

EMILIO'S TRICK.

A STORY OF THE "LITTLE PORTERGEE."

BY SOPHIE SWETT.

When the little Portergee, Manuel Silva, came home from New York, Scanset people began to wonder, as they had done the winter before, what he was going to do with himself. Even now that there was a "building boom," Scanset was not a very lively place in the winter, and Manuel was what the townspeople called "up and comin'." Gustavus Nickerson, Manuel's "heart's friend," was the most eager to discover what the little Portergee was going to do, because, whatever it was, he meant to do it too.

Manuel and he had accomplished great things together in New York, or so Gustavus felt. They had brought the bear home in triumph—the bear that Gustavus had found in the woods and that was said to be the great Mezul, a famous performing bear, worth many thousand dollars. The circus company, on whose steamer the boys and the bear had been carried away, did not believe it was Mezul, for whose return it had offered a large reward—old Guiseppi, the animal-trainer, was a simpleton in Gustavus's opinion—so they did not claim the bear, and never could do so again; and Manuel had paid the rascal Michael Feredo, who claimed him, so now Gustavus was in joyful, undisputed possession of the bear.

Of course he meant to pay Manuel just as soon as possible, and he had clearly proved to his mother and his brother Ludovico—his sister Viola, who wanted to manage everybody, was married now, and Cyrus Dence, the schoolmaster, had all the trouble of her—that he must go into business rather than to go to school. He further declared that schooling did not "take" with him any more than vaccination, which he had suffered three times in vain. And in fact there were reasons to suppose that the education of books would always prove a failure with little Gustavus. Yet Manuel earnestly advised him to go to school. "To try to make your way in the world with no learning in your head, it is like sailors that go to sea with nothing to steer by," he said.

"I would be kind of a joke on you if Manny should go to school now, wouldn't it?" Ludovico said to Gustavus. "And if he should go away from Scanset, you don't expect he would take you with him, do you? I guess he'd look out that you didn't go tagging after him, as you did before."

Ludovico was lame, and hardly saw how he was to find "a breathing chance" in the world, and that made him cross sometimes. And brotherly frankness is not always the most agreeable thing in the world. Gustavus' heart burned within him at these dreadful words of his brother Ludovico.

He dropped his axe; he and Ludovico were chopping wood in their wood-shed, and it was about that time in the afternoon when a boy who has chopped all day feels that life is hard enough without any such candid remarks from his big brother. Gustavus dropped his axe and ran as fast as he could to the weather-beaten house on the Point, where Manuel lived with Cap'n 'Siah Doane, who had adopted him when the sea had flung him from a wreck into his dooryard.

Manuel was not at home. Caddy Doane said that she had sent him to the store, and after he had accepted one of Caddy's doughnuts and scowled at Anita, with the baby in her lap, because she was Emilio Feredo's sister, and Emilio had run away with the bear, Gustavus ran on to the store.

Now the post-office was in the store, and as Gustavus reached it, Manuel was coming out with a letter in his hand, and he read this letter he allowed the sugar to trickle out of the great paper bag under his arm.

And when he saw it, Gustavus knew that there was some very important news in that letter. He took the paper bag from Manuel, and carried it so that the sugar would not run out, and did not say a single word until Manuel had finished reading his letter, which was certainly the part of a faithful friend. Manuel

looked up from the letter with his pinked, tawny face all aglow.

"I had thought to go to school to Mr Dence," he said, with a slight touch of regret in his tone. "Although I am almost nineteen, and my legs grow long under the small desks, and Sissy Baker, with her hair in pigtail, she spell me down, yet I had meant to go, for it is better to be laughed at for what you do not know in the small school than in the great world! But now I go sailing-master again—sailing-master of a fine new yacht, as big by two times as the other! Mr Carmichael think of it when I see him in New York, but his plans are not ready—he is not sure. We go in the fine new yacht to Southern waters—perhaps to Havana, to Santiago, to Manila, even to the Azores! Though I am Yankee, as good as any on Cape Cod, yet my heart it draw me there!"

Little Gustavus pricked up his ears at the sound of those names, made familiar by the reports of the war with Spain.

Many a Cape Cod boy had seen those places. The little Portergee had found at that time that he was all Yankee, and yearned to go. Now it was Manuel's turn to rescue the sugar, for a great stream was running out upon the snowy road!

