

Supplement No. 132

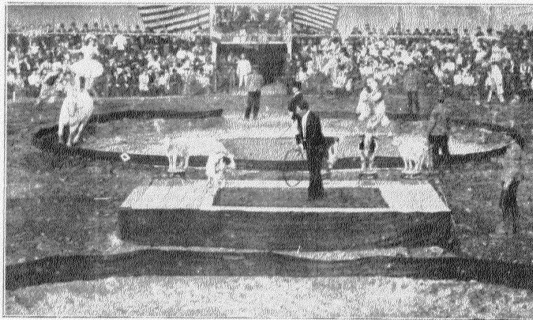
Released December 10, 1908

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Selig's Circus Coming:---The Queen of the Arena



Code Word, CIRCUS -- Length 980 Feet

The Queen of the Arena

The World's Greatest Equestrienne

Released December 10, 1900

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CHICAGO, U. S. A.

THE QUEEN OF THE ARENA

What American boy or girl has not at some time in their lives been thrilled to an ecstasy of delightful anticipation, when the flaming posters announcing the coming of some big circus were being plastered on the fences, barns and billboards of their town? The wonderful sights hidden beneath the thousands of yards of waving canvas; the almost unknown and mysterious lives of the circus folk; the glitter, the music, the big, joyous, eventful day of all days long remains as a delightful memory, as an oasis in the desert of our lives.

The locale of our story is laid in a small, but thriving village of New England. It is circus day and happy throngs of town and country people are swarming into the main entrance of the "Big Top." They are gathered by hundreds around the gaudy ticket wagon, impatiently, yet good naturedly, jostling each other in their haste to reach the window where the coveted pasteboard may be obtained which will admit them to the enchanted canvas palace. They little dream that far back in the dressing tent an anxious wife, the star rider of the big show, is watching over and praying with all the fervor of a mother's love that God will spare her infant child, who is even then gasping for breath in its struggle for life.

Bessie Drew, advertised on the circus bills as "Mlle. Olympe, the World's Greatest Equestrienne," is the wife of Richard Drew, one of the ringmasters of "The Combined Mammoth Shows." Many years her senior, Drew soon became jealous of his beautiful young wife, for she was beloved by all her hard-working comrades of the show for her sunny nature and tender devotion to her only child. On the other hand, Richard Drew was detested for the opposite qualities which had endeared his wife to all who knew her.

Having contracted a heavy cold upon her lungs, little Mildred was fast losing in her desperate fight for life. Frightened at the child's condition and almost beside herself with worry and care, the little mother calls her faithful old godfather, "Uncle Billy," the oldest clown of the circus, and asks him to run for a doctor. Without waiting to remove his make-up, the old fellow hastens to the residence of the nearest physician and implores him to come at once and save the child's life, if possible. Doctor Brown, a kind-hearted man, without waiting for further information, springs into his automobile, and he and Uncle Billy are soon on the circus grounds. Leading the way, Uncle Billy hastens to the dressing tent. With one glance at the child the doctor is convinced that there is little hope of its life unless it can be removed at once from the draughts and cheerless atmosphere of the tent. A quick decision is necessary, and although it tears the mother's heart to be parted from her little one, she consents to the doctor taking it to his own home, wherein the goodness of his heart he has offered to shelter it.

Bessie gave her baby into the doctor's care and, throwing a coat over her riding costume, she declares her intention of accompanying her baby to the physician's home. "Tell my husband I cannot ride this afternoon—baby is too ill," is the message she gives to one of the ring men who comes to tell her that her act is called. Furious at her refusal to ride, her cruel husband soon appears upon the scene and demands her immediate presence in the ring. The kind-hearted doctor resents the ringmaster's brutal manner and tries to explain the seriousness of the situation. Telling the doctor to mind his own business, he seizes his trembling wife roughly by the arm and is about to drag her to the arena. "You dog!" shouts the now thoroughly aroused doctor, as with a well-directed blow from his fist he sends the ringmaster crashing to the ground.

Seeing the serious results of her refusal to ride, Bessie throws off her coat and, although half crazed from grief and anxiety, despite the well-deserved blow he received, Drew, with a smothered oath on his lips,

stalks back to the ring, where he announces the feature act of the performance: "Mlle. Olympe in Her World-Renowned Act of Daring Equestrienne Feats."

THE BIGGEST REPRODUCTION OF A CIRCUS PERFORMANCE EVER STAGED.

Little did the vast audience of pleased spectators dream that a heart was almost breaking in the breast of the petite little circus rider who came bounding into the ring, to be lightly lifted to the back of "Old Caesar," her beautiful horse. No one outside of the circus folk knew of the tragedy that was hovering over the head of the daring little rider, who like a fairy skimming through the air, was holding the audience spellbound. No one knew but the generous-hearted doctor, who stood watching her from the entrance to the dressing tent.

