

## Two Dogs and a Jury.

Marguerito Velasquez was a person of some notoriety on the American side of the Texan frontier. There were periods, indeed, when members of his acquaintance, notably the Sheriff's officers, sought his society with an ardor difficult to withstand. The present was one of those occasions; and although Marguerito had shown some coyness about accepting the urgent invitation extended to him, and moreover given the State officials some healthy exercise before allowing them to deliver it personally, yet he had eventually given way to force of circumstances. Fortunately for themselves the representatives of the law and order in Jacobaya knew within a hundred miles or so the localities where Marguerito was likely to be found. His natural modesty would, they were aware, prevent his crossing the Mexican border, where his return had long been awaited with anxiety by certain of his compatriots. Therefore the chase had been short. Still, while it lasted, like most of the proceedings in which Marguerito was actively concerned, it had proved full of interest to the persons sharing in it. But now the object of all these attentions had recognized the uselessness of further resistance, and, feeling that he had done his best, was prepared to rest upon his laurels. Wherein his friend, Don Carlos, agreed with him. The pair, accompanied by a large proportion of the population, made their way toward the court house, a building which but unflatteringly illustrated the quality of the law dispensed within. As a matter of fact, before it became a hall of justice, it had been a loft, and access was still gained to it by a ladder. Marguerito, followed by the judge, the jury, and the crowd, mounted with impassive slowness, and he was shortly occupying a prominent position in the court.

Don Carlos, who suffered from a constitutional objection to climbing, had elected to remain in the yard below. Knowing from past experience that the trial was likely to be a lengthy process, he gravely seated himself upon the ground and prepared to await events. It should be explained that Don Carlos was not handsome. Neither was he good. Still, he possessed merits which might not have been patent to the casual observer. In complexion he was black and tan, being rather like a dachshund in the face, while he strongly resembled a greyhound in the figure. His tail, however, it was impossible to classify, for it belonged to no species or epoch. Owing to his having been dropped by his nurse when a baby, it had a break near the tip, which caused it to curl over his back in a coquettish manner far from exemplifying the real solidity of his character, while its length would have done credit to a cat. Don Carlos himself seemed to be aware that it was not the latest fashion in tails, and he habitually underwent many things in a vain endeavor to sit upon the whole of it at once. He was thus engaged upon the present occasion, when, glancing up, he chanced to catch sight of a bull-mastiff which was strolling slowly into the yard, apparently in search of stray refreshments. Don Carlos pricked up his ears and blinked his eyes, into which the light of battle gradually crept, as the intruder, unconscious of danger, drew nearer every moment.

In the meantime the sonorous tones of the judge, mingled with the drawl of the witnesses, sounded clearly from the loft above. It appeared that Marguerito was accused of horse stealing this time, and as he listened to the details of his error, as described by the sufferers from it, he felt by no means certain but that this might be the last of his many adventures.

"Judge Hopper's got a hanging look about him this morning," he meditated, with an unemotional face. "If I get off this time I will go home to Conchita and they shall find me no more."

The last witness for the prosecution finished his tale of woe, and a feeble effort was made at defence, while Marguerito wondered idly if he really were as great a ruffian as the evidence seemed to imply. Silence, broken only by the buzzing of flies, settled upon the close room, as the judge settled himself in his wooden chair and prepared to sum up. The culprit, who was looking through the window at his side, appeared to be the only uninterested person present. A deputy standing near was about to recall his attention to the proceedings, when, following for an instant the direction of the prisoner's gaze, he, too, became absorbed. The sheriff himself then glanced at the window, through which short barks were beginning to make themselves heard, and, after one look, he rushed to the door and commenced hurriedly descending the ladder. The audience gazed at each other in amazement for an instant, before, with a simultaneous movement, they took a hurried survey of the yard. Having looked, they wasted no more time, but with an expression of rapture stealing over their faces they made for the ladder, accompanied by the prisoner and guard.

