

# THE STAR AND BANNER.

BY D. A. & C. H. BUEHLER.

FEARLESS AND FREE.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

GETTYSBURG, PA. FRIDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 30, 1890.

NEW SERIES—NO. 204.

## SNAKES & SNAKE CHARMERS.

A recent number of *Bentley's Miscellany* contains an account of the method of snake charming practiced in the East, which we find so interesting that we give our readers the substance of it:

### THE SNAKE CHARMERS IN LONDON.

At the present time there are at the London Zoological Gardens two Arabs, who are eminently skilled in what is termed "Snake Charming." In this country, happily for ourselves, we have but little practical acquaintance with venomous serpents, and there is no scope for the development of an active skill in the art referred to in the visit, therefore, of these strangers is interesting, as affording an opportunity of "holding fast" which has hitherto been known to us only by description. We propose, therefore, to give some account of their proceedings.

Visiting the Zoological Gardens will remark, on the right hand side, after they have passed through the tunnel, and ascended the slope beyond a neat, wooden building in the Swiss style. This is the reptile house, and while our readers are looking towards it, we will describe the performance of the Serpent Charmer.

The names of these are Jubar-Abou-Hajib, and Mahomed-Abou-Merwan. The former is an old man, much distinguished in his native country for his skill. When the French had occupied Egypt, he collected serpents for the naturalists, and was sent for to Cairo to perform before General Bonaparte. He described to us the General, as a middle sized man, very pale, with handsome features, and a very keen eye. Napoleon watched his proceedings with great interest, made many inquiries, and dismissed him with a handsome "back-sheesh." Jubar is usually dressed in a coarse, loose borsoose of loose brown serge, with a red cap on his head. The gift, or craft of serpent charming, descends in certain families from generation to generation; and Mahomed, a small active lad, is the old man's son-in-law, although not numbering sixteen years. He is quite an Adonis as to dress, wearing a smart, richly-embroidered, dark-green jacket, carried in a white sash, over his right shoulder is a white loose vest, full of trawlers, tied at the knee, scarlet, and a fox or red cap with a blue tassel of extra proportion on his head; in his right ear is a ring, so large that it might pass for a certain ring.

### WHAT THE SNAKES ARE MADE TO DO.

Precisely as the clock strikes four, one of the keepers places on the platform a wooden box containing the serpents, and the lad Mohammed proceeds to tuck up his ample sleeves as far as possible, to have the arms bare. He then takes off his cloth jacket, and opening the box draws out a large Cobra di Capello, of a dark copper color, which he holds at arms length by the tail, and after allowing it to writhe about in the air for some time, he places the serpent on the floor, still holding it as described. By this time the cobra has raised his hood indignant at the cruel restraint he is receiving. Mohammed then pinches and teases him in every way, until the cobra strikes at him, but with great activity the cobra is avoided. Having teased the snake for some time Mohammed rises, and placing his foot upon the tail, irritates him with a stick. The cobra writhes and strikes sometimes at the stick, sometimes at his tormenter's leg, and again at his hands, all of which is avoided with the utmost nonchalance. After the lapse of about ten minutes, Mohammed coils the cobra on the floor and draws out another for ferocious cobra. While Mohammed holds this by the tail he pinches him on the head with his fingers, and teases him by the throat, until he is quite furious, then he quickly strikes him by the throat. The cobra writhes like a neckless around his neck. Then the tail is tied into a knot around the reptile's head, and again head and tail into a double knot.

After amusing himself in this way for some time, the serpent is laid in his quiet, and stretched on his back, the neck and chin being gently stroked. Whether any sort of magnetic influence is produced we know not, but the snake remains on his back, perfectly still, as if dead. During this time the cobra has remained coiled up with his head erect, apparently watching the proceeding of the Arab. After a pause, the lad takes up the second cobra, and carrying it to the first, pinches him on the head with his fingers, the cobra writhes and strikes at him, but with great activity the cobra is avoided. Mohammed then leaves the cobra in charge of Jubar, and draws a third snake out of the box. This is the cobra in a variety of apparently impossible knots, and then holding him at a little distance from his face, allows the snake to strike him, just dodging each time sufficiently far to avoid the blow. The serpent in these places in his bosom next the skin and left there, and it is not so easy, always time, to draw it out of its warm resting place. The tail is pulled, but no movement is around the tail's body and will not move. After several unsuccessful efforts, Mohammed rubbed the tail briskly between his two hands, a process which, it is plainly visible, is the reverse of a grebe. At last Mohammed pulls him held over-hand—as the sailors say—and just as the head flies out, the cobra makes a spring at his tormenter's face, for which he receives a smart cuff on the head; and is then, with the others, replaced in the box.

