

Bears at School.

BY ALBERT H. BROADWELL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY A. J. JOHNSON.

“**B**RUISES, did you say? Look at my arms!” We looked and wondered. Big patches of blue stood out, witnesses of Mr. Permane’s encounters with his pupils. Some twelve

years ago this famous trainer took a particular fancy to bears, and he confidentially asserts (and no one will doubt him) that not one of the many bears he has handled during that time has ever taken any particular fancy to him. We have had occasion to assist at a private performance, during which the accompanying photos. were taken. Mr. Permane, whose nightly performance with his bears used to form one of the principal draws at the Alhambra, Leicester Square, need have no fear of our ever starting in the bear-training line after that experience. Bears at school are very amusing to look at from a distance, but our photographer absolutely refuses to focus bears again at any price.

“They catch them in Russia, and we train them in England,” said Mr. Permane. “Curiously enough, every tenth house in St. Petersburg owns at least one pet bear cub during the season. The Russians are fond of pets, and the bear cubs are bought as they are brought in by the peasants. They are only kept for a short time, however. When about three months old they exhibit certain signs of familiarity which to the average man in the street seem rather uncalled for; they are then generously presented to the nation, and find a home in the bear-pits at the Zoological Gardens, where as many as sixty cubs are to be found at a time.

“Familiarity breeds contempt,” says Mr.

Permane, and familiarity has led him into some tight places.

Though he and the lady bear shown in the first photo. seem on very good terms, there are moments when such familiarity is undesirable.

“It was a hot summer in Madrid,” said the trainer, “and the weather seemed to affect my pets rather more than usual. After feeding time I went to caress one of the bears, who was chained to an ordinary manger. Not seeming in a mood to accept my overtures, however, the brute seized me by the arm just above the shoulder, and shook me as a terrier would a rat, and then threw me

in a heap into the furthest corner of the stable. This being the second time she had attacked me in a determined manner that week, I thought it high time that the good people of Madrid were enjoying some bear’s meat for supper—and so they did!”

Bear’s meat for supper seems a strange dish, but curiously enough there are many people on the Continent who delight in bear-steak.

This statement seemed so extraordinary that we determined to sound Mr. Permane thoroughly on that point. We will let him tell how it is that bear-steak is offered to the public for consumption,

though they little guess how the transaction comes about.

“You must understand,” he said, “that after a certain age, which after all depends much upon the temperament of the animal, a bear will become unmanageable. There is no coaxing him into good behaviour, either by threats or kindness. He simply will have his own way, and then the best thing to do is to get rid of him at an early date.



OUT SHOPPING.



THE SERPENTINE DANCE.

"The last two bears which I had to destroy under such circumstances became unmanageable whilst I was performing in Paris. It was in the middle of winter, and though I unsuccessfully tried to reform their unruly ways, I had to decide to do away with them.

"Now, I love my bears greatly—they dance for the very love of me, as you see in the Serpentine Dance photo.; so you will understand that I never could take it into my head to shoot them myself. I have always had to secure the good offices of another to give the *coup de grâce* to my unruly ones. The two bears in question were accordingly shot and sold to a butcher in the Place de la République for £30, dead meat. The run on those bears was tremendous—the meat was sold at two francs a pound, and the skins fetched nearly

£10 each! A Commissaire de Police had to be called in to stop the rush on the remains of my pets, and I felt sad indeed at the sight of such a pitiful end to their theatrical life.

"When I buy a 'guaranteed' bear from the Zoo at St. Petersburg I can bet my bottom dollar that he has never been tampered with before. These bears come straight from their native wilds, and that is how I like them best. I am always on the look-out for a bear that has never been handled before. I like him young. You can educate him like you would a child; but, mind you, you must be very firm, otherwise he will take the upper hand, and then it is all over.

"The best time to start the bear in the training business is when he is about eighteen months old. The Swinging Feat shown here took me quite six months to teach. Curiously enough, the bear enjoys the swinging immensely now, though the first few lessons were not quite so pleasant.

"How long it takes to thoroughly train a bear is difficult to say. It depends entirely upon the bear's disposition. Some bears are slow, others are quick to understand what you want, and the rest are too quick altogether, and those I drop like hot dishes.

