

BY ARTHUR MORRISON
and J.A. SHEPHERD.

II. ZIGZAG URSINE

BEAR is an adaptable creature, a philosopher every inch. He takes everything just as it comes—and doesn't readily part with it. He lives in all sorts of countries, in all manner of weather and climate, merely changing his coat a little to suit the prevailing weather. He will eat honey—when he can get it; when he can't he consoles himself with the reflection that it is bad for the teeth. He is largely a vegetarian, except when meat falls in his way, and although innocently fond of buns, will cheerfully put up with strawberries and cream if they stray in his direction. There is a proverb inculcating the principle of catching the bear before you sell his skin.

This, from a business point of view, is obviously absurd. If you can find somebody idiot enough to buy the skin first, *and pay cash*, why, take it, and let him do the catching. It will save a deal of trouble, and you will probably have a chance of selling the same skin again, after the other fellow's funeral.

The bear is indeed a very respectable beast, as beasts go. And he certainly is respected in some quarters. Both the North American Indians and the Lapps reverence him too much even to mention his name in conversation; with them he is "the old man in the fur cloak" or "the destroyer." Indeed, it seems reasonable to feel a certain respect for an animal which can knock the top of your head off with a blow of his paw; but both the Indians and the Lapps carry their respect a little too far. To kill a bear and then humbly apologise to the dead body, as they do, is adding insult to injury, especially if you dine off the injured party immediately afterward. Neither is it likely to propitiate Bruin if a dozen men, while prodding him vigorously with a dozen spears, express their regret

for the damage they are doing, and hope that he'll pardon the liberty. All this they do in sober earnest, and even go so far as to prefer a polite request that he won't hurt them. If he ever accede to this, it is probably because he is confused by the contemplation of such



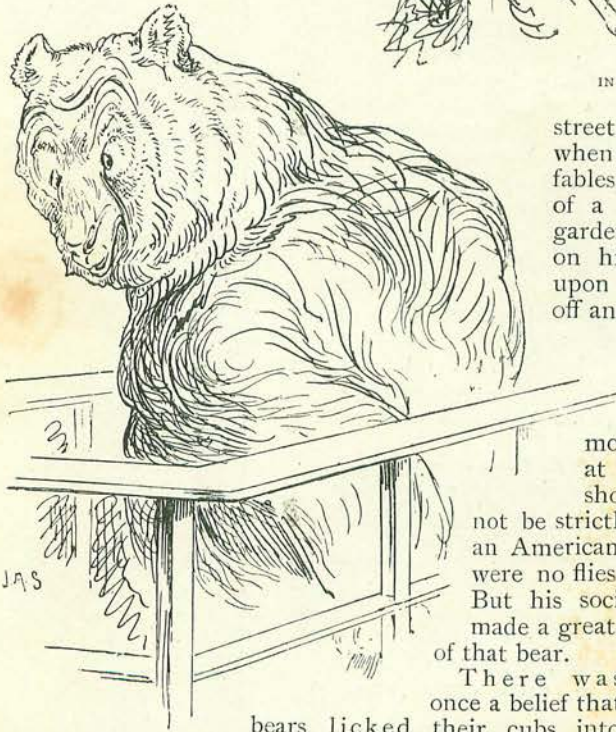
colossal "cheek." All this is galling enough, though otherwise intended, but contemptuously reaches its climax when dinner comes on. It would be annoying enough to the shade of the departed gentleman in fur to hear that he made a capital joint, or the reverse; still, it is what might be expected. But this sort of thing they studiously refrain from saying. They talk with enthusiasm of the poor bear's high moral qualities—often inventing them for the occasion, it is to be feared—and, presumably talking at his ghost, tell each other that it was most considerate and indulgent of him to let them kill him so easily. Now this is worse than laying on insult with a trowel; it is piling it on with a shovel, and rubbing it in with a brick.

