

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR M'GUTCHEON

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[CONTINUED.]

"Reasonably. If there was such a law I'll bet my head two-thirds of the men in Ararat would be getting rid of their wives before night."

"I'm tired," said Lady Deppingham suddenly. She yawned and stretched her arms. "It's been very entertaining, Saunders, but really I think we'd better dress for dinner. Come, Mr. Browne. Shall we look for the princess?"

"With pleasure, if you'll promise to spare Deppingham's life."

"On condition that you will spare Deppingham's wife," very prettily and airily. Mrs. Browne laughed with amazing good grace, but there was a new expression in her eyes.

"Your ladyship," called Saunders desperately, "do you approve of my plan? It's only a subterfuge—"

"Heartily!" she exclaimed, with one of her rarest laughs. "The only objection that I can see to it is that it leaves out my husband and Mrs. Browne. They are very nice people, Saunders, and you should be more considerate of them. Come, Mr. Browne." She took the American's arm and gayly danced from the room.

Lord Deppingham's eyes glowed with pride in his charming wife as he followed with the heartick Drusilla.

"I would have won them over if Britt had not interfered," almost



Geneva gently waved her handkerchief, waved little Mr. Saunders, his eyes glazed with mortification.

"I'm getting to hate that man," said Miss Pelham loyally. "And the other! They give me a pain! Don't mind them, Tommy, dear."

Lady Deppingham and Browne came upon the princess quite unexpectedly. She was in the upper gallery, leaning against the stone rail and gazing steadily through the fieldglasses in the direction of the bungalow. They held back and watched her, unseen. The soft light of early evening fell upon her figure as she stood erect, lithe and sinuous, in the open space between the ivy clad posts.

Geneva smiled securely in her supposed aloofness from the world. Then, suddenly moved by a strange impulse, she gently waved her handkerchief as if in greeting to some one far off in the gloaming. The action was a mischievous one, no doubt, and it had its consequences—rather sudden and startling, if the observers were to judge by her subsequent movements. She

into the shadows might have done heard her murmur flags for a despatch French window w "Oh, dear, what Geneva, peering had discovered the bungalow pore to find that he, fr was also rega through a pair of adventure, risk, trolled as breath flaunt her handkerous spirit desert lessly when her st he was waving a swags for a long d dering what he w that wretched bit at last a new thof, but it did not of mind that she d He may have ni Deppingham.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO CALLS FROM THE ENEMY.

DEPPINGHAM was up and about quite early the next morning—that is, quite early for him.

He had his rolls and coffee and strolled out in the shady park for a smoke. The princess, whose sense of humiliation had not been lessened by the fitful sleep of the night before, was walking in the shade of the trees on the lower terrace, beyond the fountains and the artificial lake.

"I was thinking of you," she said in greeting as he came up.

"How nice you are," he said. "But, my dear, is it wise in you to be thinking of us handsome devils? It's a most dangerous habit—thinking of other men."

"But, Deppy, dear, the prince isn't here," she said, falling into his humor. "That makes quite a difference, doesn't it?"

"Your logic is splendid. Pray resume your thoughts of me—if they were pleasant and agreeable. I'll not blow on you to Karl. By the way, I have a compliment for you. Browne says your hair is more beautiful than Pong's. That's quite a compliment. Fritan never even dreamed of hair like Pong's."

"You know, Deppy," she said, with a pout, "I am very unhappy about my hair. It is quite red. I don't see why I should have hair like that of a red cocker. It seems so animalish."

"Rubbish! Why should you complain? Look at my hair. It's been likened more than once to that of a Jersey cow."

"Oh, how I adore Jersey cows! Now, I wouldn't mind that a bit."

They were looking toward the lower gates while carrying on this frivolous conversation. A man had just entered and was coming toward them. Both recognized the tall figure in gray flannels.

"I trust I am not intruding," Chase said as he came up. His gaze was as much for Deppingham as for the princess, his remark quite impersonal.

"Not at all, not at all," said Deppingham quickly, his heart leaping to the conclusion that the way to the American bar was likely to be opened at last. "Charming to have you here, Mr. Chase. You've been most unneighborly. Have you been presented to her highness, then—Oh, to be sure. Of course you have. Stupid of me."

"We met ages ago," she said, with an ingenuous smile, which would have disarmed Chase if he had been prepared for anything else. As a matter of fact, he had approached her in the light of an adventurer who expects nothing and grasps at straws.

"In the dark ages," said he so ruefully that her smile grew. He had come, in truth, to ascertain why her husband had not come with her.

"But not the forgotten variety, I fancy," said Deppingham shrewdly.