The judge, being left alone in the empty loft, frowned severely at the vacant benches as he said with impassive dignity, "I guess this court will adjourn." Then he tucked up his sleeves and made good time for the yard. A vigorous struggle for the best view took place between Marguerito and himself, without either man being in the least aware of the identity of the person by whom he was jostled. Nor would it have made any difference if he had known, because not even for a free pardon would the accused have consented to forego the enthralling sight on which he was feasting his eyes. Affairs were just at their most exciting stage. The bull-mastiff, it appeared, had drawn quite close to Don Carlos before perceiving his presence. He had then, instead of apologizing for the intrusion, critically examined Don Carlos's tail, afterwards giving vent to an insulting bark. This brought matters to a climax, and, in less time than it takes to tell, the two dogs were so inextricably mixed up that but for the appendage in question, waving over the scene like a flag of battle, it would have been impossible to distinguish one combatant from the other.

There was no necessity for the haste displayed by the spectators in reaching the seat of war, for the fray promised to be as long as it was sanguinary. No quarter was asked or desired. The stranger possessed a vast amount of staying power, inasmuch as when he once took hold, little short of extracting his teeth made him let go again. But the military tactics of his opponent were new to him, and prevented his getting an opportunity of showing what he really could do. Don Carlos dashed underneath him and sent him sprawling in the mud; he jumped over his back and gave him a perfunctory bite in passing, and harried his front and rear guards, both at the same time, until the bull-mastiff felt that, for all the good he was able to effect, he might as well be a toy terrier. The ironical cheers of the crowd incited him to fresh endeavor, and he spent himself in frantic efforts to gain the mastery. At length, however, he saw a chance. Making a sudden dash while Don Carlos was in the act of executing one of his wonderful leaps, the bull-dog met him in mid-air, and at last obtained a grip of the enemy's throat. Both dogs then fell to the ground, the stranger savagely worrying his apparently vanquished antagonist. The crowd showed signs of a desire to interfere, but Marguerito waved them back. "Let 'em alone," he said, placidly, "and bet your boots upon Carlos."

That intelligent animal, as he lay beneath his conqueror, appeared to understand and to be encouraged by the faith reposed in him by his master. He gathered his long legs together, planted them firmly against his enemy's body, and the next development of the case was, that the bull-mastiff was seen to be taking an entirely involuntary flight through space. Don Carlos, meanwhile, slowly arose, shook out his tail, and yawned. The discomfited interloper, after a short period of meditation in a dust-heap, picked himself out of the dirt. He looked back at the field of battle, glanced at the open gate through which he had entered, and then in a depressed manner he evidently made up his mind that it was time to leave. He accordingly did so, and not until he had slowly lurched out of sight around a shady corner did Don Carlos creep up to his master for congratulations. That gentleman murmured something in their native Mexican that was clearly intelligible to his companion, for Don Carlos's eyes said plainly that he found life a satisfactory thing. With unlooked-for docility Marguerito turned to ascend the ladder leading to the loft. Brought back to everyday life by his movement, judge, jury and audience followed suit in a silence too blissful for breaking. The prisoner, impassive as ever, resumed his careless survey of the room, letting his gaze rest longest on the benches occupied by the jury. The judge took his seat, scrutinized the faces of the crowd, and, apparently satisfied by what he read there, cleared his throat and began.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "When we were interrupted by unforeseen circumstances a short time ago, I opine that you were just a-going to declare that, according to the best of your belief, the prisoner was innocent of the charge agin him."

"You've struck it, judge," unblushingly responded the jury.

The judge frowned down an attempt at speech on the part of the sheriff, and turned to Marguerito.

"Pris'ner," he said, "you heard the remarks of them gentlemen opposite, so you may take it that the proceedin's is concluded. But don't get up to any more of your tricks in this county, for it 'pears likely that next time you won't get off so easy. And now, what'll you take for the dog?"—*Pall Mall Budget.*

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