



### Debunking Man-Eaters

**M**AN-EATING sharks there may be; man-eating alligators there are not. "I have never known of but one authentic instance of an alligator wilfully attacking a human being unprovoked," declared E. A. McIlhenny, Louisianian who has lived among the big reptiles all his life and now has written a book about them. (*SNL*, June 1, p. 358.)

Mr. McIlhenny makes one qualification: females guarding the hidden nests where their eggs are laid.

"Female alligators will attack man to protect their nests and young, but their movements on land are so slow that there is no trouble in avoiding them, and in the water they always give warning if they are about to attack, by hissing and guttural grunts.

"It is a wonder more men are not injured by these powerful reptiles, for those who make a business of hunting them for their skins are most careless in handling them; but it is a rare thing for any one to be hurt by an alligator."

But what of the many reports of alligator attacks ending in severe injury to human beings? Fish stories, literally, says Mr. McIlhenny. There is a big, vicious, long-jawed, sharp-toothed fish in the Southern lakes and bayous, known as the alligator gar. It has all the strength and truculence of the muskellunge of the North or the barracuda of the warmer salt waters. Several cases of injury and drowning alleged against alligators have been investigated by Mr. McIlhenny, and an alligator gar turned up as the culprit in each one.

Tall tales of terror about 'gators would appear to be of quite recent origin, at least in the author's neighborhood, for he says, "In my boyhood days, before these reptiles had been disturbed by hide-hunters, I came in contact with them con-

stantly, and seeing them was such an everyday occurrence that no unusual notice was taken of them by the children playing and swimming in the streams. They were looked upon as part of our natural surroundings, and we paid no more attention to them than we did to the flocks of birds about the place."

When he and his childhood companions were in swimming, they entertain-

ed themselves by "calling" 'gators to surround them. "We would attract them by imitating the barks and cries of dogs and by making loud popping noises with our lips . . . We had no fear of them and would swim around the big fellows, dive under them and sometimes treat them with great disrespect by bringing handfuls of mud from the bottom and 'chunking' it in their eyes."

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### PSYCHOLOGY

## Five Minutes is Limit To Enjoyment of Painting

**T**HE enthusiast who claims that she "could stand for hours before that painting" is really enjoying herself and not the artistic creation, Prof. Frank J. Mather, director of the Museum of Historic Art at Princeton University, concludes after examining the "varying tensions and durations of esthetic experience from the several arts."

Enjoyment of a painting or of a statue ceases after five minutes of inspection, he declares. Theatrical performances and the opera, aided by intermissions, can hold the attention for two and a half hours; architecture for half an hour; music for a half hour at a stretch, or for three hours with intermissions; and literature for an indeterminate period.

The arts most keenly enjoyed for the longest periods of time are those closest to what he terms "the rhythms of ordinary living," Prof. Mather theorizes.

"Literary arts deal in rhythms wholly familiar to us," he explained. "These rhythms arise in our most intimate feeling and thinking, they are shaped by our whole physiology, are measured by the ingoing and outgoing of our breath, by the beat of our pulse, by the resistance or conductivity of our nerves.

"Poetry or impassioned prose," Prof. Mather declares, "moves us more readily, more deeply, and for a longer space of unflagging enjoyment than any of the other arts."

Defending his assertion that the limit of enjoyment of painting or sculpture is five minutes, he denies the validity of statements made by persons who claim to be entranced by them for longer periods. They have doubtless enjoyed something, presumably themselves, before a painting or statue in a pleasurable bemused condition, but enjoying

one's own confused reverie even while slackly looking at a work of art is something far different from enjoying the work of art itself.

"The very brevity of the enjoyment of painting and sculpture," Prof. Mather holds, "means that we can pack into an hour in any good art museum more variety and intensity of esthetic experience than we can gain from many hours spent with any other art."

Prof. Mather's observations, originally put forth in lectures delivered on the Louis Clark Vanuxen Foundation this winter, are now in book form entitled "Concerning Beauty," published by the Princeton University Press.

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### PHYSIOLOGY

## Chemistry Of Digestion Goes On Without Stomach

**F**OOD when eaten frequently in small amounts can be digested even when the stomach has been removed, as is sometimes necessary in cancer of the stomach, it appears from studies reported by Dr. Edward S. Emery, Jr., of Boston.

Dr. Emery was investigating the problem of decreased digestion which follows removal of the stomach. The latter is of course responsible for only part of the digestive process. Dr. Emery's studies showed that decreased digestion after its removal is not due to disturbance of the chemistry of digestion, because of lack of stomach juices. Instead it is due to disturbance of the mechanics of the digestive tract, he said. This can apparently be overcome by feeding small amounts at frequent intervals. His studies were made on dogs.

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