

And as for slowness the hum-hum and the dancing could not possibly be lazier than they were.

Mother, of course, could not be wrong, and yet the small reddish eyes of the bear were glowing with rage as well as pain.

I wonder if his paws have been cut or something, Jan thought, for he noticed that the instant the bear stood still its moaning cries ceased, only to break out again at the merest hint from the Russian's rope.

The performance, at last, ended by the Italian piper coming round with his greasy cap for the boys' coppers, and, presently, the troupe of men and beasts were trudging away along the high road.

'Let's get down to the nets,' suggested Pen.

'Yes,' assented Mac; 'we've lost half an hour already. The dinner-bell will ring in next to no time!'

The boys fled, leaving Jan wistfully staring at the diminishing cloud of dust which enveloped the little procession. His ears were still filled with the 'yowls' which he felt convinced meant sore paws or pain of some kind. His tender little heart ached, for Jan had that passionate love for animals which is born in some of us, and not in others.

'I wonder if—I wonder if——' he said half aloud. 'I'll try anyhow!'

Dashing into the house he unearthed a money-box from his own cupboard, and was out again on the high road, his heels setting up as much dust almost as the group ahead. He would ask the Russian, who seemed quite a loving man or he would have certainly punished the bear, to take the suffering creature to old Simon Treweek down Treherne Town.

Simon doctored all the sick cows and horses and dogs of the neighborhood. There was not the old Cornishman's equal with four-footed things. And the money-box would pay Simon amply, Jan felt sure.

'Hi! hi!' he yelled, putting on a spurt to reach the procession ahead. But no notice was taken of his shouts until the group pulled up at a solitary little ale-house on the roadside.

It was not the time of day for the usual customers, only two old men sat on a bench outside sunning themselves, but the foreigners drew up, and the pipes hummed away. A woman and a girl came out and stood on the doorstep to gaze, with frightened, fascinated eyes.

Then Jan arrived and bided his time.

The foreigners gave him a careless glance; they were accustomed to a following of enthusiastic little boys.

The younger bear began his 'yowls' almost immediately, and Jan, intensely curious, edged still closer to the clumsy dancer, so close that his sharp young eyes saw, with horror, a red stain on the rope near the crying bear's snout.

Then it 'was' pain that Jan had recognized the cries so like those of Canny in the trap!

Nearer edged the boy, and the bear, lurching by, trod on his foot with its ponderous hind paw.

The next moment came a louder cry, and a scuffle. Again the Russian lay on his back in the dust, and the bear was squeezing the breath out of him.

The women in the doorway ran shrieking into the house-place. The two old men rose from the bench, one tottered help-

lessly towards the struggling group, the other tottered as helplessly to safety.

'Oh, don't you see!' shouted little Jan. 'Its mouth is bleeding, the rope hurts it!'

The pipe-player was busy pounding the bear while the other foreigner was holding in bear number two which had got on its four legs, and was growling ominously, so nobody paid any attention to Jan.

'I mus' get the rope out myself!' half sobbed the child, and he fearlessly seized it in his two hands.

There was a terrible roar, and the bear, loosening his grip of the half-choked Russian, turned on Jan.

'Run you! Fly you!' screamed the pipe-player. 'He will kill!'

There was no time to run. The bear's hot breath was in Jan's face, but at hand was the group of old elms in front of the ale-house.

Like a flash, the active little shaver was fighting his way up the nearest tree, the bear after him.

It is second nature for a bear to climb trees in its native state. But this bear was a beaten-down, ill-used animal, passing most of its life on its hind-legs, and had lost its natural activity.

The foreigner managed to get its rope in his grip, and the Russian, on his legs once again, seized it from him.

'What's all this? What does this mean?' a stentorian voice shouted in commanding tones.

A high dog-cart, with a pair of horses, tandem-fashion, had drawn up, and the groom had sprung to the leader's head. Another man, in policeman garb, jumped also from the back seat to hold the second horse, for rampant bears were not common objects in that part of Cornwall.

Old General Carew had been sitting on the bench that morning, and was in his customary glow of righteous indignation against erring mankind. But it was upon the policeman, to whom the General had given a lift home, that the eyes of the foreigners were fixed nervously.

'It is all nozing, sare!' they faltered in a chorus.

But even as they spoke the Russian had tweaked the rope absently. The bear, with a roar of new pain, rushed upon him, and once again the two were rolling on the ground.

'Hold the horses!' shouted the General, springing down. He had potted more than one bear in his day and knew just the spot on the nose to strike.

His whip-end was elevated with that purpose, when a shriek from aloft stopped it in mid-air.

'Oh, don't! You musn', please!' Jan's small white face peered from the elm branches.

'It's his poor nose, it's all raw, and the rope's hurting it now, every time that it moves! 'Tisn't the bear that's bad, 'tis the man! He's cruel bad!'

'Eh! eh! Bless me! Who's this now? Why, why, young Treweek as I'm alive! What are you doing up a tree, sir? Come down!'

Jan obeyed with a promptitude that was rather alarming, but with the good fortune of cats and boys, he alighted on his feet safely.

'Eh, eh! I didn't mean literally when I said "come down"! gasped the startled General. 'Now, then, let's have your evi-

dence. Do you give these men in charge for maltreating animals, or what?'

From under his beetling brows the General glared down.

'Please, sir, yes!' nervously, but undauntedly, said Jan. 'The bear's nose is all sore and raw, and that man knows it is, and he pulls the rope all the time. And that's why he don't beat the bear when it throws him, the rope hurts worse than the beating, because of the sore nose. Please, sir, let the pleeceman take the rope out of the bear's snout!' pleaded the boy urgently. The Russian was once again on his feet, so was the bear.

'Pon my word! A little shaver like you has found that out for yourself? Policeman, here! Examine this bear's snout, and report if it is raw!'

'I—I'd rather not, sir, with due respect, sir, to you!'

The man of the law backed, with some trepidation.

'What! You'd rather not!'

The old General bounced forward. He would let them all see.

'Please, General, here's old Simon Treweek coming! He will do it!' half shrieked little Jan.

True enough Simon was trudging at top speed, a halter on his arm. Ill news is like a fire; already it had spread far and wide that the bears were eating up their leaders, and Treweek's boys as well.

A few minutes and Simon was master of the situation. The halter was round Bruin's neck, and cutting the rope close to the snout the horrible agony of its irritation ceased.

And by the time a great cloud of dust on the high road resolved itself into the other five Treweek boys, the bears and their leaders were on their way under the policeman's supervision to the county goal.

'I promise you I'll see the matter through, you scoundrels,' the General shouted after them. 'You'll see me on the bench to-morrow!'

He was as good as his word, and dealt out a vigorous punishment to the Russian whose barbarous mode of training young bears was brought to light by little Jan Treweek.

And you may be sure the greatest hero in those parts was Jan, carried shoulder-high by his admiring schoolmates all the way home from the Court-house.

But perhaps mother's whispered word of praise was to little Jan the sweetest reward of all for his pluck and his tenderheartedness.

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