

A bullet into Mezul! Even Manuel's pale face turned white. "A bullet never hurt anybody in the world—never!" cried Gustavus, angrily. "Mezul!" repeated Llewellyn Briggs, scornfully. "I tell you he is a young bear that has never been trained."

"There is always a bear in bear," quoted Mr Carmichael. "Bring him on board, boys, and let us hear what he has to say." Llewellyn told a tale of fierce encounter with the bear, and his clothes bore witness to his truth telling, as well as his bandaged head.

Manuel listened, with the line deepening between his brows. "Emilio!" he murmured. "Emilio!" But Gustavus could not see what Emilio could have had to do with it. He turned to go down stairs and change his handsome uniform for the clothes that would make him again only a common Seascout boy.

"I must go back and take care of Mezul," he said, in a voice that he kept steady though it had a sob in it. "Him and me are friends. We look care of each other in the woods."

"You will give up such a fine cruise for a bear?" exclaimed Mr Carmichael, with a wondering laugh. "Tell him better, Manuel."

But Manuel shook his head, firmly. "It is strange thing," he said. "Something must have been done to Mezul to make him savage like that. Now I remember he growl this morning, not like himself. If Gustavus did not stay, I must. Mezul is not common bear."

Llewellyn said he should think not, and put his hand to his bandaged head ruefully. He added that if he had a chance to go as a sailor again, he would prefer it to training bears. And Manuel's mind was not so bent upon the bear but that he could say a good word for Llewellyn to Mr Carmichael, who at once engaged him on condition that he should be ready in an hour. One of the crew that he had engaged was missing, so Llewellyn's arrival was opportune.

As Llewellyn hurried on to make his preparations, other unexpected visitors were seen making their way along the pier towards the yacht—Anita, with the baby in her arms, and dragging along on one side of her Mezul the great bear, on the other side her reluctant brother Emilio.

"It is only trick, bad trick of Emilio!" she cried, frantically, from the gang plank, "but he say he mean no harm. He change Mezul in the wood shed chamber for a young bear that my father buy. He come to Seascout to make me go on the street with lambouring and bear again. My father can train young bear, but he will hurt somebody else, I fear, so I run away when I find Emilio in the road and dear what he have done. I must bring Mezul to you, and I have not time to jake the baby home. Oh, if Mezul were not angel I could not have got here! And Emilio he only want to know where is his bear."

Emilio was struggling, as if he did not really care even to wait for that information.

"It's in Rockton, at the show," called Manuel, "and if he do not get himself out—"

"Oh, bring that delightful bear on board!" cried Stella Carmichael, impulsively, "and the girl and the baby. They look so cold."

Mezul insisted upon licking the faces of his friends, and took dancing steps upon the deck, to the great delight of every one on board the yacht, especially of the owner's daughter.

"We deserve not to see Mezul again," said Manuel, with feeling, "when we could be deceived by a stupid common bear!"

"It was so orric dark and we were so sleepy—and who ever would have thought of such a thing! Nobody in the world but that rascal Emilio would have dared to do it! He meant to get away with Mezul after he had been paid for him!"

"He would have if it had not been for Anita," said Manuel.

"Yes, sir, if it had not been for Anita," said Gustavus, and the boys looked at each other—a look that meant they must not forget Anita.

But at that very moment some one else was looking out for Anita. The young mistress of the yacht had warned and comforted her in the cabin, and Anita had confided to her that the longing of her heart was to get to her grandmother in the Azores, so that she need never again go on the streets with a performing bear, nor have her baby sister brought up to such a life.

Now did it not seem providential that they were going to the Azores

in that yacht? That was the question that Stella asked her father behind the cabin door. And would it not be delightful to have both a bear and a baby on board?—so lively! And if, as he said, the cruise was intended to restore her health—for it seemed the pink cheeks had only a little while before been pale—why, such lovely company would be sure to do it!

And although papa Carmichael shrugged his shoulders and frowned and said it was ridiculous, the result of the private conference was that he yielded—as is apt to be the way with fathers.

A telegram was despatched to the little house at the Point, that there might be no anxiety about Anita and the baby. Stella was sure that with the help of the stewardess and her maid the deficiencies in Anita's wardrobe and the baby's could all be supplied.

