

Mabel demurred at first, as any woman will at a plan that is not of her own fabrication; but at last she gave in and, with a pleasant smile, promised to obey me to the letter.

That evening Mabel signified her intention of not attending the ball, on the plea of a violent headache. Everyone expressed their sympathy and regrets, but I noticed that Captain Terryberry's were but weakly put forth, and that the gallant Purvis was metaphorically shaking hands with himself that such was the case.

"He is not going either," I thought, as I watched his face with a grim smile and an inward chuckle of delight. There will be three of us away from the ball."

So far, so good. That very morning I had received a letter from a friend, the contents of which suggested the little scheme *re* the Captain.

It seems that, three months before (I had not heard of it until then), Terryberry had been concerned in an *affaire d'honneur* in Brussels over a game of cards. One, Eugene Lemaitre was his antagonists. It was a toss-up which was the worst shot, and I am positive that the Terryberry would close both eyes when he pulled the trigger, possibly aim at the ethereal canopy overhead, and, if someone would only throw a stone and hit him anywhere, he would drop in a dead swoon and imagine himself nigh unto death. Terryberry shot young Lemaitre through the right shoulder. It was a terrible accident. Lemaitre had been until lately in a precarious condition, owing to the wound breaking out afresh, but, as I said before, I had that very morning received a letter from a friend, detailing the whole business, and ending with the news: "Lemaitre is now considered out of danger. By the way, do you know where Terryberry has hidden himself?"

Of course, I did not inform my friend where he was, and that night everyone went to the ball except Mabel and the Captain, who at the last moment discovered a telegram calling him to Montreal on important business. I thought to myself, as I listened to this excuse, that I would be willing to wager a cool hundred that the Captain would take that train to Montreal, and also that he had not the slightest intention of taking it at the present time.

All but these two started for the ball—even myself, as far as the water's edge, where, discovering that I had forgotten my handkerchief, and telling the others not to wait, I would go over in the next boat, I made my way back to the hotel, by an unfrequented path, and searched out the hostler, an Irishman of intelligence, who, by the judicious use of a little current coin of the realm, promised to obey my instructions to the letter.

I sent him to a hair shop in the town. To whom the dealer sold his wares the Lord only knows. It may have been to the sirens of the mighty deep. At all events, I told Old Makins to procure me a wig—gray preferred—and also a pair of spectacles.

We were in Makin's cosy room over the stables, and with his aid I invested myself in a pair of old pantaloons, and without removing my dress coat put on an immense great-coat, and with a few artistic touches before a piece of broken mirror, which served as the hostler's hand-glass, affixed the wig and adjusted the spectacles to my liking, and, with an old slouch hat pulled well down over my eyes, stood before my assistant for his approval.

"Be th' powers! Mither Avis. Sure an' yer not Mither Avis now at all, at all. Faith an' th' loikeness that ye be to Tim McClusky, th'ould bay pilot—God rist his sowl!—cannot be bate fur bein' twins."

I felt highly flattered. Dabbling in private theatricals now stood me in good stead. Smiling through the heavy gray beard, I gave him my final instructions:

"Remember, Tom, I'm a detective from Scotland Yard. When I give the word you are to knock at the drawing-room door, and cautiously whisper to Captain Terryberry that Inspector Bird is below, and that, in drinking a little more than was good for him, he had let drop a few sentences that caused you to seek out the Captain and warn him. The Captain had shot a man; the man had died from his wounds; acting upon a telegram the English authorities had sent a detective to hunt up the murderer, etc."

Tom slowly winked one eye expressively and followed me across the courtyard to the hotel. I told him to wait for me on the piazza while I proceeded to reconnoiter the parlor windows, which were open, the lace curtains being drawn. The night was warm, but very dark. I could stand there unobserved and see and hear those within, being myself unseen.

There, sure enough, sat Mabel in an easy chair drawn up to the table, on which stood a large reading-lamp, the light of which was shaded from her eyes by the intervention of a vase of flowers—her poor head, you know. In spite of her face being thrown into the shade, I thought I detected a smile of anticipation lingering in her eyes and around the corners of her pretty mouth.

