

POOR CO

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON

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[CONTINUED.]

"Very likely he didn't know we were coming," said his wife lily.

"Well, we'll look him up. Come along, everybody. Oh, I say, we can't leave this luggage unguarded. They say these fellows are the worst robbers east of London."

It was finally decided, after a rather subdued discussion, that Mr. Saunders should proceed to the bank and rout out the military representative of the British government. Saunders looked down the sullen line of faces and blanched to his toes.

"Tell him we'll wait for him," pursued his lordship. "But remind him, — him, that it's inexpressibly hot down here in the sun."

They stood and watched the miserable Saunders tread gingerly up the filthy street, his knees crooking outwardly from time to time, very much as if he were contemplating an instantaneous sprint in any direction but the one he was taking. Even the placid Deppingham was somewhat disturbed by the significant glances that followed their emissary as he passed by each separate knot of natives.

"I do hope Mr. Saunders will come back alive," murmured Bromley, her ladyship's maid. The others started, for she had voiced the general thought.

"He won't come back at all, Bromley, unless he comes back alive," said his lordship, with a smile. It was a well known fact that he never smiled except when his mind was troubled.

"Goodness, Deppy," said his wife, recognizing the symptom, "do you really think there is danger?"

"My dear Agnes, who said there was any danger?" he exclaimed and quickly looked out to sea. "I rather think we'll enjoy it here," he added after a moment's pause, in which he saw that the steamer was getting under way.

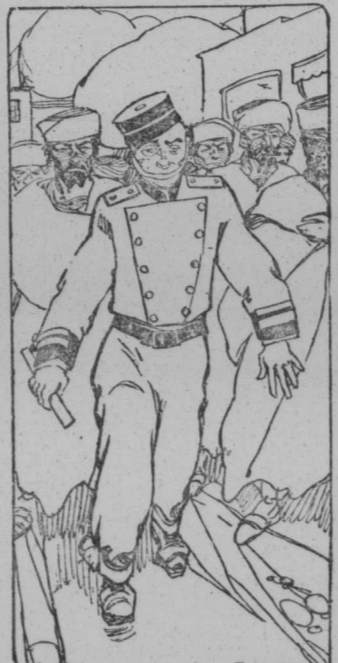
The Japa's company's tug was returning to the pier. Lord Deppingham sighed and then drew forth his cigarette case. "There," he went on, peering intently up the street. "Saunders is gone."

"Gone?" half shrieked her ladyship. "Into the bank," he added, scratching a match.

"Deppy," she said after a moment. "I hope I was not too hard on the poor fellow."

"Perhaps you won't be so nervous if you sit down and look at the sea," he said gently, and she immediately knew that he suggested it because he expected a tragedy in the opposite direction.

They expected every minute to hear the shouts of assassins and the screams of the brave Mr. Saunders. Their apprehensions were sensibly increased by the mysterious actions of the half naked loiterers. They made off in various directions, more than one of them handling his ugly creese in an ominous manner. Bromley was not slow to acquaint his lordship with these movements. Deppingham felt a



Bowles wore the light red jacket of a British trooper.

cold chill shoot up his spine, but he refused to encourage the maid's fears by turning around.

"Your lordship," said Mr. Saunders three minutes later, "this is Mr. Bowles, his majesty's agent here. He is come with me to —"

It was then and not until then that his lordship turned his stare from the sea to the clerk and his companion.

"Aw," he interrupted, "glad to see you, I'm sure. Would you be good enough to tell us how we are to reach the — chateau and why the devil we can't get anybody to move our luggage?"

Mr. Bowles, who had lived in Japan for sixteen years, was a fortunately slow Englishman, with the curse of the clime still growing upon him. He was half asleep quite a good bit of the time and wholly asleep during the remainder.

"Everything is transferred by hand, my lord, and the chateau is two miles farther up the side of the mountain. It's quite a walk, sir."

"Do you mean to say we are to walk?"

"Yes, my lord, if you expect to go there."

"Of course we expect to go there. Are there no horses on the beastly island?"

"Hundreds, my lord, but they belong to the people, and no one but their owners ride them. The servants at the chateau turned Mr. Skaggs' horses out to pasture before they left."

"Before who left?"

"The servants, my lord."

Lady Deppingham's eyes grew wide with understanding. "You don't mean to say that the servants have left the place?" she cried.

"Yes, my lady. They were natives, you know."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Deppingham.