Contact with man ruins the respectability of the bear. He gets dissipated and raffish,

and appears in the dock at police-courts. He associates with low companions—unclean-looking foreigners—who bang him sorely about the ribs with sticks to make him dance. They keep him badly, and he grows bony and mangy. He retaliates upon them by getting loose, frightening people, and breaking things. Then, when he is brought before a magistrate, they have to pay his fine. Sometimes they get into prison over him. The end is always the same—a bear who begins by associating with these people always turns up at the police-court before long, and once there, he comes again and again—just in the manner of the old offenders at Marlborough-



IN THE POLICE-COURT



SENTENCED.

street. Even in the innocent old times, when Bidpai wrote (or plagiarised) his fables, association with man made a fool of a bear. Witness the fable of the gardener's bear, who, zealous about a fly on his master's face, brought a paw upon it with all his force, and knocked off an indispensable piece of the worthy gardener's head. There is nothing whatever recorded against that gardener's character; he probably lived a most exemplary life, and won prizes at all the prehistoric horticultural shows in India—although it might

not be strictly correct for an American to say there were no flies on him.

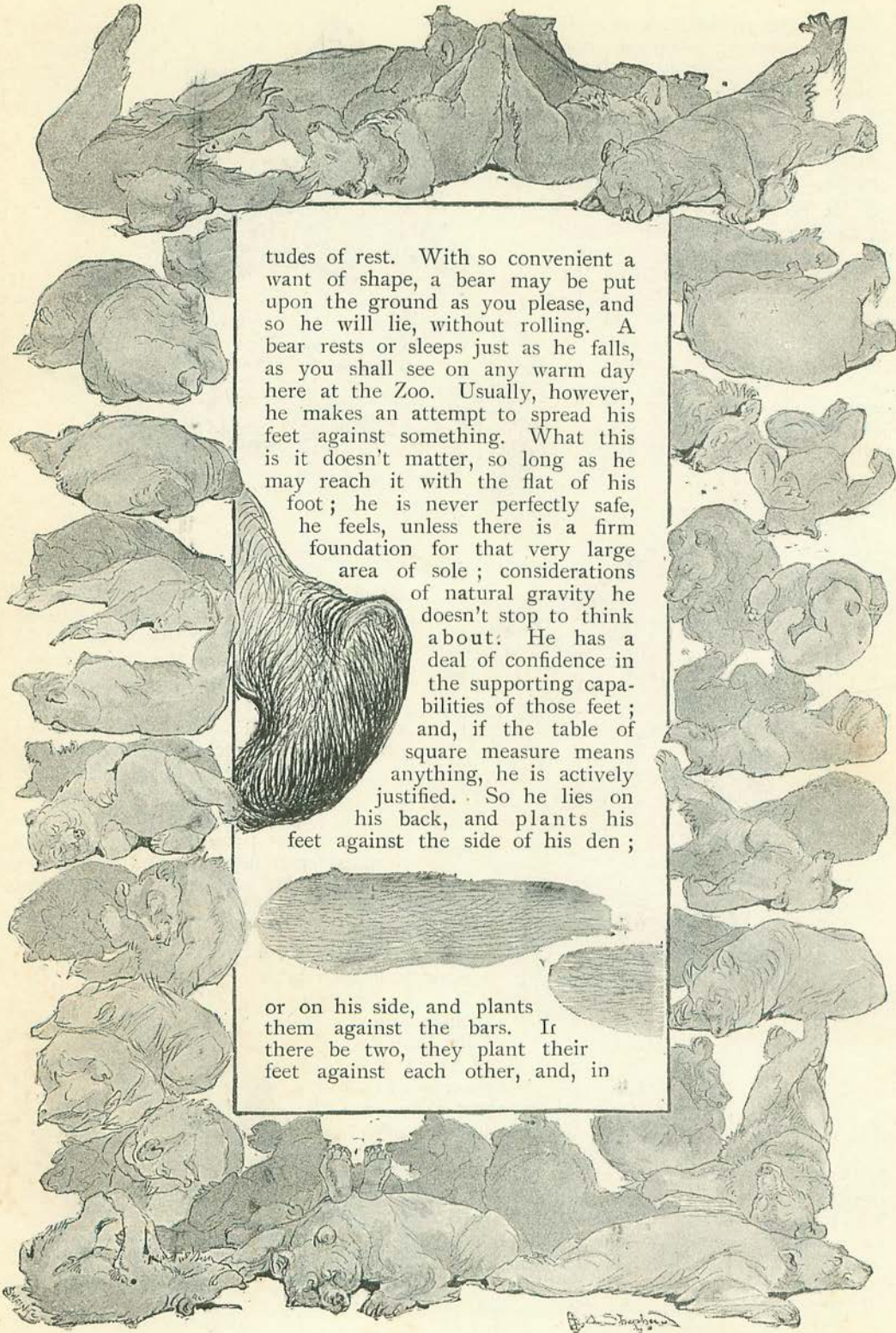
But his society made a great ass of that bear.

