

The Dancing Bear.

'Yes,' said Aunt Tabitha solemnly, 'Polly Andrews, old Deacon Andrew's wife, has gone back to live with her own people. And Polly says that if it hadn't been for the actions of the deacon's pet bear she might never have appreciated the sinfulness of the man with whom she was united in holy bonds of matrimony.'

'For twenty years,' Polly said to him as she was leaving his house, 'for twenty years I've lived with you and never appreciated what a whited sepulchre you were. But now I'm done. A man who would teach a pious dancing bear the couchee-couchee don't deserve the companionship of a Christian woman. It wouldn't be long before you would want me to be wearing short skirts and indulging in fancy dances. And I've got my soul to save and my joints are too stiff to take up such things at my time of life.' So she left him.

'It wasn't so much that there was anything wrong in what the bear did. But the actions of that innocent-minded creature showed what company the deacon had been keeping and the way he had been enjoying himself when he went to the city on what he called business trips. But the path of the transgressor is hard, and now in his declining years the sinful deacon finds himself abandoned, not only by his wife, but by the bear who had been his pride and joy.'

'The deacon had bought that bear when it was a cub and began its training early. There's no denying it was a bear of talents. It could dance a clog and a heel-and-toe shuffl and other dances not generally included in the repertoire of fat, middle-aged bears. It used to go on errands to the store, drive the cows home and make itself generally useful about the farm. Whenever the deacon went to the store the bear used to trudge after him. Then the bear would sit in a corner, not making a bit of trouble, but listening as intelligently as if it was a human being. The deacon thought the world of that bear.'

'There's a bear among bears,' he used to say proudly, 'a bear that will make his mark in the bear world. He's a credit to himself and even more to the man who owns him.'

'Three or four times a year the deacon used to go to the city on business trips. He used to take the bear with him, and while he never gave any clear explanation to Polly as to what his business was, she trusted him and the bear and never suspected that anything was wrong, though there's no denying that as a general thing Polly was ready with her suspicions and inclined to be a little jealous, not being as good looking as some I could name. The deacon always used to come home looking pretty well worn out, but he explained to Polly that was because he had been working so hard and hustling around to get a good price for the things raised on the farm.'

'One night about three weeks ago, just after the deacon and the bear had returned from a trip to the city, Lon Atwell dropped in at the deacon's house. The deacon was down at the store, but for some reason the bear hadn't gone with him and was sitting in the kitchen with a pious look on its furry face. It happened that quite a number of the neighbors had called that evening and Lon, having his fiddle with him, thought he would give them some tunes. He played two or three favorites and then the bear strolled in from the kitchen. Folks always liked to see the bear dance, so Lon struck up a brisk clog. But instead of tripping lightly about the room the bear looked at Lon with a bored expression, as much as to say that it had gotten beyond clog dancing. Then Lon tried some other tunes, but the bear didn't respond.'

'Maybe these dances aren't modern enough for him,' remarked Lon, puzzled like. 'I'll try him with a skirt dance.'

'Polly protested against this, saying that she didn't think skirt dances were the right thing for a deacon's house. But Lon exclaimed that the bear probably wouldn't know how to dance it, and that even if it did, not having any skirts, it wouldn't be in the least improper. It seemed to me that was a sort of queer way to decide whether a dance was proper, but that was what Lon said, and he having been away to the academy and played in the city band, people thought he was quite the authority on etiquette.'

'Lon commenced playing the music for the skirt dance. The bear was interested in a second. It commenced to dance about the room in a gay fashion, kicking up its heels in front and to the side and backward. It was interesting, if not an edifying exhibition. But Polly was scandaliz-

ed. 'Stop that music this instant!' she said to Lon. 'I won't permit such an exhibition in a Christian house. What isn't proper for a deacon's wife is improper for the deacon's bear. What would you think of me if I should go around trying to wave my heels in the air?'

'Every one agreed that they would be considerably surprised, not to say shocked, if Polly should take to acting in that way. Lon stopped playing and the bear stopped dancing. But both of them looked considerably disgruntled.'

'Polly felt sort of suspicious about the actions of that bear. The bear spent most of its time with the deacon, and where could he have learned such a shocking dance unless in some place where the deacon had taken him? And what business did the deacon have going into any place where a dance of that kind was likely to be seen? I could see Polly's lips tighten and I knew there was trouble ahead for the deacon. The actions of Lon Atwell put the finishing touches on the sad business.'