"Mabel," I called softly. She started, and getting up quickly, came to the window and drew back the curtains. "How is your head, dear?"

"Oh, Bert, you naughty man!" she replied, with a soft laugh. "If he does not come soon, I do not believe my headache will last. It is becoming well very rapidly, and will be entirely gone in a few minutes."

"A few minutes will do, I think," said I. "Ah! There he is now."

There was a knock at the door. Mabel flew back to her chair, and in a weak voice said:

"Come in."

The door opened, and Captain Terryberry looked in, but started back with well-feigned surprise.

"Pardon me, Miss Vernon, I was unaware you were here. I will not intrude," with a feigned retreat.

"Not at all, Captain Terryberry. This is a public room, I believe, to guests."

He appeared to be much encouraged by her voice. A half smile of satisfaction lighted up his fallow features for an instance, and entering the room he walked aimlessly toward the window at which I was stationed. I hurriedly made my escape through the conservatory door on my right, not without barking my shins severely, by tumbling noisily over a century plant in a tub near the doorway, which would, at any other time, have called up anything but Queen's English, but now only seemed to add a savour of spice to the business in hand. Hearing voices in the direction of the window, I hastened to again occupy my coign of advantage, at the same time whispering to Tom Makins, who had been standing motionless against one of the posts of the piazza, to make his entrance

into the parlour in about fifteen minutes.

"I thought you were going up to Montreal, Captain Terryberry," said Mabel, as she bathed her head with a handkerchief steeped in cologne, without looking up.

"That was my intention, Miss Vernon," he said, as he sat down on the other side of the table. "But I have changed my mind."

"Can your very important business wait, then? It cannot be as important as you at first imagined?"

"No—that is—Mabel! that telegram was all a pretext to give me an opportunity of seeing you again. I am very sorry that you have such a severe headache. (He tried to look as though he was). That opportunity I now take advantage of. Allow me to say again what I said before—what I said this morning, Mabel!"

"Captain Terryberry!" Her voice was soft and tender. No wonder the Captain looked surprised as well as gratified, while "success at last" was written all over his features. My heart sank within me. She will give the whole snap away if she talks like that, I thought with a groan. "Captain Terryberry, I will give you my answer to-morrow morning. I have given it much thought to-day (as indeed she had) until my head aches so that I cannot collect my thoughts sufficiently to thank you (Oh, what a fib; I could feel myself blush as I watched the ingenuous look on her face)—that is, to express to you how happy I will be to speak to you to-morrow morning on a subject—Did some one knock?"

The Captain looked as though he would like to knock the some one down, whoever it was, interrupting such a moment of unutterable bliss.

Tom Makins, in answer to a sharp "come in," turned the handle of the door, and, inserting his Hiberian visage into the room, said, in an impressive voice that sounded sepulchral in the stillness, and almost cost me my position, as a Scotland Yard detective, while his goggle eyes wandered all over the apartment like a bailiff taking mental stock of the furniture—he looked everywhere, except where the two were sitting. (Makins had evidently been expending some of his bribe in fire-water already).

"Is Captain Purvis Terryberry of the 65th Regiment here?" and his eyes at length rested on the object of his search.

"God save ye, sur, but may I make so bowld as to spake wid yer honor a bit?"

"No! Shut the door, I'm busy."

"So I see, sor," remarked Tom, with an audible chuckle, but without complying with the request. "It be very urgent, sor, and I'll save yer honor's grace if I kin. A detective from England—pistols and coffee fer four—man shot in Brussels—fatally—fer he's dead. Come, here, sor, QUICK, before it ur too late."

The Captain jumped hastily off his chair, and, forgetting to excuse himself to his adored, made a bee-line for the door. The said adored appeared to be suffering in the throes of strangulation, judging from certain gurgling sounds which came from that direction, while she seemed to be making violent efforts to swallow her handkerchief. Was she laughing? I am not prepared to say, but lean to that opinion.

Makins approached the Captain, and, possessing himself of a button on his dress coat, gently led him into the hall, and closed the door, while I fled to the coffee-room, three doors down the piazza, and seated myself at one of the tables, and called loudly: