

selle Valiant's act, naturally Darrah had a feeling of anxiety that it should be a success, but he was not worrying. He had seen the thing work to perfection at rehearsal many times, and he had such full confidence in the "arrow"—Abarbanell—that he was not disturbed. It was the aim of La Shelle to produce an entirely new act in each capital visited, and "The Flight of the Human Arrow" had been as extensively billed in Berlin as the "Lady and the Lion" automobile act in Paris.

During the intermission between the previous act, of itself a thriller, and the one to follow, which was to conclude the performance, the audience had a moment's respite, while the band played a favourite tune of the fatherland.

At the same time the spectators watched curiously the big machine—described as an "arbalest" in the advertisements—which was being dragged out on its wheels into the centre of the arena, the stringing of the nets, the hanging of the target, and other exciting preparations necessary in the risking of a man's life.

As the band ceased playing, the big announcer, with magnificent air of impressiveness, hand raised to command silence, stepped forward and described the nature of the act to follow. Especial stress he laid upon the fact that the slightest miscalculation would hurl the daring performer to instant death. But such a contingency, he hastened to explain, was most improbable, with the infinite care taken to avoid accident.

He was through. Again the band started a lively air. Darrah stood at his station, watch in hand, eyes glancing eagerly for the entrance of the lithe, athletic figure of Abarbanell, in his attire of steel mesh.

No Abarbanell! The dressing-tent curtain was partly withdrawn, Darrah could see the performers grouped about it, but the "arrow" did not come.

Darrah grew impatient, his face reddened, he gave a startled look at La Shelle standing near, keenly alert, but showing no sign of concern, touched the electric signal for the band-master and the music blared out again. Certainly now Abarbanell would appear,

Darrah thought, gnawing his moustache with nervousness, and muttering anathemas.

"I'll see that this delay costs him fifty," he told himself. "The first time, too—delaying!"

Still no Abarbanell. Darrah was fidgeting like a schoolgirl. He beckoned to Abarbanell's dresser, and attendant, standing at the arbalest, ready to assist his master to go through the hazardous act.

"Where the devil is he?" asked Darrah of the attendant, with a fierce scowl. The man was cowed, and seemed loath to speak.

"Where is he?" demanded Darrah again.

The answer was not calculated to have a soothing effect on the equestrian director.

"I haven't seen him since last night, Mr Darrah. God knows I wish I knew where he was. I've hunted everywhere," he declared in a whisper.

Darrah waited to hear no more. First he started to walk fast; the farther he went the greater grew his speed, until by the time he had reached the dressing-tent entrance he was on a run.

Once inside, he hurried frantically to the spot down the "performers' alley," where the trunk and the belongings of the specialty artist were located, but only the watchman was there keeping an eye on the men's articles of apparel. He had not seen Abarbanell, and supposed he had made his entrance. A messenger was sent to the sleeping-car not far away. No Abarbanell!

Darrah returned to the ring, wondering if he was not the victim of a nightmare. All he saw in the big tent was a white wall of accusing, sneering faces—or it seemed so to his strained nerves. The hisses, faint at first, which came to his ears from different sections, were not imagined. They grew in volume, timid spectators becoming bolder.

The equestrian director was wild with rage, almost overwhelmed with despair. All he could do was to shake his head, make pantomime representations of a man who has done all he could.

There was no help for it. As the

hissing, yells of disapproval, word equivalents in German of "Fake, fake," rose from everywhere, people standing up in their seats and demanding their money to be returned, Darrah got the ear of the announcer.

Presently this leather-lunged, undisturbed personage was bellowing out above the uproar that, owing to the unexplained absence of the performer, the "Flight of the Human Arrow" act would have to be abandoned for that one performance.

As the people filed out, some threatening, others yelling derision, they left a disheartened equestrian director.

It was the first time the circus had failed to live up to the strict letter of its advertisements. Darrah had been with it for years, and he knew its traditions.

From anger and chagrin, Darrah changed to dismay over the prospect of anything serious having occurred to the "arrow." That act was but one of three in the whole show which did not admit of an understudy. Abarbanell had invented the act himself, and no one had been instructed how to take the inventor's place should anything befall. It was a most hazardous feat, which required not only nerve, but knowledge of a peculiar sort—a special manner of holding the body rigid, to ensure safety and a proper flight through the air. Abarbanell stood alone in this regard.

When the act was engaged it had been La Shelle's intention to introduce it to the London public at a return engagement, but an outbreak of epizootic among the horses in London had caused a postponement of the visit to England, and a quick substitution of a route through Germany instead.

It was with many misgivings that Darrah had hurried search made for the absent one. Of course he inquired of Miss Dollie Del Monte, premiere equestrienne of the show, when last she had seen Abarbanell. Miss Del Monte was a dashing little creature, with bright eyes, and pink-and-white complexion, which made her seem more a native of Berlin than New York, where she had been born of German parents.

"Louis? I have not seen him since

last night," she said. "It was in the dressing-tent he said something about wanting to see if the arbalest was shipped O.K., and left me."

She appeared anxious about him, which was only natural, considering the fact that he and Miss Del Monte were engaged. It was Abarbanell's second season with the show. He had started in with a horse act, being a daring rider, and had later trained a troop of cuirassiers—supposed to be direct from France—whose perfect evolutions on horseback eclipsed anything of the kind seen previously.

Search high, search low, they could not find the missing man. What complicated matters still more was that a newly-employed porter of the sleeping-car could not remember whether he had made up Abarbanell's berth that morning or not. The regular porter, an American, had disappeared, and his place had been filled by this man, another American, representing himself as an ex-sailor, picked up in Paris.

After running down every possible clue to discover the whereabouts of the missing man, Darrah put the matter up to La Shelle.

"It's pretty hard on us, boss," he said. "We all know how particular these Germans are about having everything advertised actually seen in the performance. It will mean a heavy fine with the 'arrow' business missing. Excuses won't go."

La Shelle's face was inscrutable for a moment as he looked at the equestrian director, then his eyes shone fiercely.

"We'll have to take in a lot of money to make up our losses," he declared coolly. "What with possible fines and the cleaning out of our ticket-wagon last night, it will make us hustle to pay expenses."

"You don't mean that the ticket-wagon was robbed, Mr. La Shelle?" blurted out the director huskily. His face was the picture of astonishment.

"That's what I do mean exactly," was La Shelle's response. "During the trip last night the ticket-wagon door was opened, and the contents of the safe, including most of the receipts from the day's performances, were sto-

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