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The Man From Brodney's

By George Barr McCutcheon

(Chapter II Continued)

toward the end of his fifth month before she returned to her father's palace in Thorberg. He awoke to the importance of the occasion and took some slight interest in the return of the royal young lady, even going so far as to follow the crowd to the railway station on the sunny June afternoon.

He saw the princess for the first time that afternoon, and he was bowled over, to use the expression of his English friends with whom he dined that night. She was the first woman that he had ever looked upon that he could describe, for she was the only one who had impressed him to that extent. This is how he pictured her at the American legation in Paris a few weeks later.

"Ever see her? Well, you've something to live for, gentlemen. I've seen her but three times, and I don't seem able to shake off the spell. You've never seen such hair. God, it's as near like the kind that Homer painted on anything human could be, except that it's more like old gold, if you can understand what I mean by that. Not bronze, mind you, nor the raw red, but oh, well, I'm not a novelist, so I can't half-way describe it. She's rather tall—not too tall, mind you—five feet five, I'd say—whatever that is in the metric system. Slender and well dressed—oh, that's the strangest thing of all! Well dressed! Think of a princess being well dressed! I'd say she's twenty-two or twenty-three years of age—not a minute older. I think her eyes are a very dark gray, almost blue. Her skin is like a—oh, let me see! What is there that's as pure and soft as her skin? Something warm and pink and white, d'ye see? Well, never mind. And her smile! And her frown! You know, I've seen both of 'em, and one's as attractive as the other. She's a real princess, gentlemen, and the prettiest woman I've ever laid my eyes upon. And to think of her as the wife of that blithering little ass, that nincompoop of a Karl Brabetz! She loathes him, I'm sure—I know she does. And she's got to marry him! That's what she gets for being a grand duke's daughter. Brabetz is the heir apparent to some duchy or other over here and he supposed to be the catch of the season. You've heard of him. He was in Paris this season and cut quite a figure—a prince with real money in his purse, you know. I wonder why it is that our American girls don't marry the princes who have money instead of those who have none. Not that I wish any of our girls should had luck as Brabetz! I'll stake my head he'll never forget me." Chase concluded with a sharp, reflective

length in which his hearers joined, for the escape which inspired it was being stily discussed in every embassy in Europe.

But to return. The advent of the princess put fresh life into the slow-going elite and court circles. Charming people whom Chase had never seen before seemed to spring into existence suddenly; the streets took on a new air; the hands played with a keener zest, and the army prinked itself into a most amazingly presentable shape. Chase could hardly believe his success. He lifted up his chin, threw out his chest, lauded the look of contentment from his face and announced to himself that Thorberg was not such a bad place after all.

For days he swung blithely through the streets, the hangdog look gone from his eyes, always hoping for another glimpse of the fair sorceress who had worked the great transformation. It was two weeks before he saw her the second time. He was more enchanted by her face than before, especially as he came to realize the astonishing fact that she was kind enough to glance in his direction from time to time.

It was during the weekly concert in the Kursaal late one night. She came in with a party, among whom he recognized several of the leading personages at court.

Chase sat at a table with the French attaché just below the box occupied by the princess and her party. In spite of the fact that he was a gentleman born and bred he could not conquer countless impulses to look at the flower face of the royal auditor.

Gradually the program led up to the feature of the evening, the rendition of a great work under the direction of a famous leader, a special guest of the music-loving duke.

Chase arose and cheered with the assemblage when the distinguished director made his appearance. Then he proceeded to forget the man and his genius—in fact, everything save the rapid listener above him. She was leaning forward on the rail of the box, her chin in her hand, her eyes looking steadily ahead, enthralled by the music. Suddenly she turned and looked squarely into his eyes, as if impelled by the magnetism they unconsciously employed. A little flush mounted to her brow as she quickly resumed her former attitude. Chase cursed himself for a brainless lout.

The number came to an end, and the crowd arose to cheer the bowing, smiling director. Chase cheered and shouted "Bravo!" too, because she was applauding as eagerly as the others. She

called the flushed, bowing director to her box and publicly thanked him for the pleasure he had given. Chase saw him kiss her hand as he murmured his gratitude. For the first time in his life he coveted the occupation of an orchestra leader.

The director was a frail, rather good looking young man, with piercing black eyes that seemed too bold in their serenity of the young lady's face. Chase began to hate him. He was unreasonably thankful when he passed on to the box in which the duke sat.

The third and last time he saw the Princess Geneva before his sudden, spectacular departure from the grand duchy was at the duke's reception to the nobility of Rapp-Thorberg and to the representatives of such nations of the world as felt the necessity of having a man there in an official capacity.

CHAPTER IV.
 THE INDISCREET MR. CHASE.

HERE WAS NOT a handsomer, more striking figure in the palace gardens on the night of the reception than Hollingsworth Chase nor one whose pose proved that he knew the world quite as well as it is possible for any one man to know it. His was a unique figure also, for he was easily distinguishable as the only American in the brilliant assemblage.

He was presented to the princess late in the evening, together with Baggs of the British office. His pride



A heavy hand fell upon his collar.

and confidence received a severe shock. She glanced at him with unaffected welcome, but with the air of one who was looking upon his face for the first time.

He could not again approach within speaking distance of the princess, nor did he presume to make the effort. Chase knew his proper place. She was the gayest, the most vivacious being in the whole assemblage. She had but to stretch out her hand or project her smile and every man in touch with the spell was ready to drop at her feet. At last she led her court off toward the pavilion under which the royal orchestra was playing. As if it were a signal, every one turned his steps in that direction. Chase and the Englishman 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, hadn'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 noble 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 rail.

"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 alarm. Not a word was spoken. Chase whirled the presumptuous sultor about until he faced the gates to the garden. Then, with more force than he realized, he applied his boot to the person of the offender—once, twice, thrice!

The princess stared, wide eyed and unbelieving, upon the brief tragedy. She saw her tormentor hurled viciously toward the gates and then, with new alarm, saw him pick himself up from the ground, writhing with pain and anger. His sword flashed from its scabbard, as with a scream of rage, he dashed upon the tall intruder. She saw Chase—even in the shadows she 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, lunging at his collar.

"Second! 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 tail 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 walked an instant and then walked rapidly away in the direction of the palace. Baggs grasped 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 Brabetz—Karl Brabetz."

"Good Lord!"

"You must have known."

"How the devil 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 softitude.

"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—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.

(To be Continued)

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