

COPY

The Man From Brodneys

By GEORGE BARR M'CUTCHEON

Copyright, 1908, by Dodd, Mead & Co.



A handsome young soldier of fortune, a princess of enchanting beauty, two eccentric adventurers who leave wills disposing of the island of Japat and its ruby mines, two heirs who must marry within a year to inherit the property despite the fact that they are already married, a shrewd American lawyer, a scheming British solicitor, a pretty stenographer, a prince who is musical and profligate and a horde of fanatical Moslems who will inherit the riches of Japat provided the heirs do not marry each other—these are the leading characters in a romance which for genuine novelty, thrilling and unusual situations, live American humor and the paths of a great but apparently hopeless love has rarely been equaled and never surpassed.

CHAPTER I

THE LATE MR. SKAGGS.

THE death of Taswell Skaggs was stimulating, to say the least, in applicable though the expression may seem. He attained the end of a hale old age by tumbling aimlessly into the mouth of a crater on the island of Japat, somewhere in the mysterious south seas. The world had quite thoroughly forgotten him during the twenty odd years immediately preceding his death. It was, however, noticeably worth while to remember him at this particular time. He left a last will and testament that bade fair to distress as well as startle a great many people on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Boston the law firm of Bowen & Hare was puzzling itself beyond reason in the effort to anticipate and circumvent the plans of the firm of Bosworth, Newnes & Grapevine, London, E. C., while on the other side of the Atlantic Messrs. Bosworth, Newnes & Grapevine were blindly struggling to do precisely the same thing in relation to Messrs. Bowen & Hare.

Without seeking to further involve myself I shall at once conduct the reader to the nearest of these law offices.

"Pretty badly tangled, I declare," said Mr. Hare, staring helplessly at his senior partner.

"Hopefully," agreed Mr. Bowen, very much as if he had at first intended to groan.

Before them on the table lay the contents of a bulky envelope, a long and stupendous letter from their London correspondents and with it a copy of Taswell Skaggs' will. Mr. Bowen recently had been named as joint executor of the will, together with Sir John Alencombe of London, W. C., one time neighbor of the late Mr. Skaggs. A long and exasperating cablegram had touched somewhat irresolutely upon the terms of the will, besides notifying him that one of the heirs resided in Boston. He was instructed to apprise this young man of his good fortune.

There was one very important, perhaps imposing, feature in connection with the old gentleman's will—he was decidedly sound of mind and body when it was uttered.

When such estate lawyers as Bowen & Hare give up to amazement, the usual frequency of construction, it is high time to regard the case as startling.

"Read it again, Bowen."

"The will?"

"Not the letter."

"Whom?"

"Mr. Bowen again read aloud the letter from Bosworth, Newnes & Grapevine, this time slowly."

"I am much upset by the contents," he observed reflectively.

"Of affairs, I mean."

"To do about the will?"

"I don't know."

"I dare say if I were you I should never buy a house."

"I don't know."

"I don't know."

"I don't know."

don't see how anything short of Providence can alter the situation."

"Thank heaven, Bowen, he names you as executor, not me."

"I shall decline to serve. It's an impossible situation, Hare. In the first place, Skaggs was not an intimate friend of mine. I met him in Constantinople five years ago and afterward handled some business for him in New York. He had no right to impose upon me as if—"

"But what should you hesitate? You have only to wait for the year to roll by and then turn your troubles over to the natives. Young Browne can't marry Miss Ruthven inside of a year simply because there is no Miss Ruthven. She's Lady-Lady—what's the name?"

"Deppingham."

"And Browne already has one Mrs. Browne to his credit, don't you see. Well, that settles it, I'd say. It's hardly probable that Browne will murder or divorce his wife, nor is it likely that her ladyship would have the courage to dispose of her incumbency in either way on such short notice."

"But it means millions to them, Hare."

"That's their unfortunate lookout. You are to act as an executor, not as a matrimonial agent."

"But, man, it's an outrage to give all of it to those wretched islanders. Bosworth says that rubies and sapphires grow there like mushrooms."

"Bosworth also says that the islanders are thrifty, intelligent and will fight for their rights. There are lawyers among them, he says, as well as jewel diggers and fishermen."

"Skaggs and Lady Deppingham's grandfather were the only white men who ever lived there long enough to find out what the island had stored up for civilization. That's why they bought it outright, but I'm hanged if I can see why he wants to give it back to the natives."

"Perhaps he owes it to them. He doubtless bought it for a song, and, contrary to all human belief, he may have resurrected a conscience. Anyhow, there remains a chance for the heirs to break the will."

"It can't be done, Hare; it can't be done. It's as clean as an instrument as ever survived a man."

It is by this time safe for the reader to assume that Mr. Taswell Skaggs had been a rich man and therefore privileged to be eccentric. He came of a sound old country family in upper England, but seems to have married a bit above his station. His wife was serving as governess in the home of a certain earl when Taswell won her heart and dragged her from the exalted position of minding other people's children into the less conspicuous one of caring for her own.