'Lon was pretty dissatisfied at having the skirt dancing stopped and he wanted to find out if the bear knew any other improper dances.'

'Seems to me I remember another dance that used to be popular in the city a couple of years ago,' said Lon, in his most innocent manner. 'I wonder if the bear knows how to dance it.'

'Then Lon began playing a queer, long drawn out sort of barbarous music. It was on its hind feet in a moment, dancing all over the room. But I can't describe the dance. If the skirt dancing was painful to a truly good person, this second dance was a thousand times worse. The bear seemed to enjoy it thoroughly and that wicked Lon Atwell almost fell off his chair from laughing.'

'Well, well,' Lon almost shouted. 'Who would have thought the pious old deacon's bear would know how to dance the couchee-couchee?'

'None of us had ever seen that performance, though we had all heard of it, and if

we had known what kind of a dance the bear was dancing we never would have allowed the exhibition, at least not more than a minute so as to see what it was really like. Polly was ready to sink through the floor with mortification. But just as she was going to give Lon Atwell her opinion of him and his music the dance stopped. And she noticed that the deacon had come in quietly and was standing in the doorway with an expression that seemed more like amused interest than grief on his face.'

'And are you the venerable reprobate who has corrupted this innocent bear and taught him these scandalous dances?' she asked in severe tones.

'The deacon is 65 years old and pretty stiff in his legs. He seemed rather surprised at Polly's question.'

'Do you think that at my time of life and with my rheumatism I would spend my time gyrating about on the floor for the purpose of teaching a bear improper dances?' he asked in the most innocent way.

'When Polly came to think it over she saw that the deacon was right on this point. He certainly couldn't have taught the bear himself, he had taken him where such dances could be seen. She told the deacon that he was a hypocrite, a deceiver, and a man of sin. She said that she was afraid that if she stayed with him any longer she would be spoiled herself. The deacon allowed that some things were too old and sour to be spoiled. And then Polly packed up her things and went home to her people.'

'Maybe the deacon wasn't entirely to blame for things up to this point. A good many of the neighbors thought Polly acted pretty hastily. The deacon gave as an excuse that he had to go to the theatre and shows in order to get acquainted with people and make friends and customers. There is something in that, though it hardly seems probable that in order to sell vegetables a man has to attend shows so often that his bear learns to dance the couchee-couchee. But for the desertion of his pet bear, which left him alone in the world, only the deacon himself was to blame.'

'After Polly left him of course the deacon had to keep house himself. Men folks are never good hands at such work—the deacon's meals were badly cooked, and everything was upside down. This made him short tempered. Instead of realizing that it was his own sinfulness and folly that were responsible for his wife's leaving

him, the deacon laid all the blame on that poor, abused bear.'

'If you hadn't been such a fool as to dance skirt dances in front of Polly,' he used to say to the bear, 'all this would never have happened.' Then he would hit the bear a good cuff on the side of the head.'

'After a while the bear got so that he didn't want to come home nights, being afraid of harsh words and blows from the deacon. So he would stay out late and when he did arrive home the deacon would have to get out of bed to let him in. One night, just after the deacon was snugly tucked in bed, he heard the bear knocking at the door. Instead of letting the poor, cold animal in, the deacon shoved up the window and shouted to the bear that he would have to stay out all night. 'If you get cold,' he added, 'you can amuse yourself and keep warm by dancing a skirt dance, or the couchee-couchee, or some other of those fool performances that brought disgrace on yourself and your worthy owner.'

'Of course, the bear couldn't dance without music, and, after waiting out in the cold until he was almost frozen, he took to the woods. And he never came back. The deacon was heart broken when he found his pet had left him for good. But I didn't feel much sympathy for him. 'Just like a man,' I said to Polly: 'ill-treats the companion of his sinful pleasures and then wonders that he or she don't love him forever.'

The Elephant As a Worker.

Mr. E. N. Buxton, in discussing the question of the preservation of big game in Africa, points out the great difficulty of protecting elephants, on account of the high market value of their tusks, and then avers that personally he is opposed to the destruction of elephants at all, on the ground that, valuable as they are for their ivory, they might be still more valuable as weight carriers. The idea of employing elephants as domestic animals of burden is not new, and many have testified to the patient and effective manner in which they apply their enormous strength in the service of man.

