

POOR CO

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR
M'CUTCHEON

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[CONT.]

The enemy plucked the mint in its bed of chipped ice. "The sagacity that Taswell Skaggs displayed in erecting an ice plant and cold storage house here is equaled only by John Wyckholm's foresightedness in maintaining a contemporaneous mint bed. I imagine that you, gentlemen, are hoping to prove the old codgers insane. Between the three of us, and man to man, how can you have the heart to propose anything so unkind when we look, as we now do, upon the result of their extreme soundness of mind? Here's how!"

Selma passed the straws, and the three men took a long and simultaneous "pull" at the refreshing julep. Mr. Saunders felt something melt as he drew the subsequent long and satisfying breath. It was the outer rim of his cautious reserve.

"I think we'll take you up on that proposition to trade mint for cigarettes," said Mr. Britt. "Mr. Browne, my client, for one, will sanction the deal. How about your client, Saunders?"

"I can't say as to Lady Deppingham, but I'm quite sure his lordship will make no objection."

"Then we'll consider the deal closed. I'll send one of my boys over tomorrow with a bunch of mint. Telephone up to the bungalow when you need more. By the way," dropping into a curiously reflective air, "may I ask why Lady Deppingham is permitted to ride alone through the unfrequented and perilous parts of the island?" The question was directed to her solicitor.

"Perilous? What do you mean?"

"Just this, Mr. Saunders," said the enemy, leaning forward earnestly. "I'm not responsible for the acts of these islanders. There are men among them who would not hesitate to dispose of one or both of the heirs if they could do it without danger to their interests. What could be more simple, Mr. Saunders, than the death of Lady Deppingham if her horse should stumble and precipitate her to the bottom of one of those deep ravines? She wouldn't be alive to tell how it really happened."

"My word!" was all that Saunders could say, forgetting his julep in contemplation of the catastrophe.

"He's right," said Britt promptly. "I'll keep my own client on the straight and public path. He's liable to tip over too."

"Deuce take your Browne," said Saunders, with mild asperity. "He never rides alone."

"I've noticed that," said the enemy coolly. "He's usually with Lady Deppingham. It's lucky that Japan is free from poepple, gentlemen."

"Oh, I say," said Saunders, "none of that talk, you know."

"There's another thing I want to speak of," said the enemy, arising to prepare the second round of juleps. "I hear that your clients and their partners for life are in the habit of gambling like fury up there."

"Gambling?" said Britt. "What rot!"

"The servants say that they play bridge every night for vast piles of rubies and turn the wheel daily for sapphires uncountable. Oh, I get it straight."

"Why, man, it's all a joke. They use gun wads and simply play that they are rubies."

"My word," said Saunders, "there isn't a ruby or sapphire in the party."

"That's all right," said the enemy, standing before them with a bunch of mint in one hand and the bowl of ice in the other. "Every man in Japan thinks that your people are gambling with jewels that belong to the corporation. They think there's something crooked, d'ye see? My advice to you is. Stop that sort of joking."

"By Jove," said Saunders, taking a straw and at the same time staring in open mouthed wonder at the tall host, "you appall me! It's most extraordinary."

"This is all offered in a kindly spirit, you understand," said the magnanimous enemy. "We might as well live comfortably as to die unseasonably here. Another little suggestion, Mr. Saunders. Please tell Lord Deppingham that if he persists in snooping



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the back of his head some day soon. He has no right to a single ruby, even if he should see one and know what it was. Just tell him that, please, Mr. Saunders."

"I shall, confound him," exploded Saunders, smiting the table mightily. "He's too uppish anyhow. He needs taking down."

"Ah, Selma," interrupted the enemy as the native boy entered, "no milk, eh?"

"No, excellency, the ship is not due to arrive for two weeks."

"Ah, but, Selma, you forget that I am expecting a letter from Von Blitz's wives. They promised to let me know how soon he is able to resume work at the mines."

"I hear you polished him off neatly," said Britt, with a grin.