### HOW IS IT DONE.

Dr. John Davy, in his work on Ceylon, denies that the fangs are extracted from the serpents which are exhibited, and says that the only charm employed is that of courage and confidence—the natives avoiding the stroke of the serpent with wonderful agility, adding that they will play with any hooded snake, but with no other poisonous serpent. In order that we might get at the truth, we sought it

from the fountain-head, and our questions were most freely answered by Jubar-Abou-Hajib, who acted as an interpreter. He says he is a serpent caught in the first instance!

A. I take this cobra, (holding up a sort of geological hammer mounted on a long handle), and as soon as I have found a hole containing a cobra I knock away the earth till he comes out, or can be got at; I then take a stick in my right hand, and seizing the snake by the tail in the left, fold it at arm's length. He keeps trying to bite, but I push his head away with the stick. When this has been done long enough, I will strike up to his head and fix it firmly to the ground; and taking the cobra and forcing open his mouth, I break off the fangs with it, carefully removing every portion; and especially squeezing out all the poison and blood, which I wipe away as long as it continues to flow; when this is done the snake is harmless and ready for use.

Q. Do the ordinary jugglers, or only the hereditary snake charmers, catch the cobra?

A. We are the only persons who dare to catch them, and when the jugglers want snakes they come to us for them; with that adze (pointing to the hammer) I have caught and taken out the fangs of many thousands.

Q. Do you get any other snakes besides cobras for your exhibition?

No; because the cobra is the only one that will fight well. The cobra is always ready to give battle, but the other snakes are sluggish, only bite, and can't be taught for our exhibitions.

Q. What do the Arabs do if they happen to be bitten by a poisonous snake?

A. They immediately tie a cord tight round the arm above the wound, and cut out the bitten part as soon as possible—some burn it; they then squeeze the arm downward, so as to press out the poison; but they don't suck it because it is bad for the mouth; however, in spite of this, they sometimes die.

Q. Do you think it possible that cobras could be exhibited without the fangs being removed?

A. Certainly not, for the least scratch of their deadly teeth would cause instant death, and there is not a day that we exhibit that we are not bitten, and no skill in the world could prevent it.

Such were the particulars given us by a most distinguished professor in the art of snake charming; and, therefore, they may be relied on as correct; the matter-of-fact way in which he acted, as well as related the snake catching, bore the impress of truth, and there certainly would appear to be far less mystery about the craft than has generally been supposed.

### THE SNAKE HOUSES.

The reptile house is fitted up with much attention to security and elegance of design. Arranged along the left side are roomy cages painted to imitate mahogany, and fronted with plate glass. They are ventilated by perforated plates of zinc above, and warmed by hot water pipes below. The bottoms of the cages are strewn with sand, and in those which contain the larger serpents, strong branches of trees are fixed. The advantage of the plate glass fronts is obvious, for every movement of the serpent is distinctly seen while its great strength confines them with perfect safety. Each cage is, moreover, provided with a pan of water.

Except when roused by hunger, the serpents are generally in a state of torpor during the day, but at night draw on, they, in common with other denizens of the forest, are roused into activity. In their native state, the cobra lies in wait, coiled round the branches of trees, ready to spring on the antelope and other prey as they pass through the leafy glades; and the smaller serpents silently glide from branch to branch in quest of birds on which they feed. As we have had the opportunity of seeing the reptile house by night, we will describe the strange scene.

