

# CHARMED BY A RATTLESNAKE

Remarkable Experience of a Young Texas Girl

It is certain that the killing of a monster rattlesnake a few days ago in Burleson county, Tex., wrought a pleasing change in the affairs of an ardent lover who was eagerly seeking to make a favorable impression upon the father of a pretty girl whose heart he had already won.

It is a thrilling story and one that presents a feature that will doubtless interest scientists. Those who witnessed the whole affair are now pretty well convinced that reptiles possess some mysterious power that enables them under certain conditions to paralyze the will power of human beings as easily as they charm birds and small animals. In this instance the monster



DICK TARNE RAISED HIS RIFLE

seems to have had complete control of its victim, and there is no telling what would have happened if help had not arrived at an opportune moment. The rattler is the largest of its species ever killed in Texas. A portion of its tail and probably several rattles were destroyed in the battle that ended its life. Twenty-six rattles were found. The headless body was longer than a man who stands full six feet. It was shot by Richard Tarne under circumstances well calculated to have unnerved the arm of a veteran woodsman.

When first discovered, the monster reptile was coiled upon Miss Nellie Hightower's lap. The young girl sat as if she was paralyzed or charmed by the swaying head of the horrible rattler, that was darting its forked tongue within a few inches of her face.

Colonel Hightower was the first to discover his daughter's peril. He happened to be walking a little in advance of a party of young people who were strolling along the shores of a little stream not far from a camp occupied by several families who were enjoying an outing. When the old gentleman saw the horrible reptile apparently in the act of burying its fangs in the face of his only daughter, he sank to his knees in helpless terror.

The young girl was half reclining on a ledge of rock at the water's edge about ten steps from her father. Her arms were hanging limp by her side, and she appeared to be unconscious, though her wide open eyes were riveted upon the head of the snake. One of the girls called her name softly, but she did not turn her head. They were afraid to make any noise, for it looked as if the infuriated monster was just in the act of driving its poisonous fangs into its victim's flesh.

Men and women sank upon the ground in hopeless fright. The agonized father of the poor girl was about to rush forward with no weapon but his cane when Dick Tarne caught his arm.

"If you disturb the thing, it will bite your daughter before you can strike it," he said.

"Then what is to be done?" whispered the trembling father. "Must I sit here and see my daughter bitten to death by that hideous monster?"

Dick thought that he could shoot the snake's head off. Would the old gentleman be willing for him to risk a bullet so close to his daughter's face? He was more than willing. "Be quick," he said, "and aim well. Save my child's life. Dick. For heaven's sake shoot quick, boy, if you love her."

Fortunately Dick Tarne is an accomplished marksman and one of the champion rifle shots of the state. Before the father had ceased speaking the young man had thrown his rifle to his feet and knocked the trigger. The sound of the gun was followed by a scream which caused the agonized father to turn and see the tremendous snake had vanished into the ground.

Through the bushes they could see the girl throwing her arms about with a cry of joy. The father

had gone straight to the mark, and the reptile's head was mangled. Colonel Hightower was first to reach his daughter's side, and, while supporting her trembling body with one arm, he rained blows with his cane upon the squirming monster that had attacked his daughter and caused him so much agony.

Several moments passed before Miss Nellie regained her self possession.

"I have certainly been charmed or hypnotized by a snake," says Miss Hightower, "and, although I was surely in a semiconscious state of mind during at least a portion of the horrible ordeal, I could not move hand or foot or command my voice. I could plainly see the hideous monster and feel the rays from its glittering black eyes burning into my brain, and I knew it was drawing nearer and nearer my face every movement, but I sat as one under the spell of some horrible nightmare. I could hear my heart beat and feel the hot blood running through my veins, and often I tried with all my power to scream, but my voice died in my throat."

According to this young girl's story, she must have endured one of the most horrible tortures that any mortal ever survived. She says that she had lingered behind a small party of boys and girls with whom she had strayed from camp and that, finding a shady nook near a pretty pool, she sat down on a ledge of rock for the purpose of trying to catch a trout. She remembers that she noticed two little eyes peeping from under a great boulder only a short distance away. Supposing that they belonged to some harmless little animal, she gave the matter only a passing thought. She afterward recalled that she was strangely fascinated by the steady gaze of the glittering little orbs.

The fatal moment came when she looked once too often and lingered a moment too long. She was powerless to break the charm of those glittering black eyes. Slowly the monster reptile began to crawl toward its victim, gliding over the rocks as noiselessly as if it were moving across velvet.

"I was both asleep and awake," says Miss Nellie. "I was inclined to repose and yet shuddering with horror. All I could do was to sit and die by inches and pray for my friends to come to my rescue. I heard them coming, but I could neither move nor shout. A mountain of horror was upon me, and the tongue and breath of Satan were in my face. The crack of that rifle was the sweetest music that ever fell upon my ears."

## Desperate Fight For Life In a Seine

Tangled in a big fishing seine after the capsizing of their boat one mile from shore, Charles Beck and his son, George Beck, two Evanston men, struggled for their lives for two hours in Lake Michigan a few days ago. Not until the imperiled men had cut the net, which was 300 feet long, in two were they able to extricate themselves.

Then, thoroughly exhausted with their efforts to keep afloat while they were escaping from the death trap, they battled again with the waves and, by aiding one another, swam to the beach in safety.

The Becks had gone out early in the morning to take in the seine, which they had set off Grassy Point lighthouse. They were engaged in hauling in the netful of fish when a squall arose. Their boat, a flat bottomed scow, swung into the trough of the sea and filled with water. While they were baling out the water with their hats the scow capsized, throwing both its occupants into the lake. Immediately the arms and legs of the men became entangled in the seine and rendered them powerless to swim.

Divesting themselves of their rubber coats and boots, the father and son, with a fishing knife, began cutting the cords from their hands and ankles. When once they had cut themselves loose and started to swim toward the shore, they again became entangled in the net. The son's strength began to give out after a half hour's struggle, and the desperate father of helping the boy to keep afloat and crossing both himself and his son from the impending danger.

The father's endurance had nearly given out when he succeeded in separating the last strands of the seine. Both fishermen were so exhausted when they reached shore that they had to be assisted to their lodges.

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