There was once a belief that bears licked their cubs into

bears licked their cubs into shape. If there be anything in this, all

the bears in my acquaintance came of very negligent mothers—or, perhaps, of mothers who tried the other sort of licking. They have strength, sagacity, stupidity, gloom, cheerfulness, teeth, hair, claws, position, magnitude, and big feet; but nothing at all like shape. This is why they are able to indulge in such a rich variety of atti-

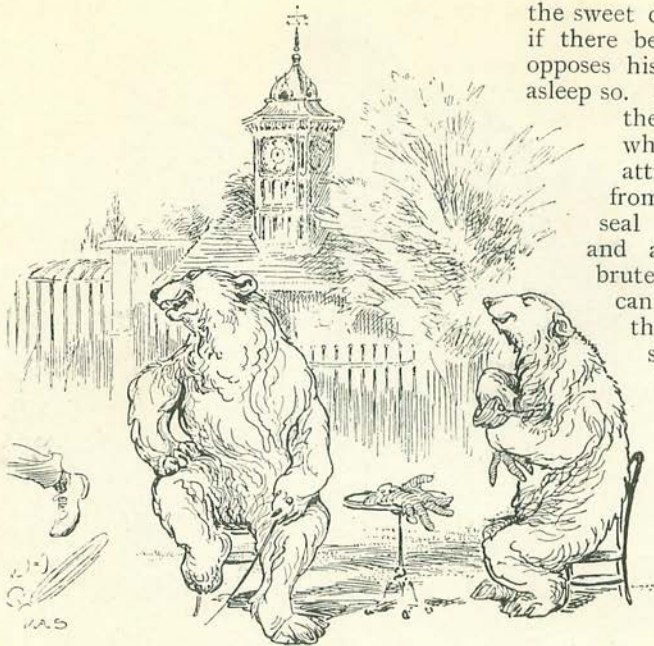




tudes of rest. With so convenient a want of shape, a bear may be put upon the ground as you please, and so he will lie, without rolling. A bear rests or sleeps just as he falls, as you shall see on any warm day here at the Zoo. Usually, however, he makes an attempt to spread his feet against something. What this is it doesn't matter, so long as he may reach it with the flat of his foot; he is never perfectly safe, he feels, unless there is a firm foundation for that very large area of sole; considerations of natural gravity he doesn't stop to think about. He has a deal of confidence in the supporting capabilities of those feet; and, if the table of square measure means anything, he is actively justified. So he lies on his back, and plants his feet against the side of his den;

or on his side, and plants them against the bars. If there be two, they plant their feet against each other, and, in

A. Shepherd



"SPLIT ICEBERG."

the sweet communion of sole, fall asleep ; if there be only one, he curls up, and opposes his palms to his soles, and falls asleep so. Bango, the hairy-eared bear in the end cage, does this. A man who once said it was his sole attitude was driven to seek refuge from an infuriated populace in the seal pond. Notwithstanding this, and all that has been said about brute instinct in animals, nobody can gaze at, for instance, Michael, the big brown bear, without seeing at once that his sole is quite big enough for his body, big as that is. While the family motto of Samson, the big Polar bear, is understood to be, "O my prophetic sole, mine ankle!" This, however, is another story, and relates to Samson's slight lameness in a hind foot.

