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The Man From Brodney's

By George Barr McCutcheon

(Chapter XV Continued)

He stared at her, uncomprehending. She went on. "Do you consider it bad luck to postpone a wedding?" Instantly he drew his horse power to her. There was a new gleam in his eyes. Her blood leaped at the challenge they carried. "Very bad luck," he said quite steadily, "for the bridegroom."

In an instant they seemed to understand something that had not even been considered before. She looked away but he kept his eyes fast upon her half turned face, finding delight in the warm tint that surged so shamelessly to her brow. He wondered if he could hear the pounding of his heart above the thud of the horses' feet.

"We are to be married in June," she said, somewhat defiantly. Some of the light died in his eyes. "Prince Karl was very ill. They thought he might die. His studies—his music. I mean, proved more than he could carry. It—it is not serious. A nervous breakdown," she explained haltingly. "It was necessary to postpone the marriage. He will be quite well again, they say, by June."

"I hope he may be fully recovered, for your sake," he managed to say.

"Thank you." After a long pause she turned to him again and said, "We are to live in Paris for a year or two at least."

"He is in Paris now?"

"No," she answered, and that was all. He waited, but she did not expect her condemnation.

"So it is to be in June," he mused. "In June," she said quietly. He sighed.

"I am more than sorry that you are a princess," he said boldly.

"I am quite sure of that," she said, so politely that he almost gasped. She was looking comfortably, a mischievous gleam in her dark eyes. His laugh was as awkward as hers was charming.

"You do like to be flattered," he exclaimed at random. "And I shall take it upon myself to add to to-day's measure." He again drew forth his pocket-book. She looked on curiously. "Permit me to restore the lace handkerchief which you dropped some time ago. I've been keeping it for myself, but—"

"My handkerchief?" she gasped, her cheeks flushing at once to that ridiculous incident of the balcony. "It must belong to Lady Deppingham."

"Oh, it isn't the one you used on the balcony," he protested coolly. "It antedates that adventure."

"Balcony? I don't understand you," she protested.

"Then you are exceedingly obtuse."

"I never dreamed that you could see," she confessed pathetically.

"It was extremely nice in you and very presumptuous in me. But, your highness, this is the handkerchief you dropped in the castle garden six months ago. Do you recognize the perfume?"

"You are very sentimental," she said at last. "Would you care to keep it? It is of no value to me."

"Thank! I will keep it."

"I've changed my mind," she said inconsequently, stuffing the fabric in her gauntlet. "You have something else in that pocketbook that I should very much like to possess."

"It can't be that Bank of England—"

"No, no! You wrapped it in a bit of paper last week and placed it there for safe keeping."

"You mean the bullet?"

"Yes. I should like it to show to my friends, you know, when I tell them how near you were to being shot." Without a word he gave her the bullet that had dropped at his feet on that first day at the chateau. "Thank you. Oh, isn't it a horrid thing! Just to think, it might have struck you!" She shuddered.

He was about to answer in his dejection when a sharp turn in the road brought them in view of the chateau. Not a hundred yards ahead of them two persons were riding slowly, unattended, very much occupied in themselves. Their backs were turned toward Chase and the princess, but the glance which shot from the princess to Chase found a peculiar smile disappearing from his lips.

"I know what you are thinking," she cried impulsively. "You are wrong—very wrong. Mr. Chase, Lady Deppingham is a born coquette—a born triller. It is ridiculous to think that she can be seriously engaged in a—"

"It isn't that, princess," he interrupted, a dark look in his eyes. "I was merely wondering whether dear little Mrs. Browne is as happy as she might be."

Genevra was silent for a moment. "I had not thought of that," she said soberly.

as ever. He showed no sign of restraint, no evidence of compunction. Chase found himself secretly calculating on the state of affairs. Were the two bears working out a preconcerted plan, or were they, after all, playing with the fires of spring?

Immediately after tidings Geneva carried Lady Deppingham off to her room. When they came forth for a proposed stroll in the grounds Lady Agnes was looking very meek and fearful, while the princess had about her the air of one who has conquered by gentleness.

"It has been so appalling! That's why, besides, it isn't necessary for her to be so horrid about it. She—"

"She isn't horrid about it, dear. She's most self-sacrificing."

"Rubbish! She talks about the Puritans and all that sort of thing. I know what she means. But there's no use talking about it. I'll do as you say—command, I mean. I'll try to be a prince. Heaven alone knows what a proud brute I am. I don't. All this tommyrot about Bobby and we wouldn't exist if that wretched Chase man had been a little more affable. He never noticed us until you came. No dear, to smooch after him and—why, my dear, he would have been lost!"

"It's all very nice. Amnes, but you forget your husband," said Geneva, with a tolerant smile.

"Genevra," said Lady Agnes solemnly, "if you'd been on a barren island for five months as I have with nothing to look at but your husband and the emus you would not be so hard on me. I wouldn't take Drusilla's husband away from her for the world. I wouldn't even look at him if he were not on the barren island too. I've read novels in which a man and woman have been wrecked on a desert island and lived there for months, even years, in an atmosphere of righteousness. My dear, those novelists are uncles. Nobody could be so good as all that without getting wings. I'm tired of men and angels. That's why I want you for awhile. You've got no wings. Genevra, but it's of no consequence, as you have no one to fly away with. Or to, you might add," laughed Geneva.

"That's very American. You've been talking to Miss Pelham. She's always adding things. By the way, Mr. Chase sees quite a lot of her. She types for him. I fancy she's trying to choose between him and Mr. Saunders. If you were she, dear, which would you choose?"

"Mr. Saunders," said Geneva promptly. "But if I were myself I'd choose Mr. Chase."

"Speaking of angels, he must have wings a yard long. He has been chosen by an entire harem, and he flies from them as if pursued by the devil. I imagine, however, that he'd be rather dangerous if his wings were to get out of order unexpectedly. But he's nice, isn't he?"

The princess nodded her head tolerantly.

Her ladyship went on: "I don't want to walk, after all. Let us sit here in the corridor and count the prism in the chandeliers. It's such fun. I've done it often. Mr. Britt has advanced a new theory. We are to indulge in double barreled divorce proceedings. As soon as they are over Mr. Brown and I are to marry. Then we are to hurry up and get another divorce. Then we marry our own husband and wife all over again. Isn't it exciting? Only, of course, it isn't going to happen. It would be so frightfully improper—shocking, don't you know. You see, I should go on living with my divorced husband even after I was married to Bobby. I'd be obliged to do that in order to give Bobby grounds for a divorce as soon as the estate is settled. But Deppy has put his foot down hard. He says he had trouble enough getting me to marry him the first time. He won't go through it again. Of course it's utter nonsense."

"A little nonsense now and then is—"

"began the princess and paused amiably.

"Is Mr. Chase to stay for lunch?" asked Lady Agnes irrelevantly.

"How should I know? I am not his hostess."

"Hoity toity! I've never known you to look like that before. A little dash of red sets up your cheeks off. But Geneva threw up her hands in despair and started toward the stairway, her chin tilted high. Lady Agnes, laughing softly, followed. "It's too bad she's down to marry that horrid little Brabets," she said to herself, with a sudden wistful glance at the proud, vibrant, lovable creature ahead. "She deserves a better fate than that."

Genevra waited for her at the head of the stairway.

"Agnes, I'd like you to promise that you will keep your avian claws off Mrs. Browne's husband," she said seriously.

"I'll try, my dear," said Lady Agnes meekly.

When they reached the garden they found Deppingham smoking furiously and quite alone. Chase had left some time before to give warning to the English bank that trouble might be expected. The shadow of disappointment that flitted across Geneva's face was not observed by the others. Bobby

Browne and his wife were off strolling in the lower end of the park. "Poor old Deppy," cried his wife. "I've made up my mind to be exceedingly nice to you for a whole day."

"I suppose I ought to beat you," he said slowly.

"Beat me? Why, pray?"

"I received an anonymous letter this morning telling me of your goings-on with Bobby Browne," said he easily.



