



OUR AMERICAN COUSIN

TOM TAYLOR

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BY
TOM TAYLOR

1858

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Mrs M At the same time, you must be cautious, or in grasping at Asa Trenchard's solid good qualities, you may miss them, and De Boots expectations into the bargain.

Aug Oh, I will take care not to give up my hold on poor De Boots 'till I am quite sure of the American.

Mrs M That's my own girl. [Enter Asa L.] Ah, Mr. Trenchard, we were just talking of your archery powers.

Asa Wal, I guess shooting with bows and arrows is just about like most things in life, all you've got to do is keep the sun out of your eyes, look straight—pull strong—calculate the distance, and you're sure to hit the mark in most things as well as shooting.

Aug But not in England, Mr. Trenchard. There are disinterested hearts that only ask an opportunity of showing how they despise that gold, which others set such store by.

Asa Wal, I suppose there are, Miss Gusty.

Aug All I crave is affection.

Asa [Crosses to C.] Do you, now? I wish I could make sure of that, for I've been cruelly disappointed in that particular.

Mrs M Yes, but we are old friends, Mr. Trenchard, and you needn't be afraid of us.

Asa Oh, I ain't afraid of you—both on you together.

Mrs M People sometimes look a great way off, for that which is near at hand. [Glancing at Augusta and Asa alternatively.]

Asa You don't mean, Miss Gusta. [Augusta casts sheeps eyes at him.] Now, don't look at me in that way. I can't stand it, if you do, I'll bust.

Mrs M Oh, if you only knew how refreshing this ingenuousness of yours is to an old woman of the world like me.

Asa Be you an old woman of the world?

Mrs M Yes, sir.

Aug Oh yes.

Asa Well I don't doubt it in the least. [Aside.] This gal and the old woman are trying to get me on a string. [Aloud.] Wal, then, if a rough spun fellow like me was to come forward as a suitor for you daughter's hand, you wouldn't treat me as some folks do, when they find out I wasn't heir to the fortune.

Mrs M Not heir to the fortune, Mr. Trenchard?

Asa Oh, no.

Aug What, no fortune?

Asa Nary red, it all comes to their barkin up the wrong tree about the old man's property.

Mrs M Which he left to you.

Asa Oh, no.

Aug Not to you?

Asa No, which he meant to leave to me, but he thought better on it, and left it to his granddaughter Miss Mary Meredith.

Mrs M Miss Mary Meredith! Oh, I'm delighted.

Aug Delighted?

Asa Yes, you both look tickled to death. Now, some gals, and mothers would go away from a fellow when they found that out, but you don't valley fortune, Miss Gusty?

Mrs M [Aside, crosses to Aug.] My love, you had better go.

Asa You crave affection, you do. Now I've no fortune, but I'm filling over with affections which I'm ready to pour out all over you like apple sass, over roast pork.

Mrs M Mr. Trenchard, you will please recollect you are addressing my daughter, and in my presence.

Asa Yes, I'm offering her my heart and hand just as she wants them with nothing in 'em.

Mrs M Augusta, dear, to your room.

Aug Yes, ma, the nasty beast. [Exit R.]

Mrs M I am aware, Mr. Trenchard, you are not used to the manners of good society, and that, alone, will excuse the impertinence of which you have been guilty.

Asa Don't know the manners of good society, eh? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sockdologizing old man-trap. Wal, now, when I think what I've thrown away in hard cash to-day I'm apt to call myself some awful hard names, 400,000 dollars is a big pile for a man to light his cigar with. If that gal had only given me herself in exchange, it wouldn't have been a bad bargain. But I dare no more ask that gal to be my wife, than I dare ask Queen Victoria to dance a Cape Cod reel.

Enter Florence, L. 1 E.

Flo What do you mean by doing all these dreadful things?

Asa Which things.

Flo Come here sir. [He does so.]

Asa What's the matter?

Flo Do you know this piece of paper? [Showing burnt paper.]

Asa Well I think I have seen it before. [Aside.] Its old Mark Trenchard's will that I left half burned up like a landhead, that I am.

Flo And you're determined to give up this fortune to Mary Meredith?

Asa Well, I couldn't help it if I tried.

Flo Oh, don't say that.

Asa I didn't mean to do it when I first came here—hadn't the least idea in the world of it, but when I saw that everlasting angel of a gal movin around among them doing fixins like a sunbeam in a shady place; and when I

pictured her without a dollar in the world—I—well my old Adam riz right up, and I said, "Asa do it"—and I did it.

Flo Well, I don't know who your old Adam may be, but whoever it is, he's a very honest man to consult you to do so good an action. But how dare you do such an outrageous thing? you impudent—you unceremonious, oh! you unselfish man! you! you, you! [Smothers him with kisses, and runs off, R. 1 E.]

Asa Well, if that ain't worth four hundred thousand dollars, I don't know what is, it was sweeter than sweet cider right out of the bung hole. Let me see how things stand round here. Thanks to old whiskers I've got that ship for the sailor man, and that makes him and Miss Florence all hunk. Then there's that darned old Coyle. Well I guess me and old Murcott can fix his flint for him. Then there's—[Looks off, L.] Christopher Columbus, here comes Mary.

Enter Mary, L. 1 E.

Mary Mr. Trenchard, what can I say to you but offer you my lifelong gratitude.

Asa Don't now, Miss, don't—

Mary If I knew what else to offer. Heaven knows there is nothing that is mine to give that I would keep back.

Asa Give me yourself. [Bus.] I know what a rude, ill-mannered block I am; but there's a heart inside me worth something, if it's only for the sake of your dear little image, that's planted right plump in the middle of it.

Mary Asa Trenchard, there is my hand, and my heart is in it.

Asa [Seizes here hand, then drops it suddenly.] Miss Mary, I made what folks call a big sacrifice for you, this morning. Oh! I know it, I ain't so modest, but that I know it. Now what's this you're doing? Is this sacrifice you are making out of gratitude for me? Cause if it is, I wouldn't have it, though not to have it would nigh break my heart, tough as it is.

Mary No, no, I give myself freely to you—as freely as you, this morning, gave my grandfather's property to me.

Asa Say it again, last of hope and blessed promise. [Clasps her in his arms.] Mary, there's something tells me that you'll not repent it. I'm rough, Mary, awful rough, but you needn't fear that I'll ever be rough to you. I've camped out in the woods, Mary, often and often, and seen the bears at play with their cubs in the moonlight, the glistening teeth, that would tear the hunter, was harmless to them; the big strong claws that would peel a man's head, as a knife would a pumpkin, was as soft for them as velvet cushions, and that's what I'll be with you, my own little wife; and if ever harm does come to you, it must come over the dead body of Asa Trenchard.

Mary I know it Asa; and if I do not prove a true and loving wife to you; may my mother's bright spirit never look down to bless her child.

Asa Wal, if I don't get out in the air, I'll bust. [Exit hastily R. 1 E. pulling Mary after him.]

Enter Binny, L. 1 E. Drunk.

Binny [Calling.] Mr. H'Asa, Mr. H'Asa! Oh he's gone; well, I suppose he'll come back to keep his happointment. Mr. Coyle's quite impatient. It isn't hoften that han hamerican has the run of the wine cellars of Trenchard Manor, and in such company, too. There's me and Mr. Coyle, which is a good judge of old port wine, and he knows it when he drinks; and his clerk, Mr. Murcott, which I don't hexactly like sitting down with clerks. But Mr. H'Asa wished it and Mr. Coyle hadn't any objections, so in course I put my feelings in my pocket, besides, Murcott is a man of hedication, though unfortunately taken to drink. Well, what of that, it's been many a man's misfortune, though I say it, what shouldn't say it, being a butler. But now to join my distinguished party. [Exit, R. 1 E.]

Scene 3.—Wine cellar in 3.

Coyle, Murcott and Binny discovered. Table L., with two cups and bottles. Coyle L. of table, seated. Binny back of table. Murcott sitting on barrel, R. Door in flat with staircase discovered, dark. Stage half dark. Candles on table, lighted.

Coyle A capital glass of wine, Mr. Binny, and a capital place to drink it.

Asa [Without.] Bring a light here, can't you. I've broken my natural allowance of shins already.

Enters D. in F., down stairs.

Asa [To Murcott.] Is he tight yet?

Mur Histered, but not quite gone yet.

Coyle Oh, Mr. Trenchard, glad to see you, to welcome you to the vaults of your ancestors.

Asa Oh! these are the vaults of my ancestors, are they? Wal, you seem to be punishing their spirits pretty well.

Binny Wines, Mr. Asa? The spirits are in the houter cellar.

Coyle Oh, Mr. Asa, there is no place like a wine cellar for a hearty bout. Here you might bawl yourself hoarse beneath these ribs of stone, and nobody hear you. [He shouts and sings very loud.]

Asa Oh, wouldn't they hear you? [Aside.] That's worth knowing.

Binny [Very drunk—rising.] That's right, Mr. Coyle, make as much noise as you like, you are in the cellars of Trenchard Manor, Mr. Coyle. Mr. Coyle, bless you, Mr. Coyle. Mr. Coyle, why his hit Mr. Coyle, I am sitting at the present time, in this present distinguished company? I will tell you, Mr. Coyle, hit his because Hi always hacts and conducts myself has becomes a gentleman, hand Hi knows what's due to manners. [Falls in chair.]