A low moan, a cry of sympathy from the ring side, and little Bessie lay unconscious in the sawdust of the ring. The band stopped playing and the other performers paused in their acts. An accident had happened. Rushing to the prostrate form of the little woman, Doctor Brown gathered her up in his arms despite the threats of the ringmaster, her husband, and carried her almost lifeless form back into the dressing tent.

But the show must go on. Another rider is instantly substituted and the performance is resumed. While the chariots are forming in line for the races and the end of the big show is rapidly approaching for the afternoon, Doctor Brown and old Uncle Billy, supporting the unconscious form of the little rider and her baby, are speeding towards the physician's home. Arriving there, the doctor's father and sister meet them at the door and at once prepare to receive the patients. Carrying them to the spare bedroom, the entire household begin work to restore the mother to consciousness and if possible to save her baby's life. They soon succeed in getting Bessie out of danger, but the child does not respond very readily to treatment. A consultation is held in the library and Uncle Billy is giving directions about his beloved daughter's care, when the ringmaster enters and demands to see his wife. His request is refused and he is ordered out of the house. Determined not to be thwarted, he returns again in the evening, this time accompanied by an officer. He arrives in time to learn that the baby has just died. Realizing the impossibility of his wife being able to resume her place with the show, he leaves the house and a few hours later the town.

For many weeks Bessie lies ill and heart-broken, but the loving care of the doctor's sister and the skillful treatment of the doctor and his father bring the desired results, and slowly the little rider regains her health and strength. The peaceful home with her new friends and the little grave in the churchyard are ties which serve to hold the ringmaster's wife and cause her to feel a dread of ever again returning to the old life.

THE RINGMASTER'S RETURN.

But another cloud must arise to darken the life of the little rider. The fall days are at hand, and the ringmaster, loath to lose the services of so famous a star, returns with the intention of compelling his wife to return to him. Fearing to present himself to the doctor, Drew watches the house until the wife comes out. She is on her way to visit the churchyard to place some flowers on the grave of her dead baby. Following stealthily behind her, Bessie was unaware of the presence of her husband until the sound of his voice caused her to start in terror to her feet, as she was bending over the little mound in the cemetery. "I have come to take you back," were the dread words that greeted her ear. Seeing the look of terror in his wife's eyes, Drew flies into a rage and seizes her roughly in his arms to drag her away. Hearing her cries, an old sexton rushes to her aid and succeeds in rescuing her from her infuriated husband.

Bessie hastens home to her friends and acquaintances with the

details of her encounter with Drew. Quieting her fears, the little woman retires to her room, and after offering up a prayer, closes her eyes, hoping to obtain forgetfulness of the past in blessed sleep.

Drew, however, was not to be so easily thwarted in his purpose, and knowing the utter uselessness of trying to recover his wife by fair means he resorts to foul. Waiting until late at night, he secures a ladder and ascends to the balcony of the house, from where he forces an entrance to the room of his sleeping wife. Before she is able to utter a sound the brutal ringmaster drags her from her bed, under threat of taking her life should she resist, compels her to don her cloak and come with him. Dragging her out upon the balcony, he commands her to descend the ladder. With a scream that arouses the doctor's family, she breaks from her husband's grasp and attempts to return to her room. A desperate struggle ensues. Back and forth from one end of the balcony to the other the maddened wife with her fast waning strength is fighting for her life. Only a miracle can save her now. The unexpected happens. In his eagerness to get her to the ladder, Drew stumbles and falls heavily against the old railing of the balcony. A sudden crash and it gives away. With a cry of horror the brave little rider sees her husband plunge headlong to the ground below.

Now the occupants of the house are aroused and, rushing to the scene of the tragedy, are soon made aware of the cause of Bessie's cries. No time is lost in reaching the prostrate form of the ringmaster, who by a supreme effort summons sufficient strength to beg forgiveness of his wife and then falls back dead in the doctor's arms.

ONE YEAR LATER—THE DOCTOR'S REWARD.

A year has elapsed since the night of the tragedy, and Bessie, who is looked upon and beloved by her benefactors as though she were one of their own family, is restored to perfect health and happiness. No longer able to withstand the doctor's pleadings to become his wife, she gives in and rewards her champion by placing her hand in his for better or for worse.

A visit from "Uncle Billy," who returns to shower his blessings upon his beloved godchild, completes the happiness of our "Little Queen of the Arena," who, surrounded by loving friends and well-wishers, gives up her precarious calling and devotes herself to a life of domestic felicity.

When you see this picture you will be able to realize the enormous expense and undertaking necessary to produce a film of such magnitude.

Follow
the crowd
to see
The Queen
of the
Arena



Scene
One
Entrance
to the
Circus

Produced by The Selig Polyscope Co. on Their Own Grounds