

MARCO'S VIOLIN

BY ALEC BRUCE

(Copyright, 1904, by Alice Bruce.)
 Flip! The crimson scalloped flaps of the performers' entrance parted suddenly and Geronimo stepped into the light.
 "Black, black as pitch," he muttered, and at the swift change from ring glare to inky darkness his tired eyes blinked as he swept the darker silhouettes, the sun-blistered managere's cars standing gaunt and silent on a sidetrack.
 Tap-tap-tap-tap! A heavy rain had just ceased falling and in the blaze of light under the high, covered archway big, sparkling drops glistened on the fly's edge, tattered the taut-stretched roof of the mammoth tent and splashed into the trench below. No other sounds save the shuffling

to the crescent on his quivering chin. He looked the fool he slightly acted.
 "Ah, but no, but no, Senor Quereño," he was arguing. "Ma'amelle did not send you. You say so, but ma'amelle does not trust you. I know! And Marco? No, no, you lie! Bah! that spell in your eyes, senor. Keep that for fools!"
 "Come, come," urged the Spaniard. "We must hurry, Geronimo."
 "Ah, Senor Quereño, Geronimo," muttered Callagan hoarsely. "You bring me bad news, sad news. Marco, Marco, and so young, so young? A violinist, Quereño, a trick performer, Geronimo, a horseman, a gentle lad. I shall never engage his like

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 Suddenly out from the troupe car to the little railed platform stepped Senor Quereño, a burly man with a mustache at his lips. "Brothers, sisters, members of the troupe, Manager Callagan would speak with you. To the ring, to the ring," he says. Come one, come all."
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IN TONES FULL OF MEANING HE WHISPERED: "ONCE AGAIN I ASK YOU, IS YOUR OFFER GOOD?"

of feet, the buzz of many voices and the muffled strains of the violins within. Martino was juggling with the ten golden balls. Standing a moment beneath the dazzling archway, Geronimo satisfied the longing of his lungs. "Me-ah!" again and again he breathed, for the fragrance of sprouting sage filled the rain-cooled air and the heat of the ring had been intense.
 "But, the light in the troupe car, sick Marco's light? I cannot see it," he muttered, stepping into the shadows and shading his eyes with his hands. "And—and Callagan said there was a light!"
 From the benches scarlet and yellow on his bosom he pulled out his watch and glanced at it; then over at the big, green posters flapping idly on the canvas walls. "Ah, only five minutes till I hold the drum, and I must not keep Ma'amelle waiting. I have never kept her waiting! But Marco, her brother Marco, Ma'amelle is so anxious, she will ask—and then—I cannot tell. Bah, Geronimo! you have time—time and to spare. Go; ask Marco how he fares. He has drawn down the shade, that is all."
 Gloomily he glanced down at his shoes, spangled, immaculate, white.
 But Geronimo's mind was made up. Where Ma'amelle Marie Selini was concerned it did not take him long to decide. So thrusting his hands deep into the wide, frilled pockets of his long, yellow pantaloons, he drew them up almost to his knees and tipped quickly off in the direction of the troupe car.
 Almost at the platform he halted suddenly, muttering anathemas on a miniature mud lake shimmering between him and the car. Bah! to think there had not been a spot on his shoes, and now?