About 10 o'clock one evening during the last Spring, in company with two naturalists of eminence, we entered that apartment. A small lantern was our only light, and a faint illumination of this imparted a ghastly character to the scene before us. The clear plate glass which faces the cage was invisible, and it was difficult to believe that the monsters were in confinement and the operators secure. Those persons who have only seen the cobra and pythons, the rattlesnakes and vipers, lately hanging in festoons from the forks of the dens, or slightly coiled up, can have no conception of the appearance and actions of the same creatures at night. The huge boas and pythons were coiled each other in every direction, whisking about the dens with the rapidity of lightning, sometimes huge coils around the branches, once entwining each other in massive folds, then separating, they would rush over and under the branches, hissing and lashing their tails in hideous sport. Ever and anon, thirsty with their exertions, they would approach the pans containing water, and drink eagerly, tapping it with their forked tongues. As our eyes became accustomed to the darkness, we perceived branches of trees in the den of the biggest serpents, we perceived a pigeon roosting, apparently indifferent to the turmoil which was going on around in the vicinity of the monster whose meal it was soon to form. In the den of one of the smaller serpents, was a little mouse, whose panting sides and fast beating heart showed that it, at least, disliked its company. Misery is said to make us acquainted with strange bed fellows; but evil must be the star of that mouse or pigeon whose lot it is to be the comrade and prey of a serpent.

### THE STING AND A BITE.

The expression "sting," as used repeatedly by Shakespeare, as applied to snakes, is altogether incorrect; the tongue has nothing to do with the infliction of injury. Serpents bite, and the difference between the harmless and the venomous serpents is simply that the mouths of the harmless snake and the whole tribe of bees are provided with sharp teeth, but no fangs; their bite therefore is innocuous; the pos-

sionous serpents, on the other hand, have 2 poison fangs attached to the upper jaw, which lie flat upon the roof of the mouth when not in use, and are concealed by a fold of the skin. In such fangs is a tube which opens near the point of the tooth by a fissure; when the creature is irritated the fangs are at once erected. The poison bag is placed beneath the ampules which act on the lower jaw, so that when the fangs are struck into the victim the poison is ejected with much force to the very bottom of the wound.

But how do the constrictors swallow goats and antelopes, and other large animals, whole? The process is very simple; the lower jaw is not united to the upper, but it is hung to a long stalk-shaped bone, on which it is moveable; and the bone is only attached to the skull by ligaments, susceptible of extraordinary extension. The process by which these serpents take and swallow their prey has been so graphically described in the second volume of the Zoological Journal, by that very able naturalist and graceful writer, W. J. Broderip, Esq., F. R. S., that we shall transcribe it, being able from frequent ocular demonstrations to vouch for its correctness. A large buck rabbit was introduced into the cage of a constrictor of great size; the snake was down and motionless in a moment. There he lay like a log, without one symptom of life, save what glared in the small bright eyes twinkling in his depressed head. The rabbit appeared to take no notice of him, but presently began to walk the cage. The snake suddenly, but almost imperceptibly, turned his head according to the rabbit's movements, as if to keep the object within the range of his eye. At length, the rabbit, totally unconscious of his situation, approached the ambushed head. The snake dashed at him like lightning. There was a blow—a scream—-and instantly the victim was locked up in the coils of the serpent. This was done almost too rapidly for the eye to follow; at the same instant the snake was motionless—the next he was one congeries of coils around his prey. He seized the rabbit round the neck, just under the ear, and was evidently exerting the strongest pressure round the throat of the quadruped, thereby preventing the expansion of the chest, and at the same time depriving the anterior extremities of motion. The rabbit never cried after the first seizure; he lay with his hind legs stretched out, still breathing with difficulty, as could be seen by the motion of his flanks. Presently he made one desperate struggle with his hind legs, but the snake cautiously applied another coil with such dexterity as completely to manacle the lower extremities, and in about 8 minutes the rabbit was quite dead. He then very gradually and carefully uncoiled himself, and finding that his victim moved not, opened his mouth, let go his hold, and put his head opposite the fore-part of the rabbit. The box, generally, I observed, begins at the head; but in this instance, the serpent having begun with the legs, was longer in gorging his prey than usual, and in consequence of the difficulty presented by the awkward position of the rabbit, the dilation and secretion of his lubricating mucus were excessive. The serpent first got the fore-legs into his mouth; he then coiled himself round the rabbit, and appeared to draw out the dead body through the folds; he then began to dilate his jaws, and folding the rabbit firmly in a coil, as a point of resistance, appeared to exercise at intervals the whole of his anterior muscles in protruding his stretched jaws and lubricating mouth, and throat, at first against and soon after gradually upon and over his prey. When the prey was completely ingulfed, the serpent lay for a few moments with his dilated jaws as still drooping with the mucus, which had lubricated the parts, and at this time he looked quite sufficiently disgusting. He then stretched out his neck, and at the same moment the muscles seemed to push the prey further downward. After a few efforts to replace the parts, the jaws appeared much the same as they did previous to the monstrous repast.