Asa Steady, old hoss, steady.

Binny Hi'm steady. Hi always was steady. [Staggers across to L.H.] Hi'm going to fetch clean glasses. [Exit, L. 3 R.]

Asa Now, Mr. Coyle, suppose you give us a song.

Coyle [Very drunk.] I can't sing, Mr. Trenchard, but I sometimes join in the chorus.

Asa Wal, give us a chorus.

Coyle Will you assist in the vocalization thereof?

Asa [Mimicing.] Will do the best of my endeavors thereunto.

Coyle [Sings.] "We won't go home till morning." Repeat. Repeat [Falls off chair, senseless.]

Asa [Finishing the strain.] "I don't think you'll go home at all." Now, then, quick, Murcott, before the butler comes back, get his keys. [Murcott gets keys from Coyle's pocket and throws them to Asa.] Is this all?

Mur No; the key of his private bureau is on his watch chain, and I can't get it off.

Asa Take watch and all.

Mur No; he will accuse us of robbing him.

Asa Never mind, I'll take the responsibility. [Coyle moves.]

Mur He is getting up.

Asa Well, darn me, knock him down again.

Mur I can't.

Asa Can't you? Well, I can.

[Pulls Murcott away. Knocks Coyle down; is going towards D. in F., meets Binny with tray and glasses; kicks it, knocks Binny down and exits up staircase, followed by Murcott, carrying candle. Dark state. Binny rises; Coyle ditto. Blindly encounter each other and pummel soundly till change.

Quick Change

Scene 4—Chamber in 1, same as Scene 2.

Enter Dundreary and Vernon, L. 1 E. Dundreary stops, C., and is seized with an inclination to sneeze. Motions with his hand to Vernon.

Ver My lord! [Business Dundreary sneezing.] Your lordship! [Dundreary same bus. Louder.] My lord!

Dun There you go; now you've spoiled it.

Ver Spoiled what, my lord?

Dun Spoiled what? why a most magnificent sneeze.

Ver I'm very sorry to interrupt your lordship's sneeze, but I merely wanted to express my gratitude to you for getting me a ship.

Dun Sir, I don't want your gratitude, I only want to sneeze.

Ver Very well, my lord, then I will leave you, and this gives you an opportunity for sneezing. [Crosses to R.] But in return for what you have done for me, should you ever want a service a sailor can offer you, just hail Harry Vernon, and you'll find he'll weigh anchor and be alongside. [Hitches up breeches and exits, R. 1 E.]

Dun Find him alongside? What does he mean by a long side? and he always wants to weigh anchor. What funny fellows the sailors are. Why the devil won't they keep a memorandum of the weight of their anchor? What's the matter with the sailor's side? [Imitates Vernon.] Oh I see, he's got the stomach ache. [Exit, R. 1 E.]

Change Scene

Scene 5—Library in Trenchard Manor in 3 or 4.

Enter Buddicombe, R. 1 E., following Lord Dundreary.

Bud A letter, my lord.

Dun [Takes letter.] You may go. [Exit Buddicombe, R. 1 E. Opens letter.] "My dear Frederick." He calls me Frederick because my name is Robert. "I wrote you on my arrival." Why, I never heard from him. "But I am afraid you didn't get the letter, because I put no name on the envelope." That's the reason why I didn't get it, but who did get it? It must have been some fellow without any name. "My dear brother, the other day a rap came to my door, and some fellows came in and proposed a quiet game of porker." A quiet game of porker, why, they wanted to kill him with a poker. "I consented and got stuck—" Sam's dead, I've got a dead lunatic for a brother—"for the drinks." He got on the other side of the paper, why couldn't he get stuck all

on one side. "P. S.—If you don't get this letter let me know, for I shall feel anxious." He's a mad lunatic. [Exit, R. 1 E.]

Change Scene

Scene 6—Coyle's Office in 2. High desk and stool, R. Modern box center against flat. Cabinet, L.

Asa discovered looking over papers on box. Murcott looking in desk.

Asa Have you found it?

Mur No, Mr. Trenchard. I've searched all the drawers but can find no trace of it.

Asa What's this?

Mur That's a cabinet where his father kept old deeds, the key he always carries about him.

Asa Oh, he does, does he? Well I reckon I saw a key as I came in that will open it. [Exit, R. 1 E.]

Mur Key, oh, my poor muddled brain, what can he mean!

Asa [Re-enters with axe.] Here's a key that will open any lock that Hobb ever invented.