"Just the rough edges, Mr. Britt. He is now a gem of purest ray serene. By the way, I hope you'll not take my mild suggestions amiss."

"There's nothing I object to except your power to call strikes among our servants. That seems to me to be rather high handed," said Britt good naturedly.

"No doubt you're right," agreed the other, "but you must remember that I needed the cigarettes."

"My word!" muttered Saunders admiringly.

"Look here, old man," said Britt, his cheeks glowing; "it's mighty good of you to take this trouble for—"

"Don't mention it. I'd only ask in return that we three be a little more sociable hereafter. We're not here to cut each other's throat, you know, and we've got a deadly half year ahead of us. What say?"

For answer the two lawyers arose and shook hands with the excellent enemy. When they started for the chateau at 7 o'clock, each with six mint juleps about his person, they were too mellow for analysis. The enemy, who had drunk but little, took an arm of each and piloted them sturdily through the town.

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six: And all this time the islanders tolled as they had tolled for years. They reckoned in years, while the strangers cast up time's account in weeks and called them years. Each day the broom men worked in the mines piling gems into the vaults with a resolution that never faltered.

From London came disquieting news for all sides to the controversy. The struggle promised to be drawn out for years, perhaps. The lonely legates, mooned in the far south sea, began to realize that even after they had spent their six months of probation they would still have months, even years, of waiting before they could touch the fortune they laid claim to. The islanders also were vaguely awake to the fact that everything might be tied up for years despite the provisions of the will. A restless, stubborn feeling of alarm spread among them. This feeling gradually developed itself into bitter resentment. Hatred for the people who were causing this delay was growing deeper and fiercer.

Their counselor, the complacent enemy, held himself aloof from the mad and women that his charges were fighting. He met the two lawyers often, but nothing passed between them that could have been regarded as the slightest breach of trust. He lived like a rajah in his shady bungalow, surrounded by the luxuries of one to whom all things are brought invisible. If he had any longing for the society of women of his own race and kind, he carefully concealed it. His indifference to the subtle though unmistakable appeals of the two gentlewomen in the chateau was irritating in the extreme. When he deliberately, though politely, declined their invitation to tea one afternoon their humiliation knew no bounds.

Lady Deppingham and Mrs. Browne should not be misunderstood by the reader. They loved their husbands—I am quite sure of that—but they were tired of seeing no one else, tired of talking to no one else. Moreover, in support of this one sided assertion, they experienced from time to time the most melancholy attacks of jealousy. If Mrs. Browne in plain despair went off for a day's ride with Lord Deppingham, that gentleman's wife was sick with jealousy. If Lady Agnes strolled in the moonlit gardens with Mr. Browne, the former Miss Blate of Boston could scarcely control her emotions. They shed many tears of anguish over the faithlessness of husbands, tears of hatred over the viciousness of temptresses. Their quarrels were fierce, their upbraidings characteristic, but in the end they cried and kissed and "made up."

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CHAPTER X.
THE SLOUGH OF TRANQUILLITY.
THREE months stole by with tantalizing slowness. The autumn passed on into winter without a change of expression in the benign face of nature. Christmas day was as hot as if it had come in mid-summer; the natives were as naked, the trees as fully clad. The six months were passing away in spite of themselves. Ten weeks were left before the worn but determined heirs could cast off their bonds and rush away to other climes. It mattered little whether they went away rich or poor. They were to go! Go! That was the theme that the future held out to them.

True, they rode and played and swam and romped without restraint, but beneath all of their abandon there lurked the ever present pathos of the jail, the asylum, the detention ward.

Not until the end of January was there a sign of revolt against the ever growing, insidious condition of melancholy. As they turned into the last third of their exile they found heart to rejoice in the thought that release was coming nearer and nearer. The end of March—eight weeks off! Soon there would be but seven weeks, then six:

"By Jove!" said Deppingham, starting up with a look of horror in his eyes, sudden comprehension rushing down upon him. "I wonder if they think I am you, Browne! Horrible!"

