

COPY

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR MCGUTCHEON

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(Continued from page 2)

asked Lady Agnes in her sweetest accents: "I don't apprehend"—began Saunders nervously.

"Saunders," said Britt calculatingly and evenly, "next thing we'll have to begin hunting for insanity in your family. We haven't heard anything from you on this little point, Lord Deppingham."

"I don't know anything about Mr. Saunders' family," said Deppingham stiffly. Britt looked at him for a moment, puzzled and uncertain. Then he gave a short, hopeless laugh and said under his breath:

"Holy smoke!"

When he finally called the conference adjourned and prepared to depart he calmly turned to the stenographer.

"Did you get all this down, Miss Pelham?"

"Yes, Mr. Britt."

"Good!" Then he went away, leaving the quartet unconsciously depressed by the emphasis he placed upon that single word.

The next day but one it was announced that the enemy had moved into the bungalow. From time to time his gray, blue or white clad figure could be seen directing the operations of the natives who were engaged in rehabilitating Wyckholme's "nest."

The chateau was now under the very eye of the enemy.

CHAPTER IX. THE AMERICAN BAR.

YOU'RE wanted at the phone.

Mr. Britt, said Miss Pelham. It was late in the evening a day or two afterward.

Britt went into the booth. He was not in there long, but when he came out he found that Miss Pelham had disappeared. The coincidence was significant—Mr. Saunders was also missing from his seat on the window sill at the far end of the long corridor. Britt looked his disgust and muttered something characteristic. Having no one near with whom he could communicate, he boldly set off for the hanging garden, where Deppingham had installed the long idle roulette paraphernalia.

"Say," he said without ceremony, "the enemy's in trouble. Bowles just telephoned. There's a lot of excitement in the town. I don't know what to make of it."

"Then why the devil are you breaking in here with it?" growled Deppingham.

"This'll interest you, never fear. There's been a row between Von Blitz and the lawyer, and the lawyer has unmercifully thrashed Von Blitz. Good Lord, I'd like to have seen it, wouldn't you, Browne? Say, he's all right, isn't he?"

"What was it all about?" demanded Browne.

"It seems that Von Blitz is in the habit of licking his wives," said Britt. "Our friend the enemy met him this evening and told him that no white man could beat his wife, singular or plural, while he was around. Von Blitz is a big, ugly chap, and he naturally resented the interference with his divine might. He told the lawyer to go hang or something equivalent. The lawyer knocked him down. From the way Bowles tells it he must have knocked him down so incessantly in the next five minutes that Von Blitz's attempts to stand up were nothing short of a stutter. Moreover, he wouldn't let Von Blitz stab him worth a cent. Bowles says he's got Von Blitz cowed, and the whole town is walking in circles, it's so dizzy. Well, to make it short, the lawyer has got Von Blitz to hating him secretly, and the German has a lot of influence over the people. It may be uncomfortable for our good looking friend."

"If he should be in great danger down there," said her ladyship firmly—perhaps consciously—"we must offer him a safe retreat in the chateau."

The others looked at her in surprise. "We can't stand off and see him murdered, you know," she qualified hastily.

The next morning a messenger came up from the town with a letter directed to Mosses. Britt and Saunders. It was from the enemy and requested them to meet him in private conference at 4 that afternoon. "I think it will be for the benefit of all concerned if we can get together," wrote the enemy in conclusion.

The messenger carried back with him a dignified response in which the counselors for Mr. Browne and Lady Deppingham respectfully declined to engage in any conference at this time.

At 2 o'clock that afternoon the entire force of native servants picked up their belongings and marched out of the chateau. The major domo, suave and deferential, gravely informed Mr. Britt that they were leaving at the instigation of their legal adviser, who had but that hour issued his instructions.

"Not for all the islands in the world," cried Lady Deppingham. "The ideal Queer spells! Please be good enough to leave me out of the insanity dodge, as you Americans call it."

"Is it necessary to make my husband insane in order to establish the fact that his grandfather was not of sound mind?" queried pretty Mrs. Browne, with her calmest Boston intonation.

"It depends on your husband," said Britt coolly. "If he sticks at anything which may help us to break that all I've got to say about it."

"Well, I'm hanged if I'll pose as an insane man," roared Browne.

"Mr. Saunders hasn't asked me to be insane, have you, Mr. Deppingham?"

"I hope you are not forgetting what I said about the American gunboats," said Britt ponderously.

"Ah," said Ballo, with a cunning smile, "our man is also a great American. He can command the gunboats,



"Our man is a great man—next to Mohammed."

too, sahib. We have told him that you have the great power. He shows us that he can call upon the English ships as well, for he comes last from London. He can have both, while you have only one. Besides, he says you cannot send a message in the air without the wire unless he give permission. He have a little machine that catch all the lightning in the air and hold it till he read's the message. Our man is a great man—next to Mohammed."

Britt passed his hand over his brow staggered by these statements.

"Say, he's smoother than I thought. Most men would have been —

fools enough to say that it was all poppycock about me sending wireless messages and calling out navies, but not he! And that machine for tapping the air! Say, we'd better go slow with that fellow. Shall I call him up on the phone and head off the strike?"

"Anything, Mr. Britt, to get back our servants," said Lady Deppingham, who had come up with Mrs. Browne.

When Britt reappeared after a brief stay in the telephone booth he was perspiring freely, and his face was redder, if possible, than ever before.

"He was very peremptory at first and very agreeable in the end. I said we'd come down at 4:30. He asked me to bring some cigarettes. Say, he's a strenuous chap. He wouldn't haggle for a second."

Britt and Saunders found the enemy waiting for them under the awning in front of the bank. He looked a man from the top of his head to the tips of his canvas shoes. Every line of his long body indicated power, vitality, health. Both men were surprised by the eager, sincere manner in which he greeted them.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen," he said. "I was a head taller than either, coatless and hatless, a lean but brawny figure in white crash trousers.

"It's very good of you to come down. If you'll come to my shack I'll mix you a real American cocktail, a mint julep, a brandy smash or anything you like in season. There's a fine mint bed up my way, just back of the bungalow. It's more precious than a ruby mine, let me tell you. And yet I'll gladly exchange 300 carats of mint, Mr. Britt, for a dozen boxes of your cigarettes. Do you know, gentlemen, I made the greatest mistake of my life in failing to bring a ton of these little white sticks out with me. I thought of Gordon gin, both kinds of vermouth, brandy, and all that sort of thing, and completely forgot the stuff of life. I happen to know that you have a million packages of them, more or less, up at the chateau. My spies told me. I dare say you know that I have spies up there all the time. Don't pay any attention to them. You're at liberty to set spies on my trail at any time. Here we are. This is the headquarters for the Mine Owners' Association of Japan."

He led them down a flight of steps and into a long, cool, looking room some distance below the level of the street.

"The Mine Owners' association, gentlemen, comprises the entire population of Japan. Here is where I receive my clients. Here is where they receive their daily loaf, if you will pardon the simile. I sit in the chairs; they squat on the rugs. We talk about rubies and sapphires as if they were peanuts. Occasionally we talk about our neighbors. Shall I make three mint juleps? Here, Selim! The ice, the mint and the straws—and the bottles. Sit down, gentlemen. This is the American bar that Baedeker tells you about—the one you've searched all over Europe for, I dare say. This reminds me of home, just a little bit," said Britt as the tall glasses were set before them. The Englishman was still clothed in reticence. "They shan't catch me napping," was the sober reflection of Thomas Saunders.



The enemy was sitting serenely on one of the iron benches.

hanging garden and deliberately interrupted the game of bridge which was going on.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Britt, calmly dropping into a chair near by, "this place is full of spies."

"Spies!" cried four voices in unison. Mr. Saunders nodded a plaintive apology.

"Yes, sir, every native servant here is a spy. That's what the enemy was here for today. I've analyzed the situation and I'm right. Ain't I, Mr. Saunders? Of course I am. He came here to tell 'em what to do and how to report our affairs to him. See? More-over, he's getting the evidence of evidence to prove that Skaggs and Wyckholme were men of sound mind up to the hour of their death. He has the depositions of agents and dealers in Bombay, Aden, Suez and three or four European cities, all along that line. He goes over the day's business at the bank as often as we do as agents for the executors. He knows just how many rubies and sapphires were washed out yesterday and how much they weigh. It's our business, as your agents, to scrape up everything as far back as we can go to prove that the old chaps were mentally off their base when they drew up that agreement and will. Of course if we can prove that insanity has always run through the two families!"

"Good Lord!" gasped Browne nervously.

"It would be a great help. If we can show that you and Mrs.—or—Lady Deppingham have queer spells occasionally, it"—

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