

Snakes:

I think I see a way of handling this - amusing and serious. I would begin with father and his giving up tobacco. Something like this:-

When my father was seventy five years old I found on returning for a visit that he did not bring out after dinner his ^{usual} cigar to which I had been accustomed to all my life and which I ^{had} associated ^{with} an ease of mind on his part, a period of humor and gaiety and story telling - characteristic of him. It had always been one of the hours of greatest delight with my father, but he did not bring out the cigar. And when I saw that he was not going to do it I said, "But where is your cigar, father?"

And he said with serious simplicity which was so lovely in him, "I am not smoking now, Ida, I was afraid the habit was getting a hold on ~~men~~ and I don't like to think that there is anything that I cannot give up."

I could have wept and yet, why not? With him the sense of mastering himself, ~~was~~ perhaps making his own character and fortune with the Lord's help always, was a controlling force, the strongest thing in him.

~~I am eighty now~~ That experience had much to do with that personal control of a life-long obsession, which I undertook when I was almost eighty, the effort to over-come an aversion to snakes. My friend Katherine Woods, that admirable reviewer of the New York Times sent me Pope's book "Snakes [?] Alive" and I almost ran out of the room when I looked at the cover. And then I began

to reflect that all yomy life yIu have had this aversion, and
it really had gone to a ridiculous extent. Cannot it be over-
come?

I talked once to Dr. Hornaday of the New York
Zoo and he said, "You come up here and I'll have you handling
snakes in a few days. It ~~can~~ be overcome."

I remember what my friend, Mrs. Peter Dunn, told
me about the way she had educated her children at the Zoo. Now
why was it not possible - how should I begin. In the first
place I made up my mind that I would not run out of the room, that
I would master my aversion to not only the cover but the pictures
inside, that I would learn something about snakes. And then
the morning I made that resolve that having mastered the book
and able to look at it without shudder or dreaming I would go to
the Zoo and see if there was somebody that could conquer the
aversion.

And this is my experience.