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The Man From Brodney's

By George Barr McCutcheon

(Chapter XII Continued)

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 robe 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 fountain 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. Titian 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 unattractive."

"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 troubling," 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. "Chained to have you here, Mr. Chase. You've been most unneighborly. Have you been presented to her highness then—Oh, be sure of course you have. Strife of me."

"We met ages ago," she said, with an ingenuous smile, which had been 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 my fears a bit? With all due respect to your estimable clients, it occurs to me that they are likely to break over 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 my guard up here. After the next

by missile. Turning it over in his fingers, he said coolly, although his cheek had gone white:

"With Von Biltz'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 marksmen. 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 repeated:

"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 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 cool 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 recovered 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 GALLOPING.

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 disconcerting news from London. Chase was obliged to tell the islanders that notice of a contest had been filed. The lineal heirs had pooled their issues and were now fighting side by side. The matter would be in chancery for months, even years. He could almost feel the gust of rage and disappointment that swept over the island, although not a word came from the lips of the sullen population. The very silence was foreboding.

He did not visit the chateau during that perplexing week. It was hard, but he resolutely kept to the path of duty, disdaining the pleasures that beckoned to him. Every day he saw and talked with Britt and Saunders. They, as well as the brisk Miss Felham, gave him the "family news" from the chateau. It did not require extraordinary keenness on Chase's part to gather that her ladyship and Browne had suddenly decided to engage in what he would call a mild flirtation, but what Saunders looked upon as a real attack of love.

"If I had the nerve I'd call Browne good and hard," said Britt over his jump. "It isn't right. It isn't decent. The disappear for hours at a time, and they're always got their heads together. Poor little Drusilla! She's from Boston, Chase, and can't retailize. Besides, Deppingham wouldn't take notice if she tried. The worst of it is Deppingham has got an idea that they may try to put him out of the way—him and Drusilla. Awful, isn't it? And, say, by the way, Saunders is getting to dislike you intensely."

"I can't help it if he loves the only stenographer on the island," said Chase easily. "You seem to be the only one who isn't in hot water all the time, Britt."

"Me and the princess," said Britt ironically. Chase looked up quickly, but the other's face was as straight as could be. "If you were a real gentleman you would come around once in a while and give her something to talk to instead of about."

"Does she talk about me?" quite steadily.

"They all do. I've even heard the white handmaids discussing you in glowing terms. You're a regular matinee hero up there, my—"

"Selim!" broke in Chase. The Arab came to the table immediately. "Don't put so much liquor in Mr. Britt's drinks after this—mostly water." Britt grinned amiably.

"I say, Britt, you're not responsible for this affair between Browne and Lady Deppingham, are you?" demanded Chase abruptly.

"What do you mean?"

"I was just wondering if you could have put Browne up to the game in the hope that a divorce or two might solve a very difficult problem."

"Now that you mention it, I'm going to look up the church and colonial divorce laws," said Britt noncommittally after a moment.

"I advise you to hurry," said Chase coolly. "If you can divorce and marry 'em inside of four weeks, with no court qualified to try the case nearer than India, you are a wonder."

Chase was in the habit of visiting the island two or three times a week during work hours. The next morning after his conversation with Britt he rode out to the mines. When he reached the brow of the last hill, overlooking the wide expanse in which the men toiled, he drew rein sharply and stared agape at what lay before him. Five hundred half naked brown men were congregated in the shade of the trees far to the right. By the aid of his glasses he could see that one of their number was addressing them in an earnest, violent harangue. It was Von Biltz. From time to time faint sounds of shouts came across the valley.

Chase shuddered. He knew what it meant.

"How about Allah now, Selim?" he asked sententiously.

"Allah is great, Allah is good," murmured the Moslem youth, but without heart.

"Do you think he can save me from those dogs?" asked the master, with a kindly smile.

"Sahib, do not go among them to-day," implored Selim impulsively.

"They are expecting me, Selim. If I don't come they will know that I have flunked. They'll know I am afraid of them."

"Do not go today," persisted Selim doggedly. Suddenly he started, looking intently to the left along the line of the hill. Chase followed the direction of his gaze and uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise.