The Bicycle Wheel in Astronomy.

At the Yale observatory an interesting use has been found for the bicycle wheel. By fitting such a wheel with a series of opaque screens placed at regular intervals and then rotating it, with the aid of a small motor, at the rate of from 30 to 50

turns in a minute in front of the cameras used to photograph meteors, Dr. Elkin has succeeded in measuring the velocity of the meteors' flight. The principle depends upon the interruptions produced by the screens in the trails of light made upon the photographic plates by the flying meteors. The velocity of the wheel is known at every instant by means of a chronographic record, and the length of the interruptions indicates the speed of the meteors.

The Origin of Writing.

Arthur J. Evans, the discoverer of the remains of a great prehistoric palace at Knossos in Crete, which is believed to be the original of the fabled 'Labyrinth,' says that the revelations made there carry back the existence of written documents on Greek soil some eight centuries beyond the earliest known monuments of Greek writing, and five centuries beyond the earliest dated Phoenician record as seen on the Moabite stone. These discoveries, therefore, place the whole question of the origin of writing on a new basis. Mr. Evans thinks that the Cretan hieroglyphs exactly correspond with what, in virtue of their names, we must suppose to have been the pictorial originals of the Phoenician letters on which the alphabet is based. Among these are Aleph, the ox's head; Beth, the house; Daleth, the door, and so forth. This contravenes the old theory of De Rouge that the Phoenician letters were derived from early Egyptian forms signifying quite different objects.

Breaking up a Mob.

The Chinese carefully avoid being caught in the rain. They have a superstition that drops of rain falling on the head breed vermin, which with their very long hair, is very difficult to get rid of. But they are equally careful not to wet their feet. This latter precaution is not due entirely to the fact that the soles of their shoes are made of pasteboard and liable to be injured by soaking, but a belief that soreness of the feet is brought about by getting them damp. In commenting on these peculiarities, Leslie's Weekly prints the following:

The Chinese fear of rain has sometimes had a striking effect on mobs and armies. At the time of the massacre in 1870, at Tientsin, the mob burned the French consulate, with the cathedral and the convent, destroyed the orphanage of the Sisters of Charity, and murdered the consul, the Sisters and several priests. Then the crowd started toward the other settlement, determined to put all foreigners to death. The cathedral behind it was in flames, and the mob, fresh from the torture of nuns, was hungry for blood. It started down the Taku road with frenzied shouts and the beating of drums and gongs, when suddenly rain began to fall. That was the end of the massacre. The crowd covered their heads and scattered.

How Old are the Big Trees.

An age as great as 5,000 years has sometimes been ascribed to the giant trees of California. Prof. Charles E. Bessey, of the University of Nebraska, regards this estimate as very much exaggerated. He says that he once counted with great care the rings of growth of a tree felled in 1853, and which was fully 24 or 25 feet in diameter, so that its stump served as the floor of a dancing pavilion. The rings numbered 1,147, and that number would represent the age of the tree in years. Professor Bessey adds that he gravely doubts whether any of the existing trees approach the age of 2,000 years.

The Beet Beats the Sugar-Cane.

According to a recent consular report from Magdeburg, Germany, the production of beet-sugar in the world is now twice as great as that of cane-sugar. This victory of the beet over the cane is ascribed to the influence of the science of chemistry in developing the industry of beet-sugar-making. This influence is especially exerted in Germany, where more than a thousand chemists are exclusively employed in the sugar factories. The manufacture of beet-sugar has taken a sudden start in Spain since she lost her colonies in the war with the United States.

Trains With a Motor at Each End.

Experiments are being made on the Wannsee Railroad between Berlin and Zehlendorf, Germany, to determine the precise value of electric propulsion as a substitute for steam. The train used consists of eight ordinary cars and is provided with an electric motor car at each end, the advantage of this arrangement being that the reversing of the train at the terminals of the journey becomes unnecessary. Thus far the electric power has proved to be about fifteen per cent cheaper than steam power.

McSwatters—Another duel in Kentucky. McSwatters—Both contestants killed? McSwatters—Neither of them touched; but six spectators are expected to die.



BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS.