

A SEASIDE COMEDY.

(Concluded.)

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

He seemed much encouraged by her voice. A half smile of satisfaction lighted up his fallow features for an instant, and entering the room, he walked aimlessly towards 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 the savour of salt to the business in hand. Again hearing voices in the direction of the window, I hastened to occupy my coln of vantage.

"I thought you were going up to London, Captain Terrberry?" 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 at the table, "but I have changed my mind."

"No—that is—Mabel, that telegram was only a pretext to give me another opportunity of seeing you. I am very sorry that you have such a severe headache." He looked up as though he was, the smiling, smirking blockhead. "That opportunity I now take advantage of. Allow me to say again what I said this morning—Mabel."

"Captain Terrberry," her voice was soft and tender. No wonder the Captain looked surprised as well as gratified, whilst 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 Terrberry, I will give you my answer to-morrow. 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 tarradiddle. I could feel myself blush as I watched the ingenious 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 down the some one, whoever he was, interrupting as he did a moment of unutterable bliss.

Brian Lynch, in answer to a sharp "Come in," turned the handle of the door, and, inserting his Hibernian visage into the room, said in an impressive voice, which sounded sepulchral in the stillness, and almost cost me my position as a Scotland Yard detective, whilst his goggle eyes wandered all over the apartment like a bailiff taking mental stock of furniture—everywhere he looked, except where the two were sitting—(Mr. Lynch had evidently been expending some of his bribery in fire-water already). "Is Captain Purvis Terrberry, of the 42nd Light Dragoons, here?" and, his eyes at last resting on the object of his search. "God save ye, sor; but might I make so bowld as to spake wid yer honor a moment?"

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

"So I see, sor," remarked Brian, with an audible chuckle, but without complying with the request.

"It is very urgent, sor, and I'll save yer honor's grace, if I kin. A telegram from Brussels—Scotland Yard—come here, sor—quick! Before it is too late."

The Captain jumped off his chair with a bolt, and, forgetting to excuse himself to his adored, hastily approached the door. The said adored seemed to be suffering in the throes of strangulation, judging from certain gurgling sounds which appeared to emanate 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 incline to that opinion.

Brian 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 bar, three doors down the piazza, quickly seated myself at one of the tables, with my back to the door, and called loudly:

"Dalrymple, bring me another brandy and soda. Have you found my man yet? I'll go and hunt him up myself in a minute. My orders are dead or alive. It'll be dead if he doesn't show himself pretty soon."

"I tell you, Inspector, there is no one of that name staying here." (This in a loud and angry voice.)

"What's in a name, I'd like to know!" said I, rising to my feet. "Any other name'll do just as well—Brown, Jones, or Robinson—they have as many names as a jackrabbit, these outlaws of an outraged and long-suffering community."

Now Dalrymple, was the proprietor of the hotel, and was coached beforehand as to his part in the little comedy. He was not overfond of the Captain for his overbearing manner and want of promptness in paying his board bills, and promised to do anything in his power to get rid of him. Poor Terrberry, we were making things hot for him.

Presently I heard steps at the door leading to the hall, and, turning, saw the blanched face of the object of our conversation. Only for a moment, however, as it as suddenly disappeared, while a scurrying along the piazza made me aware that he was off.

I sprang to the door, and, with a whcop like a wild Indian, discharged a blank cartridge or two.

At the first shot the Captain dropped his valise—his only encumbrance besides his conscience—and sped like a deer into the darkness, followed by myself and a hooting mob—guests who happened to be at home, attaches of the hotel, and hangers-on of every description, whilst the very dogs in the stable yard strained at their chains and barked with fury.

Mr. Brian Lynch a little overdid his instructions, for, without my

knowledge, he had stationed himself at a spot near a grassy terrace of four steps, where the wily Irishman shrewdly guessed Terrberry would pass, as it was a short cut to the highway.

Sure enough the Captain came flying over geranium beds, exotics, and rose bushes in a wild desire to reach the south gate—I had purposely led the mob to that at the north, to give him a chance to make good his escape.

As he reached the top of the terrace Mr. Lynch rose up unsteadily from behind a syringa tree, and fired a shot-gun over the fugitive's head, the said fugitive, with a yell of supreme terror, tripped over a shrub and rolled ungracefully to the bottom of the terrace; but instantly regaining his feet sped on through the darkness, hastened, if such were possible, by the boom of a gun from H. M. S. *Arcthusa*, the officers of which good ship, evidently at a loss to know the meaning of the shots, had fired a gun as a signal of help, and at once manned a boat for the shore.

I had returned to the hotel followed by the crowd, who were nothing loth to drink my health in huge pots of good home brewed, and Mr. Lynch lost no time in joining them. I had induced them to return with the assurance that my assistants would grab the criminal before he reached anywhere. I then escaped to my room, finished my toilet, and at once repaired to the drawing-room, where Mabel awaited me, enveloped in shawls and weak with laughing.

Proceeded by Brian, who had joined us, we passed out of the hotel through the crowd on the piazza, who never for a moment imagined that I and the Scotland Yard detective were one and the same person—indeed they treated me with the utmost indifference, while Bird was in every mouth.

We descended to the quay and were rowed by the sturdy arms of Mr. Brian Lynch through the silent waters of the bay to the *Arcthusa*, passing the man-of-war's boat en-route. A word from me to the young lieutenant in command induced him to return with us to the frigate, from which came sounds of the band and joyous laughter. The officers had assured their guests that nothing was wrong—merely a signal with the lightship.

Fifteen minutes later my arm was encircling Mabel's slender waist in a delightful waltz, while the strains of Love's Dreamland, added to the surroundings, soon banished Captain Terrberry from our thoughts.

"Ah! gentlemen! There is my aunt's voice. Let us rejoin the ladies." And, amid a shout of laughter, caused by Germaine saying dramatically—"Captain Terrberry, Herbert Avis and Mrs. Swinton. Oh! what a meeting that will be!" they entered the drawing-room.

ALLAN DOUGLAS BRODIE, in *Toronto Globe*.
THE END.

BRIEF WEDLOCK.

The date of this occurrence is not important—in fact it is just as well left untold. I was on the hotel run for a morning paper in St. Paul at the time, and glancing over the Ryan register one afternoon I saw the name of Mrs. George Trehune. It was written in the long, angular scrawl affected so extensively by women of the dramatic profession, and although I had never before heard of Mrs. Trehune her signature attracted my attention. There is more of instinct than any other sense in selecting from a long list of signatures those of people worth interviewing. Mrs. Trehune's slapdash characters set me wondering what sort of woman she was, and nothing was easier than to find out. So I handed my card to the clerk, pointed to the room, No. 205, and awaited the return of the bell-boy.

In five minutes, or thereabouts, he informed me that I was to "go right up," and up I went.

"Come in," called a voice in answer to my tap on the door. I entered. Near the open fire in an armchair sat a young woman. She wore a white gown of that soft caressing wool that so invariably sets off well the wearer's charms. Rising as I entered she advanced towards me, and her manner at once betrayed the well bred woman. I took a mental photograph of the face and figure before me. The former was oval, well featured, set with a pair of lustrous dark eyes and framed in curls of an indefinable color—half golden, half brown. The latter was tall and shapely.

"Pray be seated," she said, as I began to explain why I had asked for an interview. "Oh, yes," she went on, "I know why you came. I have several friends in the profession, and in fact have the greatest regard for the daily newspaper writers. They are equal to almost anything."

"You flatter the craft," I answered. "Some of us are very retiring. I am—"

"I hope you are not, sir," said my charming vis-a-vis, leaning impulsively forward as she spoke. Her elbow found support on the arm of the chair, her chin rested on her shapely white hand, and her large dark eyes looked straight into mine. It was an embarrassing situation, and I confess I hardly knew what to make of it. With an effort I met the gaze of this strange young woman and said inquiringly: "You dislike nervous people?"

"I should hate myself if that were the case," replied Mrs. Trehune, "for I am all nerves. Oh, dear, dear, if I only dared to do it."

With a sudden whisk she was out of the chair and pacing back and forth on the carpet like a caged lioness. There was very evidently something wrong with Mrs. Trehune. Why, good heavens, she was sobbing!

"My dear madam," I exclaimed, "if I can be of any possible service—"

"Oh, I dare not ask it of a stranger," she protested, throwing up both hands dramatically. "And yet," she added, "none but a stranger would do."

The sight of the tears had scattered my self possession to the winds. I was ready now to fight a duel or two if necessary in defence of this mysterious young person.