Manuel patched up the paper bag and tied it up, while Gustavus turned his head away to hide as wretched and despairing a face as he had ever turned to the wintry waters that were always luring him away from Cape Cod.

Ludovico was right! Gustavus had never read about the unhappiness of the man who hangs on prince's favours, but he felt, with a cruel pang, that Manuel was becoming far too great a man for him to hope to be his friend. He was going away on this cruise to places whose very names stirred a longing in his heart, and he had not a thought for any one but himself!

"To go to school and to help Assher Baker with his knitting machine, that is what I meant; and they will grieve at home to have me go. But it will be much money that I bring home; the anxious bump of Cap'n 'Siah I smote him out. Young Josiah he go some day to college. Little Israel shall, I hope, be captain of a Cunarder, though now he think he desire only to ride the elephant in a circus," said Manuel, with an indulgent smile at little Israel's childishness. "Almost any Cape Cod boy he have it in him to be captain of a Cunarder," added Manuel, with enthusiasm.

"Llewellyn Briggs, of Fleetwell, that run away to sea when he was a boy, b'longs to a show," remarked Gustavus, in an agrieved and sullen tone. "It's a big show, and 'twas going South this winter, but it got stranded—that means the money gave out—up to Rockton. The folks are all there, and the animals, too, in a great big kind of a stable they've built. Llewellyn he takes care of the animals and trains 'em. He lived here in Scanset one time, and he couldn't spell any better'n I can! But it's orf, hard to begin to be a great man—when you hain't got any friends to help you—but a bear."

Manuel laid his hand affectionately on Gustavus' small, sturdy shoulder. But Gustavus still kept his face turned towards the wintry sea to hide the briny drops in his eyes, which one cannot allow even one's friend to behold.

"Cape Cod boy he find friends every where," said Manuel, consolingly. "On board the yacht and in my beautiful islands you will find many, for you are Cape Cod boy, and my friend. Of course I make him all right in New York when Mr Carmichael talk about it first! And they let you go; you will not need to run away; for it is as sailing master's assistant, with good wages, that you go! For I have said to Mr Carmichael that Cape Cod boy it is born in him, like Portuguese, to sail a ship. And I go not unless my heart's friend Gustavus Nickerson he go too."

Gustavus did not throw himself into Manuel's arms, as he would have done if he had been another little

Portergee. He gave vent to his overcharged feelings, in the only way that was possible to him—by turning a somersault on the snow, hubbly road.

And Manuel understood all that the somersault meant, and was quite satisfied. There was grief in the little house at the Point, but Cap'n 'Siah consoled himself somewhat by thinking, and saying, with a grand air, that they could not expect that Scanset would be quite big enough for Manny nowadays.

Gustavus Nickerson's mother laughed incredulously, and then wiped her eyes. Little Gustavus, not yet fifteen, assistant to the sailing master of a yacht! She thought with regret of the switch that hung behind the wood shed door. Gustavus was anxious lest his bear should become lonesome. He occupied the wood shed chamber at Cap'n 'Siah's, and there was such a prejudice against bears in Scanset that he had to be confined there most of the time. Manuel and Gustavus gave him much of their society, but it certainly would be very dull for Mezul in the wood shed chamber when they were gone.

Gustavus had a bright idea. He wrote to his old friend Llewellyn Briggs, now Signor Brignosi, of the "Grand Educational Menagerie and Panorama," and Llewellyn replied that he would be glad to take care of the bear for the winter, if he were really the great Mezul, with the agreement that he should appear at a certain number of his company's performances in the spring.

Llewellyn hinted that this might lead to a permanent engagement for the bear, and Gustavus' heart thrilled with an unconfessed hope that it might mean an engagement for him also.

He did not confess this hope, because Manuel did not seem to have a very high opinion of the show business. He thought that a fellow ought to do great things for Scanset or something to "make himself a man," as he said. And the sea was always "the road of the bold" to Manuel.

But Gustavus wrote with enthusiasm and unmentionable spelling to Signor Brignosi, saying that he would bring the bear to him at Rockton on his way to Boston to sail in the yacht; and he added, in a postscript, that he felt within himself a talent for taming lions and "edgecsteing bares."

When the day of departure arrived the two boys arose very early to take the four-o'clock train up from the Cape.