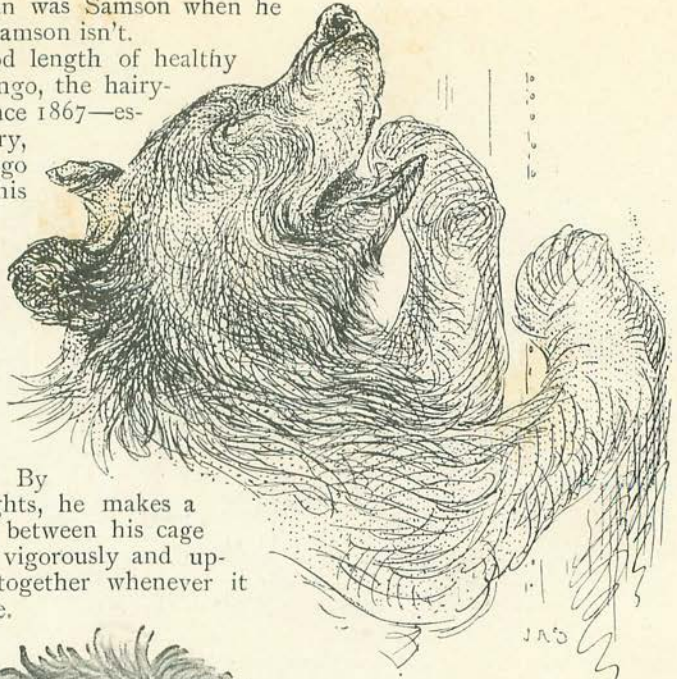
Samson is a fine fellow in the matter of size. The only short thing about him is his tail, unless you count his

temper. And there really is some excuse for the short climate would be a sufficient excuse in itself. It might, perhaps, be reasonable to say that the English climate is sufficient excuse for anybody's shortness of temper, but on the Polar bear it has the effect of that of India on an Englishman. Both Samson and Mrs. Samson—her name is Lil—manage fairly well in the winter, although they would be the more comfortable for an iceberg or two. But in the summer they keep as much as possible to the coolness of their cave, and look dolefully out at the visitors with just the expression of a fat Cockney when he says, "Ain't it 'orrid 'ot?" Still, Samson has had twenty-one of these summers now, and is bigger and stronger than ever, so that it is plain that his health does not suffer.



Lil is only a little bigger than was Samson when he first arrived, and is playful—Samson isn't.

Twenty years is a good length of healthy captivity for a bear, but Bango, the hairy-eared bear, has been here since 1867—established a quarter of a century, as the shopkeepers say. Bango lives with a single eye to his own comfort and nourishment, being blind in the other. Still, he can see a bun with his one eye just as quickly as any other bear can with two. Bango has a delusion—he is firmly convinced that by the regulations he is entitled to nine or ten meals a day, in addition to promiscuous snacks. By way of agitating for his rights, he makes a dinner gong of the partition between his cage and the next, punching it vigorously and uproariously for five minutes together whenever it strikes him that a meal is due.



BANGO.



BILLY.