Several hundred yards away, outlined against the blue sky beyond the knob, stood the motionless figure of a horse and its rider—a woman in a green habit. Chase turned his horse's head and rode rapidly toward her. She had left the road to ride out upon the crest of the green knob. Chase was in the mood to curse her temerity.

As he came up over the slope she turned in the saddle to watch his approach. He had time to see that two grooves from the stables were in the road below her. She smiled as he drew up beside her, not noticing his unconscious frown.

"So those are the fabulous mines of Japan?" she said gayly, without other greeting. "Where is the red glow from the rubies?"

"Who gave you permission to ride so far from the chateau?" he demanded, almost harshly. She looked at him in amazement.

"Am I a trespasser?" she asked coolly.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly. "I did not mean to offend. Don't you know that it is not safe for you to—"

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "I am not afraid of your shadows. Why should they disturb me?"

"Look!" He pointed to the distant assemblage. "Those are not shadows. They are men, and they are making ready to transform themselves into beasts. Before long they will strike. Von Biltz and Rasula have sunk my warships. You must understand that it is dangerous to leave the chateau on such rides as this. Come! We will start back together—at once!"

"I protest, Mr. Chase, that you have no right to say what I shall do or—"

"It isn't a question of right. You are nearly ten miles from the chateau, in the most unfrequented part of the island. Some day you will not return to your friends. It will be too late to hunt for you then."

"How very thrilling!" she said, with a laugh.

"I beg of you, do not treat it so lightly," he said, so sharply that she flushed. He was looking intently in the direction of the men. She was not slow to see that their position had been discovered by the miners. "Will you come with me now?"

"It seems so absurd! But I will come, of course. I have no desire to cause you any uneasiness."

As they rode swiftly back to the tree

lined road a faint chorus of yells came to them across the valley. For some distance they rode without speaking a word to each other. They had traversed two miles of the soft dirt road before Chase discovered that Selim was the only man following them. The two men who had come out with the princess were not in sight.

"The dogs! So, you see, princess, your escort was not to be trusted," said Chase grimly.

"But they have stolen the horses," she murmured irrelevantly. "They belong to the chateau stables."

"Which direction did they take, Selim?"

"They rode off by the Carter's highway, excellency, toward Ararat."

"It may not appeal to your vanity, your highness, but it is my duty to inform you that they have gone to report our clandestine meeting."

"Clandestine! What do you mean, sir?"

"The islanders are watching me like hawks. Every time I am seen with any one from the chateau they add a fresh nail to the coffin they are preparing for me. It's really more serious than you imagine. I must therefore forbid you to ride outside of the park."

"I dare say you are right, Mr. Chase," she said at last, quite frankly. "I thank you."

"I am glad that you understand," he said simply. His gaze was set straight before him, keen, alert, anxious.

"I begin to fear, Mr. Chase," she said, with a faint smile, "that Lady Deppingham deceived me in suggesting Japan as a rest cure. It may interest you to know that the court at Rappenthorn has been very gay this winter. My brother, Christofel, has been with us after two years' absence. He came with his wife from the ends of the earth, and my father forgave him in good earnest. Christofel was very disobedient in the old days. He refused to marry the girl my father chose for him. Was it not foolish of him?"

"Not if it has turned out well in the end."

"I dare say it has or will. She is delightful. My father loves her. And my father—the grand duke, I should say—does not love those who cross him. One is very fortunate to have been born a prince." He thought he detected a note of bitterness in this railway.

"I can conceive of no greater fortune than to have been born Prince. Karl of Brabets," he said lightly. She flashed a quick glance at his face, her eyes narrowing in the effort to divine his humor.

"As I was saying," she resumed after a moment, "Lady Deppingham has lured me from sun showers into the tempest. Mr. Chase—and her face was suddenly full of real concern—"Is there truly great danger?"

"I fear so," he answered. "It is only a question of time. I have tried to check this uprising, but I've failed. Last night Von Biltz, Rasula and three others came to the bungalow and coolly informed me that my services were



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