again. Faults, Quereño, faults? Have we not all our faults?"
 The apple at the manager's throat slipped a cog as he spoke. A few quivering notes trilled in his even patched tones; but no one had even seen a tear in Callagan's eyes.
 "And—and, gentlemen," he continued suddenly, "not a hint to Ma'amelle; not a word, remember! She is in the ring now and she must not know. It's the high jump through the drum tonight. There must be no headache, no strain upon her. And the intrigue, the intrigue! Why, Geronimo, you are billed with her. You are due now. Heavens, man, a brave face, a brave face!"
 Ting, ting, ting. A bell rang in the ring. The orchestra struck up a horse-prancing air and Geronimo brushed through the curtains.
 "Ladies and gentlemen! Shentlemen and ladies! Ta-rum, ta-rum, ta-rah-rah!" He was talking round the ring in his inimitable way, his long pantaloons drawn up to his ankles, marching time to the music, matching the long, pawing steps of the Ma'amelle's steed.
 "Ha, ha, ha."
 Loud roars of laughter, round after round of applause, greeted the droll exhibition and rippled through the interlude.
 "Listen to him, listen to him, Quereño," whispered Callagan, peering earnestly through the curtains; "and Ma'amelle, she is laughing, too. She cannot help it. God bless you, Geronimo!"
 In a few minutes came the equestrienne's final dashing act, the high jump from horseback through the drum, the act of the evening. "Ta-rum, ta-rum, ta-rah-rah! Whoop-lah, whoop-lah!" Crack! Whoop—whoop! Swish!
 "Ladies and gentlemen, there is no deception!"
 "She's through the drum, Quereño, through, through, I tell you! Ah, and I must tell her now," groaned Callagan, stepping swiftly back from the eyehole.
 "Quereño, Quereño," he whispered, but Senor Quereño was nowhere to be seen.
 "Hip, hip, hurrah! Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"
 The crash of applause was loud, long and deafening, and in the waiting interval Callagan's big heart grew bigger.
 "Bhrr-r-r-r!" The heavy tinged curtains shot along the pole. On either side, of the exit a row of red-coated grooms lined up and a panting, piebald steed darted through.
 "Marie, Marie!" whispered Callagan, stretching out his strong, fatherly arms. And in a moment the fluttering pink form of the circus' darling was in them.

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Next morning a gloom had fallen on Tim Callagan's roystering troupe. Alike to acrobat, to clown, to the rough horse groom, a still, small voice had spoken. Women, their petty jealousies all forgotten, hunched together like sorrowing sisters. "Ma'amelle, ma'amelle, ah, poor ma'amelle!" Men, dissolute fellows mostly, conversing in whispers, sauntered aimlessly round the tent. "Marco, poor Marco, yah, yah, Marco was a man!"
 All eyes were riveted on the troupe car. Sympathy, sorrow, bereavement transfused them, and Manager Callagan, it was known, had a message to convey. Senor Quereño and the manager had been closeted together all morning. Ah, and Ma'amelle, neither to hold nor to bind, she was going to leave them.
 In the little churchyard across the seas, a little churchyard, where the channel waves to all eternity would sing the requiem, there would Marco Selini sleep. Had it been Ma'amelle, the great scorched desert would have served. But Marco? No, no, brother Marco must go home.
 "Ma'amelle, ma'amelle," Callagan had protested, "you must not leave us."
 But Ma'amelle was obdurate. "Marie, Marie, take me home; you will take me home?" with his tired arms fondly encircling her, Marco had pleaded. And though lost in words, had Ma'amelle promised, her kiss, her tender pressure, her love-light in her eyes had been a promise, and when

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"Three hundred dollars, gentlemen! Bang, bang, bang! Three hundred! Going at three hundred," announced the auctioneer. "Going, going—"

Senor Quereño's face went white; his lips trembled; nervously he stroked his long, black mustache. Bah! a fool's purse must soon give out. "Four hundred dollars, four hundred, sir!"

"Enough, enough, Mister Callagan," cried the clown. "I cannot offer more. But if he wants the violin, only the violin, at \$400, let him have it!"

"Ha ha!" laughed Quereño. "The violin had a miribless ring. 'The—the violin and—the bow, ha ha! That is all I want!"

"Geronimo!" with arching brows, interrupted Callagan. "What else could the senor want? Explain."

For a moment Geronimo seemed to weigh his answer. One moment only, but during that brief space Senor Quereño passed through fire. His whole passionate nature rose in rebellion, fierce and ill-concealed. Curse of all curses on that clown!

"Geronimo!" insisted Callagan.

"Ah, sir, M-Mister Callagan, sir," muttered Geronimo trembling. "Ma'amelle's money, you say it is lost. You have looked everywhere, everywhere. Did you look in the violin? Shake it, sir, shake it. Look in the sound holes. One bill, one great, big bill, that's what brother Marco had, and—ah, y-yes, Marco—Marco might have put it there. Why not, why not, sir?"