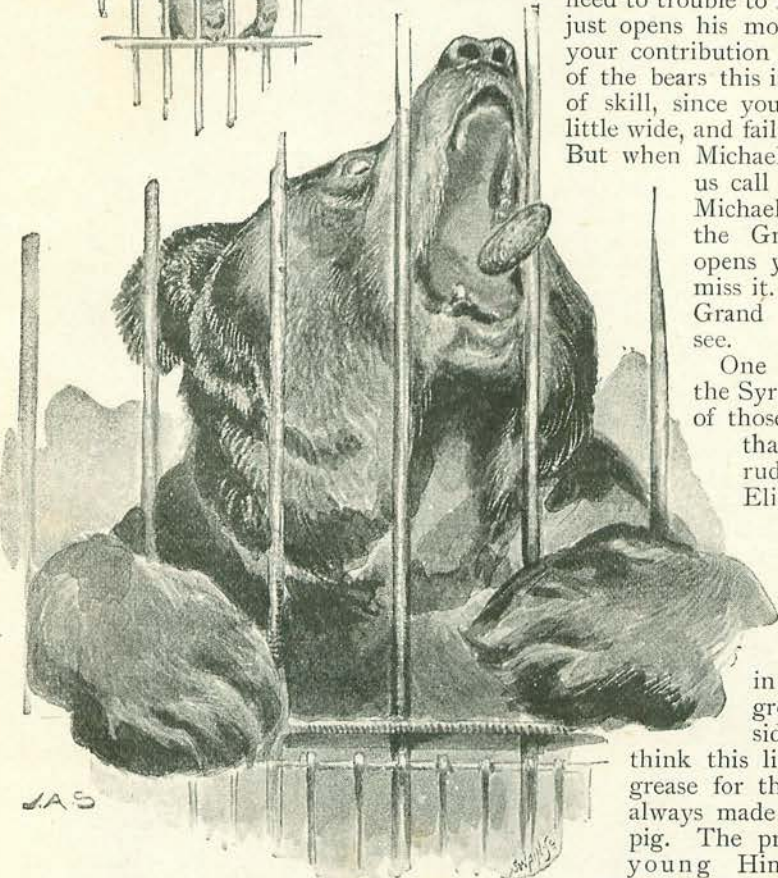
A sad, bad character in bears lives a few doors further down. It is Billy, the sloth-bear. He is the most disreputable, careless, lazy, and unkempt bear on the premises. Perhaps his parents neglected him. Certainly if one bear can have less shape than another, which has none, Billy has. He is more than shapeless; he approaches the nebulous. A sort of vast, indefinite, black mop, with certain very long and ill-kept claws observable in odd places, and now and again a dissolute, confused muzzle, in which a double allowance of lip and a half-allowance of lip mingle indistinguishably. Billy is usually asleep. He is as fond of eating as any other bear, but fonder still of sleeping. Give him a biscuit while he is lying down, and he will come for it with an indignant expression of muzzle, implying that you are rather a nuisance than otherwise.

Ludlam's dog, says the proverb, was so lazy as to lay his head

against the wall to bark. Billy must have been Ludlam's bear. Round at the other side, Joey, Fanny, and Dolly, the little Malayan bears, are certainly not lazy. Dolly will turn a somersault for you with his head (yes, I mean *his*) in the sawdust, bringing himself over by gripping the bars with his feet. Fanny will do the same thing high up against the bars, climbing a somersault, so to speak. Of course, there is no regular charge for this performance, but neither Fanny nor Dolly will feel disappointed if you contribute a biscuit to the prize fund. Fanny will find the biscuit with her paw, even if it be put out of sight on the ledge before the partition.



But Michael—big Michael, the great brown Russian bear, the largest bear in the place except Samson—doesn't need to trouble to hunt for biscuits. He just opens his mouth, and you throw your contribution in. Now, with most of the bears this is something of a feat of skill, since you may easily pitch a little wide, and fail to score a bull's-eye. But when Michael's mouth opens—let us call him the Grand Duke Michael, by the bye—when the Grand Duke's mouth opens you can't very easily miss it. Go and look at the Grand Duke's mouth and see.



MICHAEL.

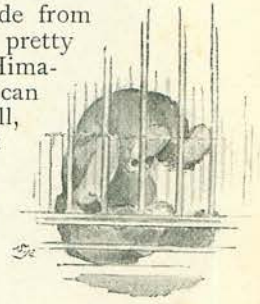
One chiefly respects Kate, the Syrian bear, as a relative of those other Syrian bears that ate the forty-two rude boys who annoyed Elisha. I have sometimes wondered whether these bears, hearing mention of a bald head, had aroused in them any personal feeling in regard to bear's-grease. But, on consideration, I scarcely

think this likely, because bear's-grease for the hair is always made from pig. The pretty young Hima-

layan here can dance if she will, having been taught

by the bearward, Godfrey. But she will only dance when she feels "so disposed," and never if asked, which is ungrateful to Godfrey, who has taken pains with her education, and who managed bears long before her grandmother was born.