The enemy's office hours were from 3 to 5 in the afternoon. Twice a week Miss Pelham came down from the chateau in a gayly bedecked jirikisha to sit opposite to him in his stuffy corner of the banking house, his desk between them, her notebook trembling with propinquity. Mr. Britt generously lent the pert lady to the enemy in exchange for what he catalogued as "happy days."

Miss Pelham made it a point to look as fascinating as possible on the occasion of these interesting trips into the enemy's territory.

The enemy, doing his duty by his clients with a determination that seemed incontestable, was the last to realize that an intrigue was shaping itself to combat his endeavors. Von Blitz, openly his friend and ally, despite their sad encounter, was the thorn which pricked the native into a state of uneasiness and doubt as to their agent's sincerity.

They began to believe that no good could come out of the daily meetings of the three lawyers.

It was Von Blitz who told the leading men of the island that their wives—the Persians, the Circassians, the Egyptians and the Turkish hours—were in love with the tall stranger. It was he who advised them to observe the actions, to study the moods of their women.

The German knew the condition of affairs in his own household. His overthrow at the hands of the American had cost him more than physical ignominy; his wives openly expressed an admiration for their champion. Every eye in Japan was upon him; every hand was turning against him.

It was Miss Pelham who finally took it upon herself to warn the lonely American. The look of surprise and disgust that came into his face brought her up sharply.

"Miss Pelham," he said coldly, "will you be kind enough to carry my condolences to the ladies at court and say that I recommend reading as an antidote for the poison which idleness produces. Neither my home nor my barroom is open to ladies. If you don't mind we'll go on with this report."

Miss Pelham flushed and looked very uncomfortable.

"You're wrong about Lady Deppingham and Mrs. Browne," she began hurriedly. "They've never said anything mean about you. It was just my miserable way of putting it. The talk comes from the islanders. Mr. Bowles has told Mr. Britt and Mr. Saunders. He thinks Von Blitz is working against you, and he is sure that all of the men are furiously jealous."

"Perhaps there is something in what you say. I'm grateful to you for preparing me." It had suddenly come to mind that the night before he had seen a man skulking in the vicinity of the bungalow.

"I just thought I'd tell you," murmured Miss Pelham nervously. "I don't want to see you get into trouble—none of us."

"Thank you." After a long pause he went on, lowering his voice. "Miss Pelham, I have had a hard time here in more ways than I care to speak of. It may interest you to know that I had decided to resign next month and go home. I'm a living man, and a living man objects to a living death. But I've changed my mind. You stick my time out. I've got three months longer to stay, and I'll stay. If Von Blitz thinks he can drive me out, he's mistaken. I'll be here after you and your friends up there have sailed away, Miss Pelham—God bless you, you're all white—and I'll be here when Von Blitz and his wives are dancing to the tunes I play. Now let's get back to work. If Von Blitz is working in the dark, I'll compel him to show his hand. And, Miss Pelham," he concluded very slowly, "I'll promise to use a club, if necessary, to drive the Persian ladies away. So please rest easy on my account."

The next morning the town bustled with a new excitement. A trim, beautiful yacht, flying strange colors, steamed into the little harbor of Ararat. Every one knew that the yacht brought the princess who was to visit her ladyship.

The enemy came down from his bungalow, attracted by the unusual and inspiring spectacle of a ship at anchor. A line of anxiety marked his brow. Two figures had watched his windows all night long, sinister shadows that always met his eye when it penetrated the gloom of the moonlit forest.

Lord and Lady Deppingham were on the pier before him. Excitement and joy illumined her face. Her eyes were sparkling with anticipation. He could almost see that she trembled in her eagerness. He came quite close to them before they saw him. Excitation no doubt was responsible for the very agreeable smile of recognition that she bestowed upon him. The enemy could do no less than to go to them with his pleasant acknowledgment. His rugged face relaxed into a most charming, winsome smile, half discontent, half assured.

He passed among the wives of his clients without so much as a sign of recognition, coolly indifferent to the

(Continued on page 7)

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