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## THE BARONET'S DOG.

The Lyons diligence was just going to start for Geneva. I climbed on the roof, there was still a vacant seat, and the porter, after closing the door of the coupe, called "Monsieur Dermin!" A tall young man, with a German style of countenance, advanced, holding in his arms a large black greyhound, which he vainly tried to place on the roof.

"Monsieur," said he, addressing me, "will you have the kindness to take my dog?"

Heeding over, I took hold of the animal, and placed him on the straw at my feet. I observed that he frequently stretched his legs, and looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as the diligence started, he looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as the diligence started, he looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as the diligence started, he looked at me with a steady gaze.

"I do not surprise me," he answered, "that this collar should puzzle you; and I shall have great pleasure in telling you the story of his wearer. Be he belongs to me, but it is not many years since he was owned by another master, whose name is on his collar. You will see why he still wears it—Here, Bevis! speak to this gentleman."

The dog raised his head, opened his bright eyes, and laying back his long ears, uttered a sound which might well pass for a salutation.

M. Dermin placed the animal's head on his knees, and began to unfasten the collar.

Instantly Bevis drew back his head with a violent jerk, and darted toward the luggage on the binder part of the roof. There, growling fiercely, he lay down, while his muscles were stiffened, and his eyes glowing with fury.

"You see, Monsieur, how determined he is to guard his collar; I should not like to be the man who would try to rob him of it. Here Bevis!" said he, in a soft, caressing tone. "I won't touch it again, poor fellow! Come and make friends!"

The greyhound hesitated, still growling at length he returned slowly toward his master, and began to lick his hands; his muscles gradually relaxed, and he trembled like a leaf.

"There, boy, there," said M. Dermin, caressing him. "We won't do it again; lie down now, and be quiet."

"What a dog! I know his master's feet, and went to sleep. My fellow traveler turning toward me, began:

"I am a native of Subbia, but I live in a little village of the Sherdan, at the foot of the Grimsel. My father keeps an inn for the reception of travellers going to St. Gothard.

"About two years since, there arrived at our house one evening a young Englishman, with a pale, sad countenance; he travelled on foot, and was followed by a large greyhound, this Bevis, whom you see. He declined taking any refreshment, and asked to be shown his sleeping room. We gave him one over the common hall. Presently we heard him pacing rapidly up and down; from time to time uttering broken words, addressed no doubt to his dog, for the animal moaned occasionally as if replying to and sympathizing with his master. At length we heard the Englishman stop, and apparently strike the dog a violent blow, for the poor dog gave a loud howl of agony, and stepped as if he ran to take refuge under the bed. Then his master growled aloud. Soon after he lay down, and was quiet for the night. Early next morning he came down, looking still more pale than on the previous evening, and having paid for his lodging he took his knapsack, and resumed his journey, followed by the greyhound, who had eaten nothing since their arrival, and whose master seemed to take no further notice of him than to frown when the creature required to be kept in.

"About noon, I happened to be standing at the door, looking toward the direction which the Englishman had taken, when I perceived a dark object moving slowly along. Presently I heard howls of distress, proceeding from a wounded dog that was dragging himself toward me. I ran to him, and recognized the Englishman's greyhound. His head was torn by a bullet, and one of his paws broken. I raised him in my arms, and carried him into the house, where I crossed the threshold he made evident efforts to escape; so I placed him on the ground. Then, in spite of the torture he was suffering, which caused him to stagger every moment, he dragged himself up stairs, and began to scratch at the door of the room where his master had slept, missing at the same time, so pitifully, that I could scarce help weeping myself. I opened the door, and with a great effort he got into the room, looked about, and not finding whom he sought, he fell down motionless.