Gustavus was restored to his uniform, and Llewellyn Briggs was given a position that he felt suited his talents better than bear-taming.

And only an hour and a half later, after all, the Alfarata sailed away with a favouring wind, Anita weeping tears of joy that she was going to the Azores, and tears of grief that she was leaving Seascout, and Mezul dancing jovially to the strains of the ducky cook's banjo.

"Me 'n' you will always stick together, won't we, Manny?" said Gustavus, under cover of the music. "Me 'n' you and the bear—and Anita and the baby," he added, with a sudden noble enlargement of heart.

BERTRAM AND THE FAKIRS

THE ENGLISH CONJURER EXPOSES THE SIMPLICITY OF SOME CELEBRATED INDIAN TRICKS.

There is a perennial delight in being mystified, and the conjurer thrives on the credulity and curiosity of mankind. Whether he call himself "Professor of Legedemain," or "Prestidigitateur," or "The Wizard of the Far North," is quite immaterial; his business is to puzzle us, and to his credit be it said that he invariably does so. It is only that terribly smart boy from school, in the front row at the Christmas Eve party, who really knows "how it is done." As he grows older his omniscience vanishes in direct ratio with his increasing years and experience. Adults are willingly deceived and if the conjurer does so far unbind as to explain his tricks, his audience is proportionately grateful.

Such has been the experience of a representative of the "Illustrated Mail," to whom no less an authority than Mr Charles Bertram has unbosomed himself on a subject which is of peculiar interest to those who are interested in Eastern magic.

Mr Bertram has just returned from a tour of some 26,000 miles through the most interesting parts of India, so that the final word on Indian mystery-workers can now be spoken by an expert.

Having been the guest of many of the native ruling princes, he has, apart from his wide personal knowledge of all that appertains to magic, had exceptional opportunities of looking behind the veil which surrounds the country's wonder-workers.

He saw, as an expert yearning for more worlds to conquer, the performances of no fewer than 157 of the best-known snake charmers, jugglers, and fakirs, and has arrived at the conclusion that in the matter of dexterity and tricks shown there is little to pick between them. All are clever up to a certain point, but none can perform anything approaching the generally accepted wonders related by lay travellers.

For instance, one reads of the six to eight foot mango tree which is made to grow, blossom, and bear fruit before one's eyes in the open air merely from a little heap of sand and a seed.

This trick is shorn of all that belongs to the marvellous when described, according to Mr Bertram. The details vary slightly with different performers, but the main points are the same with all.

The conjurer, or "Jadoo Wallah," as he is called in the vernacular, has two assistant musicians, an artist on the tom-tom and another on the vina, a sort of one-stringed violin. The trio squat on the ground, fronting the audience, and the fakir builds up the little pyramid of earth between four twigs or pegs stuck in the ground. In the centre is a stone. A diaphanous cloth is thrown over the little erection, and over this again a rather large

blanket. This carefully-constructed apparatus is now left alone for some ten minutes while some entirely different minor tricks are performed, cups and balls or the common stick and ring trick. Then the fakir solemnly approaches the blanket to the sound of the tom-tom. The covering is removed and a tiny four-leaved plant revealed. The blanket and gauze are replaced, another ten minutes interval takes place, and then the final revelation shows a little mango plant of twelve to eighteen inches in height, never more, with the mango fruit upon it. It is a curious little fact that when mango fruit is out of season, a plum is induced to grow upon the mango tree.

Mr Bertram adds that the manner in which the coverings were shaken out whilst being replaced over the little sticks was sufficient to hide any amount of manipulation which evidently took place. He further asserts that in the majority of cases in which he saw the trick performed the tom-tom player had the curled up mango bush concealed in the body of his instrument, and quietly threw it to the fakir, who put it into position between the sticks under cover of the shaking out of the blanket before it was replaced over the sticks. This much-belauded trick would not pass muster in Europe even from a third-rate performer.

One hears a good deal of talk about the extraordinary rope trick. A fakir is said to throw a rope up into the air, where it remains rigid. He then climbs up it hand over hand until he finally disappears into the illimitable azure. Mr Bertram declares that this never-takes place. What he saw, and what others saw, if they only told the truth about it, is as follows. The fakir throws into the air a 20-foot rope. This has a wire of some sort concealed in it, which stiffens as the rope is thrown. The magician thus manages to balance it for a couple of seconds on the palm of his hand, after which it promptly collapses. "Only that and nothing more."

