

THE TWO BEARS.

The story I am going to tell I got from a Frenchman. The moral of it is, that truth and honesty are the best policy.

Some half-a-dozen years ago, there lived in a village in the south of France, a hearty, honest fellow; not over bright, but kind and good. His name was Tristapatte, or Sorrypaw, we might translate it. He had a wife and two small children, who clattered about the house in wooden shoes, and he loved them very tenderly. His wife had been Miss Lagingole. She had a good-for-nothing brother, who ran away from school, was lost for several years, and at last reappeared in his native village, leading a dancing bear, and playing on a fife and tabor. He spent the night in Tristapatte's house. The bear was chained up in a neighboring stable; but poor Mme. Tristapatte could not sleep for thinking of the nearness of such a monster; and she would not let her children go out of her sight for fear some dreadful accident should happen to them. What was her horror, therefore, when the next morning, her husband told her that he was going away to travel with his brother-in-law and the bear! The poor woman was beside herself with grief and fear. "Oh, my dear husband!" she cried, "I know that dreadful bear will pick your bones!" "Nonsense," said Lagingole. "Oh! brother Lagingole," cried Mrs. Patte, "if he will go with you, promise me, at least, that no harm shall ever come to my dear husband, that no cruel bear shall ever eat him up. O! O! O!" And the poor woman began to cry at the thought of such a thing. Lagingole promised very readily. It is easy enough for people to promise who never intend to be careful to perform; and the three set off together from the village—poor Patte playing on the drum and fife, and Lagingole leading the bear behind him, and poor Mrs. Patte with her little children following a great way off, and crying, "Oh! brother Lagingole, take care that my dear Patte is not eaten by a bear."

After several adventures, Lagingole embarked his bear, and fife, and tabor, and poor Patte, in a ship that was sailing for the East. They met with a dreadful storm. The bear died of sea-sickness, and, at last, Lagingole and Tristapatte were cast penniless ashore. It was some-

where in the East, among the Mussulmans, but I cannot tell you where. They landed in the dominions of Shahabaham, not far from the residence of that despot, whose grand vizier, Marrico, being speedily informed of the arrival of strangers, sent for them to the palace, and they had to go. Shahabaham, you must know, was a spoilt prince, which is even worse than a spoilt child. Both, spoilt sultans and spoilt children, are very unhappy people, principally because neither have good consciences, and neither have anything to do. Spoilt children get tired of their playthings, and are a great annoyance to everybody. Spoilt sultans get tired of all the novelties provided for their amusement, and sometimes persecute their viziers by way of variety. Marrico, was, therefore, very unhappy. The sultan had had a present of a white polar bear only a few weeks before; and he really seemed to find some pleasure in looking at the great unwieldy beast without a tail, which gritted its sharp, white fangs every time he went up to its cage and shook a stick at it. But there was no snow in Turkey, such as all white bears love. The unusual heat of the climate did not agree with his constitution, and the bear died, to the great consternation of the vizier, on the same night when Lagingole and our friend Patte made their appearance in the sultan's dominions. The vizier did not dare to tell his master of the event which he knew would make him very angry. He was a coward, who kept putting off the evil moment, and suffering twice as much from fear as he might have done if he had boldly gone and told Shehabaham the truth, at once. And I recommend you, when you have anything disagreeable to do, to go at once and get it done.

"Approach, O, strangers," cried the vizier to Tristapatte and Lagingole. "As ye have landed on our master's shores, custom demands that ye shall do something for his highness's amusement. What can you do?" "I'll dance a saraband," said Lagingole, "and my friend Patte will play upon his fife and tabor." "That won't do," answered Marrico, "our sultan is tired of seeing people dance. If you had a dancing bear, now . . ." "The very thing! I have," cried Lagingole. "No, we have not," cried Tristapatte, plucking him by the skirt of his coat. "What's the use of

telling a lie about it. That's the way you always do." "Hold your tongue," said Lagingole. Tristapatte and Lagingole spoke this in French, so that they were not understood by Marrico.

"O, noble and thrice welcome strangers!" exclaimed Marrico, "the sultan will be delighted! You have saved me! You shall have a thousand pieces of gold, if your bear dances to the satisfaction of my master; and you bid fair to become pachas and princes, and to be honoured with the height of his esteem. I will hasten to prepare him for the entertainment. Make ready your bear against I come again. If you disappoint him, beware! He will certainly cut off the heads of both of you." "There! did you hear that?" exclaimed Tristapatte, as the vizier left them alone together. "I knew it would be so. All this comes of your lying. He will cut off our heads, and I shall never see my dear wife and my children any more. O! O! O!!" "Don't howl like that, you fool," said Lagingole; "or, if you must howl, howl like a bear. You are to be the bear, my boy! I intend to dress you up in our dead bear's skin." "But I won't be a bear," said Tristapatte, "and go upon all fours." "You need not," said Lagingole; "bears dance on their hind legs, and have not got any tails. There is very little difference between bears and some men I know. Come, be a good fellow, I won't thump you much." "I don't want to be thumped at all. I won't be a bear, that's flat," said Patte. "Very good," said the other, "as you please. But if we disappoint the sultan, he will cut off our heads." So Tristapatte consented at that thought, for the sake of Mrs. Patte and the little girls in wooden shoes in France, in his own thatched cabin; and, all the time Lagingole was dressing him up, he kept talking of the thousand pieces of gold that would be given them; and Tristapatte was turning over in his mind what presents he would take to his dear little children. No sooner was Tristapatte made into a very good bear, with a muzzle on his nose, and a stout chain round his neck, and a pole in his right hand, than a great sound of drums and bugles announced the arrival of the sultan. Shahabaham sat down upon his throne, and all his courtiers saluted him. After this ceremony, poor Tristapatte, in the bear's skin, was