"I'm afraid you don't understand the situation," said Mr. Bowles patiently. "You see, it's really a triangular controversy, if I may be so bold as to say so. Lady Deppingham is one of the angles; Mr. Browne, the American gentleman, is another; the native population is the last. Each wants to be the hypotenuse. While the interests of all three are merged in the real issue, there is nevertheless a decided disposition all around to make it an entirely one-sided affair."

"I don't believe I grasp," muttered Deppingham blankly.

"I see perfectly," exclaimed his wife. "The natives are allied against us, just as we are, in a way, against them and Mr. Browne. Really, it seems quite natural, doesn't it, dear?" turning to her husband.

"Very likely, but very unfortunate. It leaves us to broil our brains out down here on this pier. I say, Mr. — er — old chap, can't you possibly engage some sort of transportation for us? Really, you know, we can't stand here all day."

"I've no doubt I can arrange it, my lord. If you will just wait here until I run back to the bank, I can say I'll find a way. I should prefer standing under the sun to being in a boat."

It was fully five minutes before he returned. "I've arranged it, my lord," he said, "but you must be ready to start in half an hour. I'll have a Scotch trooper, with a pack of mules, to take you to the chateau. It's a good way, but it's the only way."

"I'll be ready in half an hour," said his lordship, and he turned to his wife and Bromley. "I'll be back in half an hour, my lady. I'll have a Scotch trooper, with a pack of mules, to take you to the chateau. It's a good way, but it's the only way."

anything I tell 'em to do when I represent the British army. This is the only uniform on the island, but they've been taught that there are more where this one came from. These fellows will carry your boxes up to the chateau, sir, and I've sent for two carts to draw your party up the slope. They'll be here in a jiffy, my lady."

Then, turning majestically to the huddled natives, he waved his slender stick and said: "Lively now! No loitering! Lively!"

Whereupon the entire collection of boxes, bags and bundles figuratively picked itself up and walked off in the direction of the chateau.

CHAPTER VI. THE CHATEAU.

THE road to the chateau took its devious way through the little town out into the green foothill beyond. Two lumbering wooden wheeled carts, none too clean, each drawn by four perspiring men, served as conveyances by which the arrivals were to make the journey to their new home.

Lady Deppingham's pert little nose lifted itself in disgust as she was joggled through the town behind the grunting substitutes for horseflesh. She sat beside her husband in the foremost cart. Mr. Bowles, very tired, but quite resplendent, walked dutifully beside one wheel; Mr. Saunders took his post at the other. The servants came along behind in the second cart. Far ahead, like hounds in full cry, toiled the unwilling luggage bearers. From the windows and doorways of every house, from the bazars and cafes, from the side streets and mosque approaches, the gaze of the sullen populace fastened itself upon the little procession. The town seemed ominously silent.



Most of the islanders have got three or four axes already.

At last they came to the end of the sunlit street and plunged into the shady road that ascended the slope through what seemed to be an absolutely unbroken though gorgeous jungle. The cool green depths looked most alluring to the sun-baked travelers.

They could almost imagine that they heard the dripping of fountains, the gurgling of rivulets, no like paradise was the prospect ahead. Lady Agnes could not restrain her cries of delighted amazement.

"It's like this all over the island, your ladyship," volunteered Mr. Bowles, nipping his brow in a most unmillitary way, "except at the mines and back there in the town."

"Where are the mines?" asked Deppingham.

"The company's biggest mines are seven or eight miles eastward as the crow flies, quite at the other side of the island. It's very rocky over there, and there's no place for a landing from the sea. Everything is brought overland to Ararat and placed in the vaults of the bank. Four times a year the rubies and sapphires are shipped to the brokers in London and Paris and Vienna. It's quite a neat and regular arrangement, sir."

"But I should think the confounded natives would steal everything they got their hands on."

"What would be the use, sir? They couldn't dispose of a single gem on the island, and nothing is taken away from here except in the company's chests. Besides, my lord, these people are not thieves. They may kill people occasionally, but they are quite honest, believe me. And, in any event, are they not a part of the great corporation? They have their share in the working of the mines and to the profits. Mr. Wyckholme and Mr. Skaggs were honest with them, and they have been just as honest in return."

"I should think they'd be terribly poor," said Lady Agnes. "They look so wretchedly poor."

"My lady," said Bowles, "there are four poor men on the island — my lord, the bank, the company, the natives, and the natives."

"The natives?"

"The natives, my lord. They are the only ones who work the mines, and they are the only ones who get the profits. They are the only ones who are honest with the company, and they are the only ones who are honest in return."

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