A droll, satirizing line appeared

"It was stuck under my door by Bobby, who said that Miss Pelham gave it to her. Miss Pelham referred me to Mr. Britt, and Mr. Britt urged me to keep the letter for future reference. I think he said it could be used as Exhibit A. Then he advised me to bestow it only in the presence of witnesses."

The whole household must be going mad," cried Geneva, with a laugh.

"Oh, if something only would happen," exclaimed her ladyship. "A riot, a mass meeting—anything! It all sounds so force to you, Geneva, but you haven't been here for five months, as you have."

As they moved away from the vine-covered nook in the garden a hand rested the leaves in the balcony above, and the droll, satirizing face of a trusted servant appeared behind it. This secret espionage had been going on for days in the chateau. Scarcely a move was made or a word spoken by the white people that escaped the attention of the swarthy spy. And, curious enough, these spies were no longer reporting their discoveries to Heggingsworth Chase.

The days passed. Heggingsworth Chase now realized that he no longer and authority over the natives. Rascals made the reports for the islanders and took charge of the statements from the bank.

Every morning Chase rode boldly into the town, transacted what business he could, talked with the thoroughly disturbed bankers and then deliberately made his way to the chateau. He was in love with the princess—loperately in love. He understood perfectly—for he was a man of the world and cosmopolitan—that nothing could come of it. She was a princess, and she was not in a story book; she could not marry him.

So far as Geneva was concerned, on her part it could mean no more than a diversion, a condensation to coquetry, a simple flirtation; it meant the easing of a few days, the killing of time, the pleasure of gentle conquest, and then—forgetfulness. All this he knew.

At first she revolted against the court he so plausibly paid to her in these last few days. It was bold, conscienceless, impertinent. She avoided him; he treated him to a short season of disdain; she did all in her power to repulse his effrontery—and then in the end she decided to give him as good as he sent in this brief battle of folly. It mattered little who came off with the fewest scars for in a fortnight or two they would go their separate ways, no better, no worse, for the conflict. And, after all, it was very dull in these last days, and he was very attractive and very brave and very gallant and, above all, very sensible.

They rode together in the park every morning, keeping well out of range of marksmen in the hills. Their conflict was with the eyes, the tone of the voice, the intervals of silence; no touch of the hand—nothing except the strategies of looks.

What did it matter if a few dead apulises, a few crippled ideals, a few faded hopes, were left strewn upon the battlefield at the end of the fortnight? What did anything matter so long as Prince Karl of Brabets was not there?

One night toward the end of this week of enchanting encounters—the week of effort to uncover the vulnerable spot in the other's armor—Genevra stood leaning upon the rail which inclosed the hanging garden, she was gazing abstractedly into the black night, out of which far away shined the light in the bungalow. It was the first night in a week that he had missed coming to the chateau.

She missed him. She was lonely.

He had told her of the meeting that was to be held at the bungalow that night at which he was to be asked to deliver over to Russia's committee the papers, the receipts and the memoranda that he had accumulated during his months of employment in their behalf.

She had a feeling of dread—a numb, sweet feeling that she could not explain except that under all of it lay the proud consciousness that he was a man who had courage, a man who was not afraid.

"How silly I am!" she said half aloud in her abstraction.

She turned her gaze away from the blinking light in the hills, a queer, guilty smile on her lips.

Across the garden from where she was flaying herself bitterly Lady Deppingham's husband was saying in low, agitated tones to Bobby Browne's wife:

"Now, see here, Drusilla, I'm not saying that our—that is, Lady Deppingham and Bobby—are accountable for what has happened, but that doesn't make it any more pleasant. It's of little consequence who is trying to poison us, don't you know, and all that. They wouldn't do it, I'm sure, but somebody is! That's what I mean, is it not?"

"I know my husband wouldn't—couldn't do such a thing. Lord Deppingham," came from Drusilla's stiff lips almost as a moan. She was very miserable.

"Of course not, my dear Drusilla," he protested nervously. Then suddenly, as his eye caught what he considered a suspicious movement of Bobby's hand as he placed a card close to Lady Deppingham's dress: "Demme, I—I'd rather he wouldn't! But I beg your pardon, Drusilla! It's all perfectly innocent."