"Ha-ha! Ah-ah-ah!" from fifty throats the loud murmur of surprise swelled to one long continued roar.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen? Ma'amelle Selini, hush-sh!" with uplifted hands warned Callagan. "Hush-sh-sh!"

A tattered old program fluttered and whirled from the gallery to the ring. Everyone heard it.

Suddenly, to his ear the manager raised the instrument high and shook it. "My friends," he cried, "there is something in it! A bill, a bill, Marco Selini's bill. Ah, thank God, thank God! Geronimo, it is found!" And in his glance, directed squarely at the Spaniard, a new-born suspicion lurked. "Ah, Senor Quereño, Senor Quereño, in tones full of meaning he whispered, 'once again I ask you, is your offer good?' Four hundred dollars for the violin—only the violin—and the bow!"

All eyes turned rudely on the tightwire walker. The infection of suspicion had spread to every member of the troupe.

"Yah, yah, I—I will buy—will offer—that sum," stammered Quereño crimsoning.

"But—but, Senor Callagan, ah, and do you not think so, too, that this discovery might influence Ma'amelle? Er—the violin, now, she may desire to—to keep? A remembrance, senor, a—a remembrance?"

"Hem! Possibly, senor, possibly," said Callagan, descending slowly from the stand. "But I will see. I will explain to Ma'amelle. One moment, please!"

In a few minutes he returned. "No, senor, no. Ma'amelle desires to sell. 'How kind you are,' she says, 'to offer so much money.' My friends, three cheers, three cheers for Senor Quereño. Come! Hip, hip—"

"And 'Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!' to a man Jerred Tim Callagan's angry troupe.

COAL EXCHANGED FOR WATER

Striking Illustration of the Value of Water in the Arid Districts.

The farmers whose lands are watered by the Larimer county (Colorado) ditch find themselves in a peculiar dilemma. They have 250,000,000 cubic feet of water stored in six reservoirs, but all of these reservoirs are situated lower than the ditch, and the water is, therefore, unavailable for use directly on their farms. In years past this awkward situation has been easily met by the well known exchange system, whereby the lower ditches used water from the Water Supply and Storage company's reservoirs, while that company took in exchange the high water in the river to which the lower ditches were entitled by prior appropriation.

But the water is now so low in the river that these lower ditches are not entitled to any water, and therefore, it is impossible for the Water Supply and Storage company to effect an exchange. Such was the situation last week. Of course, there was no immediate peril, because the company has always Chambers lake to fall back on; but Chambers lake is the last resource and must be husbanded as long as possible to be used for the last irrigation.

B. F. Hotel has an early priority on forty cubic feet of water per second, which he uses as power to operate his mill. After he has used it, it goes to the lower ditches for irrigation. The scheme

now in operation by the Water Supply and Storage company is:

Instead of allowing forty cubic feet of water per second to run past the head-gate of the Larimer county ditch, to be used by the flour mill, this water is taken into the ditch above Bellevue to be used for irrigation. Then to compensate Mr. Hotel for his loss of power the Water Supply and Storage people supply him at their own expense with enough coal to run his mill by steam instead of water. But the lower ditches which are entitled to the water which passes through Hotel's mill are thus deprived of their water. And to compensate the lower ditches for this the Water Supply and Storage company is obliged to turn into the river from its low reservoirs an amount of water equal to that taken out. Thus they are obliged to pay for the water in coal and besides that to return its exact equivalent. For the privilege of exchanging low water for high water the company pays for enough coal to run a flour mill. It is a striking comment on the value of water.

The cost required to operate the mill will cost the Water Supply and Storage company about \$ a day.—Fort Collins Express.

Denver Hearing Continues.

DENVER, Sept. 16.—Interstate Commerce Commissioner Prouty today continued his investigation of the complaints of cattle shippers regarding high rates and poor service on the railroads. Little new developed, the witnesses going over the same ground traversed the past two days. The railroad officials try to justify the advanced rates by showing that the transportation of cattle involved a peculiar risk and made heavy demands on railroad service and equipment.

The Story of the Presidency

By

ALFRED HENRY LEWIS

and

RUDYARD KIPLING

in the

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