Mur Key? what key?

Asa What key, why, Yankee. [Shows axe, begins to break open Cabinet.]

Enter Coyle, R. 2 E.

Coyle Villains! would you rob me?

Mur Stand off, Mr. Coyle, we are desperate. [Now seizes him.]

Asa Here it is a sure as there are snakes in Virginia. Let the old cuss go, Murcott.

Coyle Burglars! oh, you shall dearly pay for this.

Asa Yes, I'll pay—but I guess you'll find the change.

Coyle The law—the law shall aid me.

Asa Wal, perhaps it would be as well not to call in the law just yet. It might look a little further than might be convenient.

Mur It's no use to blunder, Mr. Coyle, you are harmless to us now, for we have that, that will crush you.

Coyle Well, what are your conditions? money, how much?

Asa Wal, we warn't thinking of coming down on your dollars. But you have an appointment with Sir Edward at two, haven't you?

Coyle Well?

Asa Well, I want you to keep that appointment.

Coyle Keep it?

Asa Yes, and that's all I do want you to keep of his, and instead of saying you have come to foreclose the mortgage, I want you to say, you have found the release which proves the mortgage to have been paid off.

Coyle I accept. Is that all?

Asa Not quite. Then I want you to pay off the execution debts.

Coyle What, I pay Sir Edward's debts?

Asa Yes, with Sir Edward's money that stuck to your fingers naturally while passing through your hands.

Coyle [To Murcott.] Traitor!

Mur He knows all, Mr. Coyle.

Coyle Is there anything more!

Asa yes, I want you to apologize to Miss Florence Trenchard, for having the darned impudence to propose for her hand.

Coyle What more?

Asa Then you resign your stewardship in favor of your clerk, Abel Murcott.

Coyle What, that drunkard vagabond?

Asa Well, he was, but he's going to take the pledge at the first pump he comes to.

Mur Yes, I *will* conquer the demon drink, or die in the struggle with him.

Coyle Well, anything more?

Asa Yes, I think the next thing will be to get washed. You're not a handsome man at best, and now you're awful. [Coyle makes a dash at Murcott. Asa catches him and turns him round to R.] Mr. Coyle, in your present state of mind, you had better go first.

Coyle [Bitterly.] Oh, sir, it is your turn now.

Asa Yes, it is my turn, but you can have the first wash. Come along Murcott.
[Exeunt, R. 1 E]

Change Scene

Scene 7—Library in Trenchard Manor in 3 or 4.

Sir Edward discovered seated R. of table.

Sir E The clock is on the stroke of two, and Coyle is waiting my decision. In giving her to him, I know I shall be embittering her life to save my fortune, but appearances—no, no, I will not sacrifice her young life so full of promise, for a few short years of questionable state for myself, better leave her to the mercy of chance. [Enter Florence, R. U. E.] that sell her to this scoundrel; and to myself, I will not survive the downfall of my house, but end it thus. [Raises pistol to his head. Florence seizes his arm and screams.]

Flo Father, dear father, what despair is this? [Sir Edward buries his face in his hands.] If it is fear of poverty, do not think of me, I will marry this man if I drop dead in my bridal robes.

Enter Binny, R. 1 E.

Binny Mr. Coyle, sir who has come by happointment.

Sir E I will not see him.

Flo Yes, yes, show him up, Mr. Binny. [Exit Binny, R. 1 E.]

Sir E Florence, I will not consent to this sacrifice.

Enter Asa, Coyle and Murcott, R. 1 E.

Sir E How is this Mr. Coyle, you are not alone?

Asa No, you see, squire, Mr. Coyle wishes me and his clerk to witness the cutting off the seals from the mortgage, which he has been lucky enough to find the release of.

Sir E Heavens, is it so?

Coyle Yes, Sir Edward, there is the release executed by my father, which had become detached.

Asa [To him.] Accidentally.

Sir E Saved, saved at last from want!

Coyle Meanwhile I have paid the execution debts out of a find which has just fallen in.

Asa Accidentally. It's astonishing how things have fallen in and out to-day.

Sir E But your demand here? [Points to Florence.]

Coyle I make none, Sir Edward. I regret that I should have conceived so mad a thought; it is enough to unfit me for longer holding position as you agent, which I beg humbly to resign—

Asa [Aside to him.] Recommending as your successor—

Coyle Recommending as my successor Abel Murcott, whose knowledge of your affairs, gained in my office, will render him as useful as I have been.

Asa Yes, just about.

Sir E Your request is granted, Mr. Coyle.

Asa And now, my dear Mr. Coyle, you may a-b-s-q-u-a-t-u-l-a-t-e.

CURTAIN

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