

POOR CO

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR M'GUTCHEON

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[CONTINUED.]

Fishman had been conversing diligently with an ancient countess and her two attractive daughters near the fountain. Again the dapper director came forward to lead the musicians, and again he was most enthusiastically received. This time Chase was not where he could watch the princess. He found, therefore, that he could devote his attention to the music and the popular conductor. He was amazed to find that the fellow seemed to be inspired. He was also surprised to find himself carried away by the fervor of the moment.

With the final crash of the orchestra he found himself shouting again with the others. Oddly, this time he was as mad as they. A score or more of surprised, disapproving eyes were turned upon him when he yelled "Encore!"

"There will be no encore," admonished the fair girl at his side kindly. "It is not New York," she added, with a sly smile.

Ten minutes later Chase and the Englishman were lighting their cigars in an obscure corner of the gardens.

"Extraordinarily beautiful," Chase murmured reflectively as he seated himself upon the stone railing along the drive.

"Yes, they say he really wrote it himself," drawled Baggs, puffing away. "I'm not talking about the music," corrected Chase sharply.

"Oh!" murmured Baggs apologetically. "The night?"

"No; the princess, Baggs. Haven't you noticed her?" with intense sarcasm in his tone.

"Of course I have, old chap. By Jove, do you know she is good looking—positively ripping."

They lazily observed the approach of one couple, attracted no doubt by the disparity in the height of the two shadows. The man was at least half a head shorter than his companion, but his ardor seemed a thousandfold more vast. Chase was amused by the apparent intensity of the small officer's devotion, especially as it was met with a coldness that would have chilled the fervor of a man much larger and therefore more timid. It was impossible to see the faces of the couple until they passed through a moonlit streak in the walk quite close at hand.

Chase started and grasped his companion's arm. One was the Princess Geneva and—was it possible? Yes, the nimble conductor—the sensation of the hour, the musical lion! Moreover, to Chase's cold horror, the "little freak" was actually making violent love to the divinity of Rapp-Thorberg!

The princess had not seen the two men, nor had the fervent conductor, whose impassioned French was easily distinguishable by the unwilling listeners. The sharp, indignant "No" of the princess, oft repeated, did much to relieve the pain in the heart of her American admirer. Finally, with an unmistakable cry of anger, she halted not ten feet from where Chase sat, as though he had become a part of the stone wall.

"I have asked you not to touch me, sir! Is not that enough? If you persist I shall be compelled to appeal to my father again. The whole situation is loathsome to me. Are you blind? Can you not see that I despise you? I will not endure it a day longer. You promised to respect my wishes."

"How can I respect a promise which condemns me to purgatory every time I see you?" he cried passionately. "I adore you. You are the queen of my life, the holder of my soul. Geneva, Geneva, I love you! My soul for one tender word, for one soft caress! Ah, do not be so cruel! I will be your slave!"

"Enough! Stop, I say! If you dare to touch me!" she cried, drawing away from her tormentor, her voice trembling with anger. The little conductor's manner changed on the instant. He gave a snarl of rage.

"By heaven, I'll make you pay for this some day! You shall learn what a man can do with a woman such as you are! You!"

Just at that moment a tall figure leaped from the shadows and confronted the quivering musician. A heavy hand fell upon his collar, and he was almost jerked from his feet, half choked, half paralyzed with terror. Not a word was spoken. Chase whirled the presumptuous suitor about until he faced the gates to the garden. Then, with more force than he realized, he applied his foot to the person of the offender—once, twice, thrice!

The princess stared, wide-eyed and unbelieving, as the brief episode unfolded toward the gates and then, with new ardor, saw him pick himself up from the ground, nothing with pain and sweat. She saw his hands raised from his eyes, and she saw his face of rage, he turned to

knew him to be the American—she saw Chase, lightly leap aside, avoiding the thrust for his heart. Then, as if he were playing with a child, he wrested the weapon from the conductor's hand, snapped the blade in two pieces and threw them off into the bushes.

"Skip" was his only word. It was a command that no one in Rapp-Thorberg ever had heard before.

"You shall pay for this!" screamed the conductor, tugging at his collar. "Scoundrel! Dog! Beast! What do you mean? Murderer! Robber! Assassin!"

"You know what I mean, you little shrimp!" roared Chase. "Skip! Don't hang around here a second longer or I'll— And he took a threatening step toward his adversary. The latter turned tall and ran twenty paces or more in heart-breaking time, then, realizing that he was not pursued, stopped and shook his fist at his assailant.

"Come, Geneva," he gasped, but she remained as if rooted to the spot. He waited an instant and then walked rapidly away in the direction of the palace. Baggs crossed Chase by the shoulder, shook him and exclaimed when it was too late:

"You blooming ass, do you know what you've done?"

"The — miserable cur was annoying the princess," muttered Chase, straightening his cuffs, vaguely realizing that he had interfered too hastily.

"Confound it, man, he's the chap she's going to marry."

"Marry?" gasped Chase.

"The hereditary prince of Brabets—Karl Brabets."

"Good Lord!"

"You must have known."

"How the dev— Of course I didn't know," groaned Chase. "But, hang it all, man, he was annoying her. She was flouting him for it. She said she despised him. I don't understand."

"The princess came forward into the light of the path. There was a quaint little wrinkle of mirth about her lips, which trembled nevertheless, but her eyes were full of solicitude.

"I'm sorry, sir," she began nervously. "You have made a serious mistake. But," she added frankly, holding out her hand to him, "you meant to defend me. I thank you."

Chase bowed low over her hand, too bewildered to speak. Baggs was pulling at his mustache and looking nervously in the direction which the prince had taken.

"He'll be back here with the guard," he muttered.

"He will go to my father," said Geneva, her voice trembling. "He will be very angry. I am sorry, indeed, that you should have witnessed our scene. Of course you could not have known who he was."

"I thought he was a— But in any event, your highness, he was annoying you," supplemented Chase eagerly.

"You will forgive me if I've caused you even greater, graver annoyance. What can I do to set the matter right? I can explain my error to the duke. He'll understand."

"Perhaps you'd better go at once," said the princess, rather pathetically. "My father will not overlook the indignity to—to my—to his future son-in-law. I am afraid he may take extreme measures."

"Forgive me," muttered the hapless Chase.

"It would not be proper in me to say that I could bless you for what you have done," she said, so naively that he lifted his eyes to hers and let his heart escape heavenward.

"The whole world will call me a bungling, stupid ass for not knowing who he was," said Chase, with a wretched smile.

"If I were you I'd never confess that I did not know who he was," she said. "Let the world, think that you did know. It will not laugh then. If you can trust your friend to keep the secret I am sure you can trust me to do the same."

Again Chase was speechless—this time with joy. She would shield him from ridicule!

"And now please go! It grieves me to feel that I may be the unhappy cause of misfortune to you."

"No misfortune can appall me now," murmured he gallantly. Then came the revolting realization that she was to wed the little musician. The thought burst from his lips before he could prevent: "I don't believe you want to marry him. He is the duke's choice. You!"

"And I am the duke's daughter," she said steadily, a touch of hauteur in her voice. "Good night. Goodby. I am not sorry that it has happened."

She turned and left them, walking swiftly among the trees. A moment later her voice came from the shadows, quick and pleading.

"Hasten," she called softly. "They are coming. I can see them."

"It's a devil of a mess," sighed Baggs when they were far from the walls. "I'm sure it will cost you your job, if nothing else. You'll be relieved before tomorrow night my word for it. And you'll be lucky if that's all. The duke's a terror. I don't for the life of me see how you failed to know who the comp really was."

"An Englishman now uses a joke until it is too late. This time it appears to be an American who is slow-witted. I don't understand why he was waiting that contended land."

"My word, Chase, everybody in Europe except you, knows that Brabets is a crank about music—composes, it is said all that. He's a contumacious little wonder just the same. He doesn't care a hang about what the worst kind, don't you know, a shame at, has to marry his chap. You A it. Chase I

say, you'd better come over and stop with me tonight. It will be better if they don't find you just yet."

Three days later a man came down to relieve Chase of his office. He was unconsciously supplanted in the duchy of Rapp-Thorberg.

It was the successful pleading of the Princess Geneva that kept him from serving a period in durance vile.

CHAPTER V.

THE ENGLISH INVADE.

THE granddaughter of Jack Wyckholme, attended by two maids, her husband and his valet, a clerk from the chambers of Bosworth, Newnes & Grapewin, a red cocker, seventeen trunks and a cartload of late novels, which she had been too busy to read at home, was the first of the bewildered legationees to set foot upon the island of Japat.

She was very pretty, very smart and delightfully arrogant after a manner of her own.

Mr. Saunders was the polite but excessively middle class clerk who went out to keep the legal strings untangled for them. He was soon to discover that his duties were even more comprehensive.

It was he who saw to it that the luggage was transferred to the lighter which came out to the steamer when she dropped anchor off the town of Arata; it was he who counted the pieces and haggled with the boatmen; it was he who carried off the hand luggage when the native dock boys refused to engage in the work; it was he who unfortunately dropped a suitcase upon the hallowed tail of the red cocker, an accident which ever afterward gave him a tenacity of grip that no man could understand.

If Lady Deppingham expected a royal welcome from the inhabitants of Japat she was soon to discover her error. Not only was the pictured scene of welcome missing on the afternoon of her arrival, but an overpowering air of antipathy smote her in the face as she stepped from the lighter, conquest in her smile of conciliation.

She glanced from right to left down the lines of swarthy islanders and saw nothing in their faces but surly, bitter unfriendliness. They stood stolidly, stonily at a distance, white robed lines of resentment personified.

Not a hand was lifted in assistance to the bewildered visitors; not a word, not a smile of encouragement escaped the lips of the silent throng.

"Is there no British agent here?" she demanded imperatively, perhaps a little more shrilly than usual.

No one deigned to answer. Glances of indifference, even scorn, passed among the silent lookers-on, but that was all.

"Does no one here understand the English language?" she demanded. "I don't mean you, Mr. Saunders," she added sharply as the little clerk set the dog on its haunches and stepped forward, again fumbling his much fumbled straw hat. This was the moment when the red cocker's tail came to grief. The dog arose with an astonished yelp and fled to his mistress. He had never been so outrageously set upon before in all his pampered life. Seizing the opportunity to vent her feelings upon one who could understand, even as she poured soothing words upon the insulted Pong, whom she clasped in her arms, Lady Agnes transformed the unlucky Saunders into a target for a most ably directed volley of wrath.

Lord Deppingham, a slow and cumbersome young man, stood by nervously fingering his eyeglass. For the first time he felt that the clerk was better than a confounded dog after all.

"My dear," he said, waving Saunders into the background, "I think it was an accident. The dog had no business going to sleep." He paused and inserted his monocle for the purpose of looking up the precise spot where the accident had occurred.

"Oh, rubbish!" exclaimed her ladyship. "I suppose you expect the poor darling to apologize."

"All this has nothing to do with the case. We're more interested in learning where we are and where we are to go. Permit me to have a look about."

His wife stared after him in amazement as he walked over to the canvas awning in front of the low dock building, actually elbowing his way through a group of natives. Presently he came back, twisting his left mustache.

"The fellow in there says that the English agent is employed in the bank. It's straight up this street. By Jove! He called it a street, don't you know," he exclaimed, disdainfully eyeing the narrow, dusty passage ahead.

"There's the British flag, my lord, just ahead. See the building to the right, sir?" said Mr. Saunders, more respectfully than ever and with real grins up his heart.

"So it is! That's where he is. I wonder why he isn't down here to meet us?"

(To be continued)

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