"The cost, you say? Well, I pay from



IN FULL SWING.

£7 to £10 each delivered in London. But I do not think that a bear could be obtained as a pet under £15.



THE SEE-SAW.

"This reminds me of an amusing incident. I expected a consignment of eight bears, which arrived at a certain London terminus rather late in the evening. I was sent for rather urgently, and though I resented that somewhat unwarranted intrusion upon my evening pipe, I went, and I now think it is as well that I did so. The whole station staff had assembled around the cage containing my 'goods.' The passengers were adding materially to the crush, and I had to exercise the utmost patience and goodwill to overcome the confusion that unhappily arose over my 'wild dogs,' for, let me add, they were, curiously enough, registered as such. They had been in their cage a week, and, of course, they tried their level best to get out of it at the earliest possible moment. I inwardly thanked the Russians for their common sense in providing iron bars of great strength."

One of this unruly party is shown at work a year after his arrival on English soil. His

feat consists in rolling a huge ball up one half of a see-saw, rocking freely, and down the other half. He is shown here anxiously awaiting the dreaded moment when the ascent quickly changes into an abrupt descent with a bang.

"There is one thing about which the public at large seem to be under a wrong impression, and this I should like to correct," added Mr. Permane. "Bears are herbivorous, not carnivorous. They will attack either animal or man only after a somewhat

protracted fast. There is, therefore, no necessity for giving bears any meat whatsoever.

"Wherever I go," says Mr. Permane, "I am always besieged by the local butcher offering to provide me with the necessary meat and bones for my bears, and when I send him away, telling him that I only give them carrots and bread, he departs with a knowing wink, and probably imagines that I am utterly mistaken as to the food I ought to provide for my four-footed friends."

From the evident enjoyment shown by one of the pets in "Do let me have some," we



"DO LET ME HAVE SOME."

have evidence enough that carrots are considered quite a dainty.

"My large bears," Mr. Permane adds, in explanation, "will eat 4lb. of bread and 10lb. of carrots per diem, and I do not believe in limiting their green food on any account. It is a splendid thing for their coats, and I can remember my four bears eating nearly two sacks full of freshly cut grass in one day.

"Food, however, is not the only thing to be considered. Bears, as a rule, drink water; that is, of course, in their native country. But, will you believe it, my bears were once confirmed bibbers. Do you see that little bear? His name is Fatty, and that name has been given him on account of his rotundity. He used to have beer for luncheon and beer for dinner, and so did the others. I had to put a stop to that, however. He is a clever little chap, and has learnt to be a pickpocket of no mean merit. Look at the knowing way in which he steals the bottle in *The Pickpocket*, and the joyful look when he finds himself the sole possessor of his plunder.

"In days gone by I used to give my bears what is commonly called 'four ale' beer; one day, however, while performing at Kidgrove, I was unable to obtain any of their every-day liquid. In the hurry of the moment I accordingly had to purchase some bottled Bass. That settled the bears. Some days later I had to move to another place, and I used 'four ale' again, but, alas, the bears

would not drink it—they knew what they were about. One of them, on tasting the contents of his bottle, showed his indignation by throwing it right across the stage, smashing some half-dozen foot-lights, and growling in a way that caused some trepidation among the audience. Upon my explaining the reason, however, I met with a tremendous ovation. This incident ended the beer business altogether. I cast about for ways and means, and decided to give my bears sugar water. They took to it in the kindest fashion, and their bibbings are now exclusively confined to temperance drinks, a course which they have adopted with much wisdom, and to the benefit of my balance at the bank."

We ventured to ask Mr. Permane how his bears happened to acquire their former vicious habit in preference to temperance drinks, especially before large audiences, when it might have been thought that they, in the ordinary course of modesty, would have chosen the ample opportunities offered by elaborate stage scenery to hide their blushes.

"It was quite by accident," said the trainer. "One day one of my bears got loose in a stable, and seeing a bottle containing the remainder of some beer, he very ingeniously started to empty the contents thereof. I saw at once that there would be a good stage trick in this, and so I went ahead and taught them the use of the sugar-water bottle."



THE PICKPOCKET.



HIS PLUNDER.