His only son was killed by a runaway horse when he was twenty, and their daughter became the wife of an American named Browne when she was scarcely out of her teens. It was then that Mr. Skaggs, practically childless, determined to make himself wifeless as well.

He magnanimously deeded the unentailed farm to his wife, turned his securities into cash and then set forth upon a voyage of exploration. It is common history that upon one dark, still night in December he said goodby forever to the farm and its mistress, but it is doubtful if either of them heard him.

To be "jolly well even" with him Mrs. Skaggs did a most priggish thing. She died six months later, but before doing so she made a will in which she left the entire estate to her daughter, effectually depriving the absent husband of any chance to reclaim his own.

Taswell Skaggs was in Shanghai when he heard the news. It was on a Friday. His informant was that erstwhile friend Jack Wyckholme. Naturally Skaggs felt deeply aggrieved with the fate which permitted him to capitulate when unconditional surrender was so close at hand. His language for one brief quarter of an hour did more to upset the progress of Christiana's conquest in the far east than all the "Y" in the Chinese empire.

"I'll sell the farm in England for me," he said, "and I'll sell the blood farm in America. She's an American, God bless her. I dare say if I were you I should never buy a house."

"I don't know."

records of the inebriate's asylum as to be credited. His wife, after enduring him for sixteen years, secured a divorce. Accepting the world as his home, he ventured forth to visit every nook and cranny of it. In course of time he came upon his old time neighbor and boyhood friend, Taswell Skaggs, in the city of Shanghai. Neither of them had seen the British isles in two years or more.

"Ow do you know?" demanded Taswell.

"Haven't I been there, old chap? A year or more? It's a rotten big place where gentlemen aspire to sell gloves and hankerchiefs and needlework over the shop counters. You know, Tazzy, I could well afford to starve, and I wouldn't sell things, so I came away. But it's no island."

"Well, that's neither here nor there, Jackie. I haven't a 'ome, and you haven't a 'ome, and we're wanderers on the face of the earth. My wife played me a beauty trick, drin' like that. I say marriage is a bloom'n' nuisance."

"Marriage, my boy, is the convalescence from a love affair. One wants to get out the worst way, but has to stay in till he's jolly well cured. For my part, I'm never going back to England."

"Nor I. It would be just like me, Jackie, to 'ave a relapse and never get out again."

The old friends took an inventory. Jack Wyckholme, gentleman's son and ne'er-do-well, possessed £9 and a fraction, an appetite and excellent spirits, while Taswell Skaggs exhibited a balance of £1,000 in a Shanghai bank, a fairly successful trade in Celestial necessities and an unbounded eagerness to change his luck.

"I have a proposition to make to you, Tazzy," said Mr. Wyckholme late in the night.

"I think I'll listen to it, Jackie," replied Mr. Skaggs, quite soberly.

As the outcome of this midnight proposition Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme arrived two months later at the tiny island of Japat, somewhere south of the Arabian sea, there to remain until their dying days and there to accumulate the wealth which gave the first named a chance to make an extraordinary will. For thirty years they lived on the island of Japat.

Wyckholme preceded Skaggs to the grave by two winters, and he willed his share of everything to his partner of thirty year standing. But there was a proviso in Wyckholme's bequest, just as there was in that of Skaggs. Each had made his will some fifteen years or more before death, and each had bequeathed his fortune to the survivor. At the death of the survivor the entire property was to go to the grandchild of each testator, with certain reservations to be mentioned later on, each having by investigation discovered that he possessed a single grandchild.

The island of Japat had been the home of a Mohammedan race, the outgrowth of Arabian adventurers who had fared far from home many years before Wyckholme happened upon the island by accident. It was a British possession, and there were two or three thousand inhabitants, all Mohammedans. Skaggs and Wyckholme purchased the land from the natives, protected and eased their rights with the government and proceeded to realize on what the natives had unwittingly prepared for them. In course of time the natives repented of the deal which gave the Englishmen the right to pick and sell the rubies and other precious stones that they had been trading for such trifles as silks, gongawars and wampas. A revolution was inaugurated, whereupon the natives organized the entire population in a great company, retaining for a fifth of the property themselves. They seemed to have a satisfactory arrangement, determined that some of the more adventurous were to go to appraise the island's resources, and that they were to be allowed to remain in the island, to be paid for their services by the natives.

"There remains a chance for the heirs to break the will."

"I don't know."

The Advocate Offers the Best DOLLARS WORTH OF READING MATTER IN NEW BRUNIWEK SEND

your Dollar and we will put you on the paid up list.

OUR RATES FOR Advertising ARE VERY LOW

Try us and see the good that will result

Let Us Furnish You with Letter Heads, Bill Heads, Envelopes, Statements, Note Heads,

Draft Forms, Visiting Cards, Business Cards, Posters, Dodgers.

OR IN FACT ANYTHING IN THE Printing Line.

end, or, Bring your orders, and we will do the rest.

We Supply and Print ADVOCATE PUBLISHING CO. LTD.



"There remains a chance for the heirs to break the will."

"I don't know."

"I don't know."