Their best trick appears to be the finding of an egg in an empty bag which is shaken and flattened out and then produces eggs by the basketful. This is neat but not extraordinary. An effective trick is the "ducking duck." The fakir brings forth a tin or a half-coconut filled with water; in this floats a little metal duck. The conjurer and his attendant tom-tom player retire to a short distance, and the orchestra strikes up. The duck immediately begins to wobble, and thrust its head under water, finally as the music ceases, the tin-bird remains quiescent. This is done by a fine hair stretched between the duck and the fakir.

The process of fire-eating is much akin to that familiar to children on the beach at English seaside places. A tiny lump of incandescent charcoal, a twist of tow, and the smoke and fire is belched forth in a most approved fashion. The cup and ball trick is as old as the hills, and simply depends on sleight of hand. The ball is passed from one cup to another as in the time-honoured game of thimble-rigging.

The art of producing snakes when and where wanted is an ancient pride of the Indian fakir, but, crede Mr Bertram, it is not particularly miraculous. For ten rupies the Father of Snakes promises to supply a snake on any spot pointed out to him. The spot is chosen, and the fakir promptly goes on to perform other and minor tricks to distract the attention of the audience. After a few minutes his assistant casually passes over the chosen spot and carefully draws from out his loin-cloth the snake in question. Subsequently the fakir turns round and exclaims with delight: "Behold your snake!" So much for the marvels of the Jadoo Wallah.

Mr Bertram showed a few simple passes with coins to one of these fakirs. At first he appeared frightened, and then fell on his knees and kissed Bertram's feet, calling him "Shaitan Wallah" (a conjurer, or "the Devil"). This name caught on, and the fakirs all over India now know him as "Shaitan Wallah." The Holy Man of Benares, lately dead, however, attributed his skill to quite a different source, for, said he, to those round him after seeing Bertram's performance, "He can only have got that power by long years of patient meditation and prayer."

In the course of his tour Mr Bertram performed on one occasion in a rajah's harem without "purdah"—that is, without the usual veil behind which the ladies peep through holes at the performance. Bertram was al-

lowed to enter amongst them just as at one of his London drawing-room entertainments. No male European has ever before been allowed this privilege, and it caused considerable excitement throughout the province, whose ruler had broken through so strict a rule of native etiquette.

When it was suggested that it was possible that the fakirs purposely omitted to show him their best miracles, Bertram said, "Well, if you knew how anxious these Indian jugglers and snake-charmers are to get even a few rupees for a performance, I don't think you would consider it likely that they would refuse my offer of £500 to see the rope-in-air-and-man-climbing trick. Further, I found on meeting him towards the close of my tour that Lord Lansdale had offered no less than £10,000 to any fakir who could show this trick. No, sir, I am afraid they really can't do it."

DIRGE FOR A SOLDIER.

By Paul Laurence Dunbar.

In the east the morning comes,
Hear the rolling of the drums
On the hill.
But the heart that bent as they beat
In the battle's raging day
Lies still.
'Tis to him the night has come,
Though they roll the morning drum.

What is in the bugle's blast?
It is "Victory at last!"
Now for rest,
But, my comrades, come behold him
Where our colours now enfold him,
And he breathes
Bares no more to meet the blade,
But lies covered in the shade.

What a stir there is to-day!
They are laying him away
Where he fell.
There the flag goes draped before him;
Now they pile the grave sod o'er him
With a knell,
And he answers to his name
In the higher ranks of fame.

There's a woman left to mourn
For the child that she has borne
In travail.
But her heart beats high and higher,
With a patriot mother's fire,
At the tale,
She has borne and lost a son,
But her work and his are done.

Fling the flag out, let it wave;
They're returning from the grave—
"Dear old dad!"
And the cymbals now are crashing,
Bright his comrades' eyes are flashing
From the thicket,
Bale-ribs which knew him brave,
No tears for a hero's grave.

In the east the morning comes,
Hear the roll of the drums
Far away.
Now no time for grief's pursuing
Other work is for the doing
Here to-day,
He is sleeping, let him rest
With the flag across his breast.

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