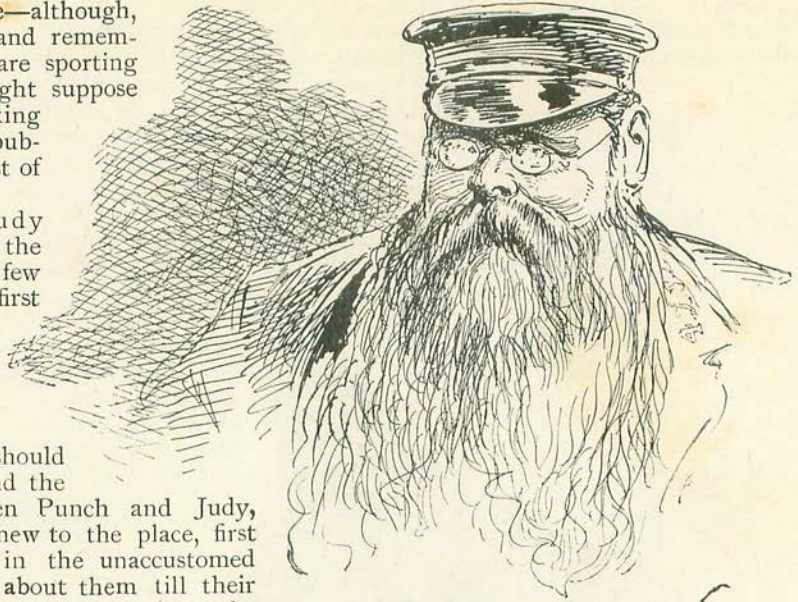
Menush and Nelly belong to a good family—the American blacks—but have been in trade, in the pit, until quite lately. Having acquired a considerable competence in buns, however, they have now retired into semi-privacy. They grew so excessively fat, indeed, upon the public bounty, that it became a matter of great difficulty to induce either to climb the pole—and almost as difficult a thing for either to do it. Now



DOLLY'S SOMERSAULT.

they live in ease—although, looking at them and remembering that they are sporting characters, one might suppose them to be thinking of taking a quiet public-house for the rest of their days.

Punch and Judy have succeeded to the pit business. A few days after they first took possession, two other bears were turned in with them, nameless, but these obviously should be called Toby and the Policeman. When Punch and Judy, young bears and new to the place, first found themselves in the unaccustomed area, they looked about them till their eyes fell in succession upon the pole, the bath, and the floor—circular, and plainly meant as a ring. Here was a gymnasium, ready fitted; wherefore they promptly began a grand inaugural assault-at-arms, lasting most of the day. There was no distinct separation of the events; plunging, boxing, climbing, and wrestling were mixed in one long show, frequently approaching in character the drama wherefrom Punch and Judy derive their names, with one variation. For Judy is rather larger and stronger than Punch, who accordingly became chief receiver, and this with the utmost good humour. The pair, in the wild delight of comparative freedom in novel surroundings, having executed a prelude scramble and rampage and a mutual roll in the bath, stood



THE BEARWARD.



RETIRED.

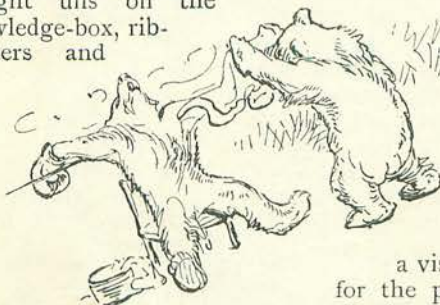
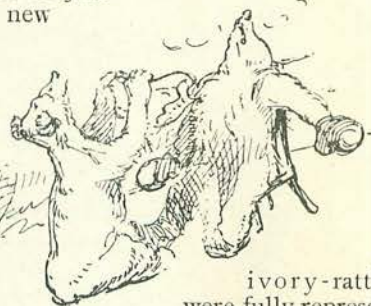
up and sparred carefully for an opening. Judy soon began proceedings with both mawleys, Punch ducking very cleverly and putting in the right on the listening-machine. Not to be denied, Judy bored in, and using right and left scored a decided lead, when Punch, the trickier of the



two, observing his partner's back now to be turned to the bath, ducked in, held and back-heeled, both falling a mighty plunge, Punch uppermost, thus finishing round one. Round two consisted chiefly in a persevering attempt by Punch to drag Judy out of the bath, in order to roll in it himself. Round three began by Judy suddenly rising from the water and driving Punch violently up against the pole, from which awkward position he dropped on to four feet and retreated with celerity, suddenly stopping and turning