"It would be impossible for the princess to forget the greatest of all fools," said Chase.

"He was no worse than other mortals," said she.

"Thank you," said Chase. Then he turned to Lord Deppingham. "My visit requires some explanation, Lord Deppingham. You have said that I am unneighborly. No doubt you appreciate my reasons. One has to respect appearances," with a dry smile.

"When one is in doubt he must do as the Moslems do, especially if the Moslems don't want him to do as he wants to do."

"No doubt you're right, but it sounds a bit involved," murmured Deppingham. "Lady Deppingham will be delighted to see you. Are you ready to come in, princess?"

They started toward the chateau, keeping well in the shade of the boxed trees, the princess between the two men.

"I say, Chase, do you mind relieving

the traces at any moment and raise the very old Harry at somebody else's expense. I'd like to know if my head is really safe."

"I came to see you in regard to that very thing, Lord Deppingham. I don't want to alarm you, but I do not like the appearance of things. They don't trust me and they hate you—quite naturally. I'm rather sorry that our British man-of-war is out of reach. Pray don't be alarmed, princess. It is most improbable that anything evil will happen. And, in any event, we can hold out against them until relief comes."

"We?" demanded Deppingham.

"Certainly. If it comes to an assault of any kind upon the chateau I trust that I may be considered as one of you. I won't serve assassins and bandits—at least not after they've got beyond my control. Besides, if the worst should come they won't discriminate in my favor."

"Why do you stay here, Mr. Chase?" asked the princess. "You admit that they do not like you or trust you. Why do you stay?"

"I came out here to escape certain consequences," said he candidly. "I'll stay to enjoy the uncertain ones. I am not in the least alarmed on my own account. The object of my visit, Lord Deppingham, is to ask you to be on your guard up here. After the next steamer arrives and they learn that Sir John Brodney is in the island, permission to Russia's demand, with the additional news that your solicitors have filed injunctions and have begun a bitter contest that may tie up the estate for years—then, I say, we may have trouble. It is best that you should know what to expect. I am not a traitor to my cause in telling you this. It is no more than I would expect from you were the conditions reversed."

"It's mighty decent in you, Chase, to put us on our guard. Would you mind talking it over with Browne and me after luncheon? You'll stay to luncheon, of course?"

"Thank you. It may be my death sentence, but I'll stay."

In the wide east gallery they saw Lady Deppingham and Bobby Browne deeply engrossed in conversation. Deppingham started and involuntarily allowed his hand to go to his temple as if to check the thought that flitted through his brain.

"Good Lord," he said to himself, "is it possible that they are considering that—Saunders' proposition? Surely they can't be thinking of that!"

As he came in a guarantee that we consider the will valid. It is an admission that we regard it as sound. If not, why should we recognize its provisions, even in the slightest detail? Britt is looking for hallucinations and all!"

"Sh!" came in a loud hiss from somewhere near at hand, and the two in the gallery looked down with startled eyes upon the distressed face of Lord Deppingham. They started to their feet at once, astonishment and wonder in their faces. They could scarcely believe their eyes. The enemy!

He was smiling broadly as he lifted his helmet, smiling in spite of the discomfort that showed so plainly in Deppingham's manner.

Chase was warmly welcomed by the two heirs. Lady Agnes was especially cordial. Her eyes gleamed joyously as she lifted them to meet his admiring gaze. She was amazingly pretty. The conviction that Chase had mistaken her for Lady Agnes the evening before took a fresh grasp upon the mind of the Princess Geneva. A shameless wave of relief surged through her heart.

Chase was presented to Drusilla Browne, who appeared suddenly upon the scene, coming from a no one knew where. There was a certain strained look in the Boston woman's face and a suspicious redness near the bridge of her little nose.

"It's very good of you," said the enemy after all of them had joined in the invitation. "Why is it that I am more fortunate than your own attorneys? I am but a humble lawyer, after all, no better than they. Would you mind telling me why I am honored by an invitation to sit at the table with you?" The touch of easy sarcasm was softened by the frank smile that went with it. Deppingham felt it his duty to explain.

"It's—it's—oh, yes, it's because you're a diplomat," he finally remarked in triumph. "It was a grand recovery, thought he. "Saunders is an ass, and Britt would be one if Browne could only admit it, as I do. Rubbish! Don't let that trouble you. Eh, Browne?"

"Besides," said Bobby Browne breezily, "I haven't heard of your clients inviting you to lunch, Mr. Chase. The cases are parallel."

"I'm not so sure about his clients' wives," said Deppingham, with a vast haw-haw! Chase looked extremely uncomfortable.

"I am told that some of them are very beautiful," said Geneva sedately.

"Other men's wives always are, I've discovered," said Chase gallantly.

The party had moved over to the great stone steps which led down into the gardens. Chase was standing beside Lady Deppingham, and both of them were looking toward his distant bungalow.

"That is my home, princess. It is the first time I have seen it from your point of view, Lady Deppingham. I must say that it doesn't seem as far

the chateau seemed to be thousands of miles away."

"When in reality it was at your very feet," she said, with a bright look into his eyes. For some unaccountable reason Geneva resented that look and speech.

"Is that really where you live?" she asked, so innocently that Chase had difficulty in controlling his expression.

At that instant something struck sharply against the stone column above Chase's head. At least three persons saw the little puff of smoke in the hills far to the right. Every one heard the distant crack of a rifle. The bullet had dropped at Chase's feet before the sound of the report came floating to their ears. No one spoke as he stooped and picked up the warm, deadly missile. Turning it over in his fingers, he saw coolly, although his check had gone white.

"With Von Blitz's compliments, ladies and gentlemen. He is calling on me by proxy."

"Good God, Chase," cried Browne, "they're trying to murder us! Get back, every one! Inside the doors!"

"I'm sorry to bring my troubles to your door," said Chase. "It was meant for me, not for any of you. The man who fired that did not intend to kill me. He was merely giving voice to his pain and regret at seeing me in such bad company." He was smiling calmly and did not take a single step to follow them to safety.

"Come in, Chase! Don't stand out there to be shot at!"

"I'll stay here for a few minutes, Mr. Browne, if you don't mind, just to convince you all that the shot was not intended to kill. They're not ready to kill me yet. I'm sure Lord Deppingham will understand. He has been shot at often enough since he came to the island."

He lighted a cigarette and coolly leaned against the column, his gaze bent on the spot where the smoke had been seen. The others were grouped inside the doors, where they could see without being seen. A certain sense of horror possessed all of the watchers.

"For heaven's sake, why does he stand there?" cried the princess at last. "I can endure it no longer. It may be as he says it is, but it is foolhardy to stand there and taunt the pride of that marksman. I can't stay here and wait for it to come. How can?"

"He's been there for ten minutes, princess," said Browne—"plenty of time for another try."

Before they were aware of her intention the princess left the shelter and boldly walked across the open space to the side of the man. He started and opened his lips to give vent to a sharp command.

"It is so easy to be a hero, Mr. Chase, when one is quite sure there is no real danger," she said, with distinct irony in her tones. "One can afford to be melodramatic if he knows his part so well as you know yours."

Chase felt his face burn. It was a direct declaration that he had planned the whole affair in advance. He flicked the ashes from his cigarette and then tossed it away, hesitating long before replying.

"Nevertheless I have the greatest respect for the courage which brings you to my side. I dare say you are quite justified in your opinion of me. It all must seem very theatrical to you. I had not thought of it in that light. I shall now retire from the center of the stage. It will be perfectly safe for you to remain here—just as it was for me. He was leaving her without another word or look. She repented.

"I am sorry for what I said," she said eagerly. "And"—she looked up at the hills with a sudden widening of her eyes—"I think I shall not remain."

Chase made light of the occurrence, but sought to impress upon the others the fact that it was prophetic of more serious events in the future. In a perfectly cold blooded manner he told them that the islanders might rise against them at any time.

"The people are angry, and they will become desperate. Their interests are mine, of course. I am perfectly sincere in saying to you, Lady Deppingham, and to you, Mr. Browne, that in time they will win out against you in the courts. But they are impatient. They are not the kind who can wait and be content. It is impossible for you to carry out the provisions of the will, and they know it. That is why they resent the delays that are impending."

Deppingham told him of the scheme proposed by Saunders, treating it as a vast joke. Chase showed a momentary sign of uneasiness, but covered it instantly by laughing with the others. Strange to say, he had been instructed from London to look out for just such a coup on the part of the heirs—not that the marriage could be legally established, but that it might create a complication worth avoiding.

He could not help looking from Lady Deppingham to Bobby Browne, a calculating gleam in his gray eyes. How very dangerous she could be! He was quite ready to feel very sorry for pretty Mrs. Browne. He sat opposite to the princess. His eyes were refreshing themselves after months of fatigue; his blood was coursing through new veins. And yet his head was calling his heart a fool.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRINCESS GOES GALLANTLY.

A WEEK passed—an interesting week in which few things happened openly, but in which the entire situation underwent a subtle but complete change. The mail steamer brought discouraging news from London. Chase was obliged to tell the islanders that notice of



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