"I called my father, and perceiving that the dog was not dead, we gave him all possible assistance, taking, indeed, as much care of him as though he had been a child, so much did we feel for him. In two months he was cured, and showed us much affection; we found it, however, impossible to take of his collar, even for the purpose of binding up his wounds. As soon as he was able to walk, he would often go toward the mountain and be absent for hours. The second time this occurred we followed him. He proceeded as far as a part of the road where a narrow defile borders a precipice; there he continued for a long time, smelling and scratching the ground. We conjectured that the Englishman might have been attacked by robbers on this spot, and his dog wounded in defending him. However, no event of the kind had occurred in the country, and, after the strictest search, no corpse was discovered. Recollecting, therefore, the man-

ner in which the traveller had treated the dog, I came to the conclusion that he had tried to kill the faithful creature. But wherefore? This was a mystery which I could not solve.

"Bevis remained with us, testifying the utmost gratitude for our kindness. His intelligence and good humor attracted the strangers who frequented our inn, while the inscription on his collar, and the aid we had to tell of him, failed not to excite their curiosity.

"One morning in autumn I had been out to take a walk, accompanied by Bevis. When I returned, I found seated by the fire, in the parlor, a lady newly arrived from Geneva, who looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as she perceived me, she started up, and called to her dog, who immediately darted toward me, and, seizing my hand, laid his head on it, and uttered a sound which I recognized as the sound of his collar. He then looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as the diligence started, he looked at me with a steady gaze. As soon as the diligence started, he looked at me with a steady gaze.

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## THE HERMIT.

"A BALLAD—BY GOLDSWORTHY.

"Twas gentle hermit of the dale,  
And gentle, lonely way,  
To where you reap, where the vale  
With flowers and grasses gay,  
For long and long I tread,  
With fainting steps and slow;  
Where wild, in measure spread,  
Sweet meditation to I go.

"I learned to play the lute,  
And to sing the hermit's cry,  
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## A DEATH-BED SCENE.

The following is an extract from the life of John Randolph, of Roanoke, by Hugh A. Garland, which has just been published:—

"Next morning (the day on which he died,) Dr. Parish received an early and urgent message to visit him. Several persons were in the room, but soon left it, except his servant, John, who was much affected at the sight of his dying master. The Doctor remarked to him, 'I have seen your master very low before, and he has recovered; and perhaps he will again.'"

"John knows he will again," said he. "He then looked at the Doctor with great intensity, and said, in an earnest and distinct manner, 'I confirm every disposition in my will, especially that respecting my slaves, whom I have manumitted, and whom I have made provision.'"

"I am rejoiced to hear such a declaration from you, sir," replied the Doctor, and soon after proposed to leave him in a short time, to attend to another patient. "You must not go," was the reply; "you cannot, you shall not leave me—John! take care that the Doctor does not leave the room."

John soon locked the door, and reported, "Master, I have locked the door; and got the key in my pocket; the Doctor can't go now."

He seemed excited, and said, "if you do go you need not return."

"The Doctor appeared to him as to the propriety of such an order inasmuch as he was only desirous of discharging his duty to another patient. His manner instantly changed, and he said, 'I retract that expression.' Sometime afterwards, turning an expressive look, he said again, 'I retract that expression.'"

"The Doctor now said that he understood the subject of his communication, and promised that he would explain the matter fully. He replied in his peculiar way, 'No, you don't understand it; I know you don't.' On laws are extremely precise on the subject of slaves; a will may nullify them, but provision for their subsequent support requires that a declaration be made in the presence of a white witness; and it is requisite that the witness, after hearing the declaration, should continue with the party, and never lose sight of him until he is gone or dead. You are a good witness for John. You see the propriety and importance of your remaining with me; your presence will make allowance for your situation. John told me this morning—master, you say dying."

The Doctor spoke with entire candor, and replied that it was rather a matter of surprise that he had lasted so long.

He now made his preparations to die. He directed John to bring him his father's great button; he then directed him to