about to deliver a stinger between the eyes. This round continued an unrecorded length of time, and consisted chiefly of wrestling, the bottom of the bath in the end being about the driest spot in the pit. Rounds four, five, and six consisted of judicious extracts from rounds one, two, and three, in new combinations, and with varying results, the combatants retiring, *secundum artem*, to their proper corners between each round. Bangs on the smeller, drives in the breadbasket and dexter optic, straight uns on the knowledge-box, rib-benders and



ivory-rattlers were fully represented, and there were frequent visitations in the atmospheric department.

As the seventh round was about to begin, a visitor protruded a bun, impaled upon the stick for the purpose provided, near the pole a little way up. Business was immediately suspended, and Judy made for that bun. With some difficulty—Judy wasn't used to the

J. A. Smeaton

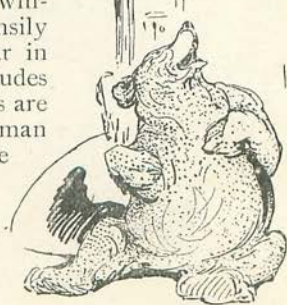
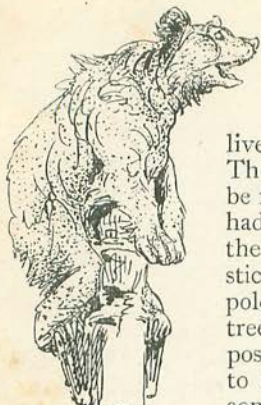
pole, and it shook the more the higher she ascended—she acquired the little present half way up, and descended to where Punch waited to renew the display. But Judy was thoughtful, and indisposed for the noble art. She had found a new thing in life, something to live for and think about—buns. So she thought about them.

The place where they were to be found, she reasoned—for she had never noticed the man at the opposite end of the long stick—was up that pole; the pole being probably a bun-tree. So that, whenever disposed for buns, it only needed to climb the pole and find some. Having arrived at this stage in the argument, it seemed to strike her that another bun was desirable, there and then. Wherefore she began another rather nervous climb, her eyes fixed steadily above to where the buns were expected to appear.

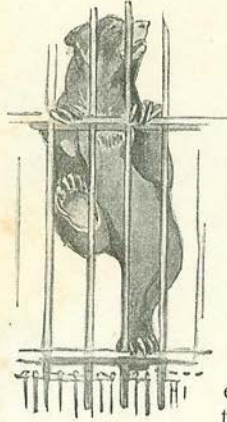
The expedition was a failure, and Judy pondered it, with the apparent decision that the buns must be a little higher up. So she started again; and found one! She has got over that little bun-tree superstition by this time, and can climb better. Also she and the others have already broken up entirely five of the sticks upon which buns arrive, thus from time to time cutting off the supply. And although Toby and the Policeman are very useful as seconds at the later boxing matches, very few buns get past Judy. Punch, the hen-pecked and wily, waits good-humouredly at the foot of the pole, and has been known to catch many a bun that Judy climbed for.

Through all the bear-dens you may see bears in attitudes sufficiently human to be quaint and grotesque. A squat like that of an Indian idol, an oddly human looking out of window, or a lounge at the bars, clumsily suggestive of a lounge at a bar in the Strand; and of all the attitudes those of the gentle little Malays are quaintest. A certain bandy human

respectability hangs about these small fellows. Dolly, after turning his somersault, will sit and inspect his reward just as a child will



C. Simpson



examine an apple, judging where to make the first bite. Dolly's great luxury is a cocoanut. He will thrust holes through the eyes at the end with a claw, and drink the milk before proceeding to the kernel. If the eyes are too tough to be pierced, he will lose his temper, like a spoiled child, and smash the nut against the floor; after which he will rush about distracted making wild efforts to drink the milk. I think some sort of a moral lesson might be deduced from this. If so, the gentle reader is at liberty to deduce it, without extra charge.