"Of course it's innocent!" whispered Drusilla fiercely.

"It's either nonsense for us to suspect them of—Pray don't be so upset, Drusilla. It's all right."

"If you think I am worrying over your wife's harmless affair with my husband you are very much mistaken."

Deppingham was silent for a long time.

"I don't sleep at all these nights," he said at last miserably. She could feel sorry for him. She could only feel for herself and her sleepless nights.

"Drusilla, do you think they want to get rid of us? We're the obstacles, you know. We can't help it, but we are. Somebody put that pill in my tea today. It must have been a servant. It couldn't have been—"

"My husband, sir?"

"No, my wife. You know, Drusilla, she's not that sort. She has a horror of death and—"

He stopped and wiped his brow pathetically.

"If the servants are trying to poison any of us, Lord Deppingham, it is reasonable to suspect that your wife and my husband are the ones they want to dispose of, not you and me. I don't believe it was poison you found in your tea, but if it was it was intended for one of the heirs."

"Well, there's some consolation in that," said Deppy, smiling for the first time.

The sharp rattle of firearms in the distance brought a sudden stop to his lugubrious reflections. Five, a dozen, a score of shots were heard. The blood turned cold in the veins of every one in the garden; faces blanched suddenly, and all voices were hushed. A form of paralysis seized and held them for a full minute.

Then the voice of Britt below broke harshly upon the tense, still air: "Good God! Look! It is the bungalow!"

A bright glow lighted the dark mountain side; a vivid red painted the trees; the small of burning wood came down with the breezes. Two or three sporadic shots were borne to the ears of those who looked toward the blazing bungalow.

"They've killed Chase!" burst from the stiff lips of Bobby Browne.

CHAPTER XVII
CHASE COMES FROM THE CLOUDS.

FOR many minutes the watchers in the chateau stared at the burning bungalow, fascinated, petrified. Through the mind of each man ran the sudden, sharp dread that Chase had met death at the hands of his enemies.

Genevra felt her heart turn cold. Then something seemed to clutch her by the throat and choke the breath out of her body. Through her brain went whirling the recollection of his last words to her that afternoon. "They'll find me ready if they come for trouble." She wondered if he had been ready for them or if he had surprised them! She had heard the shots. Chase could not have fired them all. Was he now lying dead in that blazing bungalow? She screamed aloud with the thought of it!

"Can't something be done?" she cried again and again, without taking her gaze from the doomed bungalow. She turned fiercely upon Bobby Browne, his countryman. Afterward she recalled that he stood staring as she had stared, Lady Deppingham clasping his arm with both of her hands. The glance also took in the face of Deppingham. He was looking at his wife, and his eyes were wide and glassy, but not with terror. "It may not be too late!" again cried the princess. "There are enough of us here to make an effort, no matter how futile. He may be alive and trapped up!"

"Voie, right!" shouted Browne. "He's not the kind to go down with the first rush. We must go to him. We can get there in ten minutes. Britt! Where are the guns? Are you with us, Deppingham?"

He did not wait for an answer, but dashed out of the garden and down the steps, calling to his wife to follow. "Stop!" shouted Deppingham. "We dare not leave this place! If they have turned against Chase, they are also ready for us. I'm not a coward, Browne. We're needed here, that's all. It's too late to help Chase. They've got him, poor devil! Everybody inside! Get to the guns if possible and cut off the servants' quarters. We must not

let them surprise us. Follow me!"

There was wisdom in what he said, and Browne was not slow to see it clearly. With a single penetrating glance at Geneva's despairing face, he shook his head gloomily and turned to follow Deppingham, who was hurrying off through the corridor with her ladyship.

"Come," he called, and the princess, feeling Drusilla's hand grasping her arm, gave one helpless look at the fire and hastened to obey.

