

How Idaho Ike Went into the Show Business

Frank N. Stratton

IDAHO IKE, aroused from sweet slumber, wearily drew on a few articles of clothing and stumbled sleepily after the straggling procession of citizens hurrying to the wreck.

"Seems like some folks is allers in a rush," he yawned. "Reckon them cars'll stay thar fer a while? What's th' use uv hurryin'."

He seated himself comfortably upon a great gray boulder a short distance from the track, and calmly contemplated the confusion.

Dimmed and deadened by the pall-like mists of the morning, the flitting forms of rescued and rescuers, the roar of escaping steam, the crackling of luried flames, and the lamentations of hysterical passengers formed a miniature pandemonium suddenly projected into that land of mute mountains and calm cañon, whose heights and recesses had hitherto echoed only the voices of adventurous gold-seekers, the cries of wild beasts, and the semi-daily whistle of a passing locomotive.

A man, lean and long-haired, another, short and rotund, and a woman leading a sobbing little golden-haired girl, issued dejectedly from the envelope of mist and approached Idaho Ike's perch.

"What's th' matter with th' kid?" Ike called out.

"Frightened, sir, only frightened," answered the lean man, glad, apparently, to have excited interest in even so unkempt a questioner. "Nobody hurt much. But baggage burnt. Our costumes, instruments and parapher-

nalía all destroyed. Irreparable loss, sir, irreparable."

"Pairfurnally—what's them?"

"Properties, sir, stage properties. You behold, sir, the DeArcey Philharmonic Company, celebrated in the East, celebrated. Musical artists—and I do a neat turn in magic. My transformation scene——"

"And th' kid—what does she do?"

"Marguerite? The juvenile Patti, sir. Wonderful voice—for her age—only six. You should hear her in——"

"An' ye need a grub-stake."

"I beg pardon."

"What fer?"

"Grub-stake? I don't quite understand——"

"Oh, I say yer up against it—busted—stranded."

"Ah. Yes. True, sir. Quite true. Nothing left but our tickets. And booked for Yellow Rock to-morrow night."

Idaho Ike slid down from his perch.

"Foller me," he commanded.

The DeArcey Philharmonic Company obeyed. In their distress they would have followed anybody.

Down the one street of the straggling town, to the foot of the rise across the gulch, marched the queer procession. Idaho Ike halted.

"Lemme carry th' little gal," he said, half imperiously, half entreatingly. "It's a hard climb."

The child nestled in the long, strong arms, her tired, golden head on the flannel-shirted shoulder. Straight up the slope they toiled, to the rude "hotel" hastily erected to accommodate



"Perhaps it was because Mrs. DeArcey could not sing"

the miners engaged in developing the "Lucky Fall" mine.

"Make yerselves to hum," said Ike, regretfully surrendering his burden. "I'm boss here, an' ye'll git th' best we got. Ye're a-goin' to show here to-night. Ye've got a date with Mister Isaac Irick, manager. That's me. I'm a-goin' into——"

"But, my dear sir," ejaculated the lean man, "impossible! No instruments—no opera house—no music—no properties——"

"Dern th' properties! What kind o' instruments do ye need?"

"Well, a piano, two violins, and——"

"Pianer! Why, pardner, they haint

no pianer in a hundred mile o' here—
ner violins, neither."

The long-haired man groaned, and
wring his bony hands.

"Ef ye could make out with a fiddle
—Sant Cox has got a fiddle—an'
Dutchy's got a flute."

"Excellent, my dear sir, splendid!
Señor Arello can play the flute. We
can manage without music. If the
good people will come——"

"Come? You bet th' good people'll
come—an' th' bad ones, too. You jest
rest up, an' look after th' little gal,
while I see th' boys. We'll fix it."

To the wondering miners, called
from their task, Ike, mounted on a
dump-car, made his first essay at ora-
tory.

"Fellow-cityzens — boys — owin' to
th' wreck this mornin' we hev stran-
gers within our gates, an' one uv 'em
is sure a angel. They're stranded, an'
needin' a helpin' hand. By which I
mean th' Dorsey Phillips Harmoniky
Kumpany, includin' th' kid.

"They haint askin' fer no hand-out.
They're goin' to give value received—
by which I mean they're a-goin' to
give a show here to-night what is a
show, an' we want to turn out hansum.

"We're a-goin' to knock off work
on th' mine this arter-noon, and ye'll
all draw yer pay. Then I wants sum
uv ye to hustle over to town, an' up
an' down th' gulch, an' give th' tip to
th' stragglers an' prospectors. Th'
rest uv ye yank that loose lumber
down into th' gulch, where it widens
out yander. We're a-goin' to build a
opry house, an' I'm a-goin' into th'
show bizness, fer a limited time, only."

At seven o'clock that evening num-
erous lanterns and innumerable stars
illumined a roughly constructed stage
and "dressing-room," and a motley
assemblage that filled and overflowed
the four rows of plank benches.

"Why, it's not inclosed!" exclaimed
the astonished "DeArcey." "And no
box-office—no tickets—no——"

"Don't need no tickets," drawled
Idaho Ike. "You make a hit an' ye'll
git th' stuff. Couldn't keep 'em out
with a forty-foot fence, nohow. Now,
let 'er go."