Scarcely a mouthful of the nice hot breakfast that Caddy had prepared could either of them eat. Manuel thought it as well that the leave-takings should be hurried, for Cap'n 'Siah was old and feeble now to bear the strain of parting, and Anita, who was Portuguese, wept aloud as a Cape Cod girl does not permit herself to do.

The bear, sleepy and reluctant, had to be dragged down the wood-shed stairs, and actually growled at Caddy's doughnuts, of which Gustavus carried a bagful, as there was no time to give Mezul any other breakfast.

"I never knew Mezul to object to make a journey before," said Manuel, wondering. "And he delight himself, other times, in the good doughnuts of Caddy."

"It's orf, early, and I s'pose a bear has his feelings," said Gustavus, with a sympathetic yawn. "I most wish 't we'd taken a lantern," he added, for it was still very dark, as they plunged into the Fleetwell road—they were obliged to walk to Fleetwell, where they were to take the train, as they could find no conveyance for the bear.

The stars blinked frostily in the far-off winter sky, and Scanset was still soundly sleeping. No, one person was stirring; a short, thick-set figure appeared from the Striped Marsh road.

"Mr Dence?" called Manuel, for he

thought it would be like the schoolmaster to come to say good-by to them.

But instead of answering, the figure took to its heels.

Manuel's sharp eyes peered into the darkness.

"It look—the size and the way he run—like Emilio," he said.

Now when they had left Emilio in New York, less than a fortnight before, he had said that his father and he were going South with a show, and it did not seem probable that he had returned to Scanset. And yet Gustavus echoed "Emilio!" in a tone of conviction.

"If he's come back, it isn't for any good," he added, seriously. "But anyhow, we've got the bear!" And Gustavus threw his arm around the great bear's neck as they walked.

The bear growled a little.

"It's hard for an old bear to be dragged out so early," said Gustavus, apologetically, when Manuel expressed his surprise—for Mezul had never before growled at his friends. The train stopped but a minute or two at the Fleetwell station in the frosty darkness. They were forced to hustle the bear into the baggage-car with their trunks. It was cold, but the baggage-master was kind, and gave them an old overcoat to cover him.

The two boys went into the smoking-car adjoining, where there was then no one but themselves; and both were aroused from a sound sleep by the banging of doors and the conductor's shout of "Rockton!"

It was not yet seven o'clock, and was still dark in the cloudy winter morning. Signor Brignosi was at the station, as he had promised to be. He was dressed in ordinary, somewhat shabby clothes, and he was, as Gustavus said to himself with some disappointment only Llewellyn Briggs, just as he used to be.

The boys both talked together in their eager haste to tell Llewellyn what a wonderful bear Mezul was, and just how he should be cared for. The train rushed off again so soon that Gustavus still shouted charges from the platform when he was beyond Llewellyn's hearing. He had not trusted himself to take leave of the bear, that was still cross and sleepy.

At half-past two o'clock that afternoon the fine new yacht was almost ready to sail. Gustavus, in a new suit almost as handsome as Manuel's, and a gold-lettered cap, was trying to answer, without blushing, the nautical questions of Miss Stella Carmichael, aged sixteen, who was all over the yacht, so wrapped in furs that nothing human was visible except a pair of pink cheeks and a pair of bright eyes.

Gustavus might be weak grammatically, but he knew the ropes. And he said to himself that he was not afraid of a girl; not he! although he knew that he was blushing furiously, and felt as if her bright eyes were turning him into a jelly-fish. Gustavus did not like girls, but one is not going to allow his satisfaction in sailing as an officer of a yacht to be affected by a trifling like that! An officer! Yes, sir! Manuel said so!

And in his pride and delight he had almost stifled the pang that he had felt ever since he had left Mezul to the care of the trainer, when a strange and unexpected thing happened.

A man in torn and soiled clothes, and with a handkerchief bound around his head, came limping hurriedly down the wharf. Signor Briggs—No, you would not believe he could ever be anybody but Llewellyn Briggs!

"Talk about your bear!" he cried, as soon as he caught sight of Gustavus. "The great Mezul, do you call him? He's a young, green bear and as savage as a wolf! He has torn me most to pieces, and if anybody can train him, I don't want the job! If you don't get him away I shall have to put a bullet into him!"

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