In the grand hallway they came upon Britt and Saunders, white faced and excited. The white servants were clattering down the stairways, filled with alarm, but there was not one of the native attendants in sight. The sound of a violent struggle in the lower corridor came to their ears. Loud voices, blows, a single shot, the rushing of feet, the panting of men in force combat—and then, even as the whites turned to retreat up the stairway, a crowd of men surged up the stairs from below, headed by Ballo, the major domo.

"Stop, excellencies!" he shouted again and again. Bobby Browne and Deppingham were covering the retreat, prepared to fight to the end for their women although unarmed. It was the American who first realized that Ballo was not heading an attack upon them. Ballo and a score of his men had refused to join the stablemen and gardeners in the plot to assassinate the white people. As a last resort the conspirators contrived to steal into the chateau, hoping to fall upon their victims before Ballo could interpose. The major domo, however, with the wily sagacity of his race, anticipated the move. The two forces met in the south hall after the plotters had effected an entrance from the garden. The struggle was brief, for the conspirators were outnumbered and surprised. They were even now lying below, bound and helpless, awaiting the disposition of their intended victims.

"It is not because we love you, excellencies," explained Ballo, with a sudden fierce look in his eyes, "but because Allah has willed that we should serve you faithfully. We are your dogs. Therefore we fight for you. It is a vile dog which bites its master."

Browne, with the readiness of the average American, again assumed command of the situation. He gave instructions that the prisoners, seven in number, be confined in the dungeon, temporarily at least.

"There will be no other attack on us tonight," said Browne, rejoicing the women after his interview with Ballo. "It has missed fire for the present, but they will try to get at us sooner or later from the outside. Britt, will you and Mr. Saunders put those prisoners through the sweat box? You may be able to bluff something out of them if you threaten them with death. They—"

"It won't do, Browne," said Deppingham, shaking his head. "They are fatalists; they are stoics. I know the breed better than you. Question if you like, but threats will be of no avail. Keep 'em locked up; that's all."

Fierceness and ammunition were taken from the gunroom to the quarters occupied by the white people. Every preparation was made for a defense in the event of an attack from the outside or inside. The white servants were moved into rooms adjoining their employers. Britt and Saunders transferred their belongings to certain gorgeous apartments. Miss Pelham went into a Marie Antoinette suit come by that of the princess. The native servants retained their customary quarters below stairs.

Far in the night Geneva, sleepless and depressed, stole into the hanging garden. Her mind was full of the horrid thing that had happened to Heggingsworth Chase. He had been nothing to her. He could not have been anything to her had he escaped the guns of the assassins. And yet her heart was stunned by the stroke that it had sustained. Wide eyed and sick, she made her way to the railing and, clinging to the vines, stared for she knew not how long at the dull red glow on the mountain.

The night was still and ominously dark. She had never known a night since she came to Japan when the birds and insects were so mute. A somber, supernatural calm hung over the island like a pall. The smell of smoke hung about her. She could not help wondering if his fine, strong body was lying up there burned to a crisp. It was far past midnight. She was alone in the garden. Sixty feet below her was the ground; above, the black dome of heaven.

She was not to know till long afterward that one of her faithful Thorberg men stood guard in the passage leading up from the garden, armed and willing to die. One or the other slept in front of her door through all those nights on the island.

Something hot trickled down her cheeks from the wide, pitying eyes that stared so hard. She was wondering now if he had a mother, sisters. How their hearts would be wrenched by this! She was thinking of him with pity and horror in her heart, not love.

A question was beginning to form itself vaguely in her troubled mind. Were all of them to die as Chase had died?

Suddenly there came to her ears the sound of something swishing through the air. An instant later a solid object fell almost at her feet. She started back with a cry of alarm. A broad shaft of light crossed the garden, thrown by the lamps in the upper hall of the chateau. Her eyes fell upon a writhing, snake-like thing that lay in this path of light.

(To be Continued)

CHAPTER XVI THE BURNING OF THE BUNGALOW.

HE went in and had lunch with them in the hanging garden. Deppingham was surly and preoccupied. Drusilla Browne was unusually vivacious. At best she was not volatile, her greatest accomplishment lay in the ability to appreciate what others had to say. Her husband, alone from a natural anxiety, was the same blithe optimist