Mrs. "DeArcey," greeted by vocif-
erous cheers, stepped forth upon the
creaking stage, glanced confidently
down upon the area of unshorn faces,
rolled her eyes tragically upward to-
ward the starry heavens, and pro-
ceeded to "let 'er go."

Her rendition of "Der Erl Konig,"
accompanied by the wailing fiddle and
flute, failed to evoke enthusiasm.
Perhaps it was because Mrs. "De-
Arcey" could not sing. Perhaps it
was because she was even hoarser and
flatter than usual. It might have been
partly for the reason that a melancholy
and amazed coyote, silhouetted, far up
the mountain, against the sky, had
generously added his howls to hers.

To the doubtful encore the lady re-
sponded with a perpetration of "Una
Voce Poco Fa," in which the coyote
assisted with redoubled vigor.

There was an ominous murmur and
shifting of the audience when the
singer retired.

"Lookee here," said Idaho Ike, im-
patiently, "th' boys won't stand fer no
sich Dutch an' Dago bizness. They
wants music. Sumthin' lively an'
devilish. Give 'em th' fiddle an' flute,
once."

Mr. "DeArcey" and "Señor Arello"
glided smilingly out of the "dressing-
room" and began to droll the overture
to "Poet and Peasant." The enrapt-
ured coyote threw his whole soul into
his accompaniment, and was rewarded
by a volley of revolver-shots from
several of the suffering audience, a
proceeding so startling to the two

artists that they suddenly disappeared before the "Peasant" had had his in-nings.

Cries of "Fake," "Bum," "Shoot 'em up," followed the exit.



"Up the slope toward the 'hotel'"

"I tell ye they won't stand fer this," Ike expostulated. "They've be'n lick-erin' up, an' ye must give 'em sum music."

"Music! Music!" cried the trembling "DeArcey."

"My dear sir, we are offering them the choicest work of the best masters, the soul-symphonies of——"

"Cut out yer sole simfunny's," howled Ike. "Don't ye know enny music—Old Zip Coon, er th' Arkansaw Traveler, er——"

"Sir," cried the long-haired man, "you insult us. We are artists——"

A chorus of wild yells, punctured by revolver shots, interrupted his protest.

"There's a-goin' to be fragments uv artists scattered up an' down th' gulch in about two minnits ef ye don't ante up," observed Ike.

"If I only had my properties," whimpered the quaking "DeArcey," as a premonitory volley of stones rattled against the walls of the "dressing-room," "I would soothe them with a manifestation of magic——"

"It'll take some manyfestashuns uv magic to git ye out us this," cried Ike, wrathfully. "What'd ye tell me ye could play fer? Ye've bunkoed th' boys into turnin' out to hear a lot uv——"

The little girl ran to him, pulled him down, and whispered something in his ear, eyeing her parents guiltily.

"That's th' stuff," cried Ike jubilantly. "Give 'em a coon song," and he pushed her toward the stage.

The "DeArcey" interposed.

"Never, sir, never, shall my child descend——"

"Git out'n th' way," yelled Ike, pushing him back, "unless ye want to descend into that mob."

The child sprang fearlessly forth, and at that moment the great, round moon crested the mountain and shone down, full and glorious, upon that little, golden-haired figure, dainty in pink and white, smiling and throwing kisses right and left in all the grace and innocence of childhood.

At sight of that vision, a calm like that which stilled the Sea of Galilee settled upon the clamorous crowd.

Clear and sweet as a silver bell arose the childish voice.

"It ain't no use to sing dem songs to me;
I lub the tunes that hab the melody,
Like 'Suwanee Ribber,' 'Ol' Black Joe,'
'Dixie Lan', an' lots ob mo'—"

Half way through the second verse fiddle and flute chimed softly in, and the audience swayed to and fro with the measure.

Roars of applause followed the little singer's exit, roars that increased until she re-appeared, smiling, and singing as she came forward:

"If you ain't got no money, you needn't
come round—"

Then the crowd, taking the hint, arose, laughing and cheering, and another fusillade, not of stones, but of coin, some of it wrapped in greenbacks, rattled upon the stage.

"Gather it up an' foller me," said Idaho Ike to the long-haired man, as he swung the exhausted child to his shoulder, leaped from the rear of the

stage, and started up the slope toward the "hotel."

"One more?" he asked.

"I'll try," she panted.

"Make it 'Down On The Suwanee River.'"

Three hundred loyal subjects followed the singer up the slope, and three hundred rough voices joined in the song with a vim that made the mountains ring.

At the door of the "hotel" Idaho Ike kissed the laughing child on both rosy cheeks, surrendered her to her mother, and pulled off his hat.

"It's up to us, boys," he said, as he deposited the first contribution. "Don't crowd. Ye'll all git a chance to chip in."

When the morning train pulled out the little singer stood, with the happy "Company," on the rear platform, tossing tiny kisses to the flannel-shirted throng that was sending up three cheers "fer th' kid."

"She is sure a peach," muttered Idaho Ike, gazing wistfully after the disappearing train, "an' I'm mighty proud about goin' into th' show business—fer a limited time only."

