throat, I saw that four more of these hideous creatures were swimming rapidly toward the spot. Ah, Dandy, Dandy! You tried so hard in your doggyish way to warn me that danger was near, but your cries only made matters worse!

Alligators in front, alligators behind. Whither were we to fly? I stumbled against the prostrate tree top—happy thought! In less time than it takes to write the words, both Dandy and I had scrambled up the straggling branches like two nimble cats. Here was safety, such as it was, for we were some eight feet above the surface of the swamp. Trapped and treed, safe, indeed, yet destined it seemed, to pass the long, cold, fast-coming night in this unpleasant situation.

The long vigil began. Dusk deepened into darkness, and darkness turned into blackness, for no starlight could penetrate that overhead growth.

Naturally of a nervous temperament, I felt myself grow old in years, as bound to my place of refuge, the moments crept by like hours. If I could hold out till daylight the alligators would probably retire, and I might then be able to make a wild rush for the shore.

How many of those long, weary hours passed I had no way of judging, but at last, worn out with fatigue, I felt a deadly chill creeping over me. Suddenly the little dog moved in my arms, and licked my hand softly. He seemed uneasy, and stretched up his head, as if begging to look beyond me. I humour'd his wish. For a moment he stood motionless, with his paws upon my shoulder. Then, to my amazement, he whined—not a whine of distress, but one of pleasure. Yes, he was even then wagging slowly his stump of a tail, while his whole body quivered with excitement.

I twisted about in the tree seat, and saw—a light! As I live, a light, dim though it was, glimmered through the mist. Fear bore heavily upon my heart. Perhaps it was only an uncanny phosphorescence. Yet it moved almost too steadily. The real ignis fatuus dances from place to place.

Fascinated, I watched the glow, which grew brighter. I tried to cry out. To my dismay I found myself speechless! The chill and nervous shock had in a way stiffened my throat and tongue. I strained and fought to overcome the temporary paralysis which was like a dreadful nightmare, for about I must. That light meant rescue if I could only make myself heard.

Some "alligator men" were out hunting, and I knew that the light was from their jack-lantern, which was fastened at the bow of the boat. The "jack" serves to attract the creatures, or at least to fascinate them so that they remain motionless until the hunters come within shooting distance.

The boat came near, then turned to go off in another direction. Now or not at all must I cry out, or it would pass out of sight and hearing.

Beating at my throat with my hands, I finally threw off that dreadful cramp, and a shriek for help that could have been heard a mile—it seemed to me—came mercifully to my lips; and as it echoed through the swamp, the boat stopped. I heard a negro's frightened voice—

"Who da? Who da?"
Again I could not speak, but Dandy's yapping bark rang sharply.

"Who da? Speak, or I shoot! Who da?"

Then a white man's voice cried—
"Who is there? Where are you? Why don't you answer?"

Once more my tongue loosened. The voice was that of Jim Brownson, a professional hunter, and a man well known by everybody in the neighbourhood. "This way! This way! Oh, make haste!" Then I fainted.

I did not see the boat as it came swiftly towards me; nor did I see the gleam from the lantern as it illuminated my feeble stronghold; nor did I hear the fusillade of shots which drove away the brutes; nor did I know that I was taken carefully from among the branches and laid upon a hastily improvised bed, made of coats, in the bottom of the boat of my rescuers. Yet all this happened, and Dandy crept to my side and licked my

unconscious hands, as they told me all towards, while we were borne rapidly away from that gruesome spot.

He was the cotter's only child. They called him Little Jim. And Death with scythe and hour-glass had called round to wait on him; The mother wept, the father sobbed, For Death looked very sure, But Little Jim's still in the swim Through Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

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