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# The Man From Brodney's

By George Barr McCutcheon

(Chapter XVII. Continued)



"Can't something be done?" she cried.

Fascinated, almost paralyzed, she watched it for a full minute before realizing that it was the end of a thick rope which had lost itself in the heavy shadows at the cliff end of the garden. She was standing directly in the shaft of light. To her surprise, the wriggling ceased. The next moment a faint, subdued shout was borne to her ears. Her flight was checked by that shout, for her startled, bewildered ears caught the sound of her own name.

At last, far above, she saw the glimmer of a light. It was too large to be a star, and it moved back and forth. Sharply it dawned upon her that it was at the top of the cliff which overhung the garden and stretched away to the sea. Some one was up there waving a lantern. She was thinking hard and fast, a light breaking in upon her understanding. Something like a shot into her being. Who else could it be if not Chase? He alone would call out her name. He was silent.

She called out his name shrilly, her face raised eagerly to the bobbing light. Not until hours afterward was Geneva to regret the use of her Christian name by the man in the clouds. Rushing over, she grasped the knotted end of the rope. A glance and a single tug were sufficient to convince her that the other end was attached to a support at the top of the cliff. It hung limp and heavy, lifeless. A sharp tug from above caused it to tremble violently in her hands. She dropped it as if it were a serpent. Again she heard the shout, and this time she called out a question.

"Yes," was the answer, far above. "Can you hear me? Greatly excited, she called back that she could hear and understand. "I'm coming down the rope. Stay for us—but don't worry! Please go inside until we land in the garden. It's a long drop, you know."

"Are you quite sure—is it safe?" she called, shuddering at the thought of the perilous descent of nearly 300 feet sheer through the darkness.

"It's safer than stopping here. Please go inside."

She dully comprehended his meaning. He wanted to save her from seeing his fall in the event that the worst should come to pass. Scarcely knowing what she did, she moved over into the shadow near the walls and waited breathlessly, all the time wondering why some one did not come from the chateau to lend assistance.

At last that portion of the rope which lay in the garden began to jerk and writhe vigorously. She knew then that he was coming down hand over hand through that long, dangerous stretch of darkness. The cliff reared itself sheer to the height of 350 feet directly behind the chateau. At the summit of this great wall a shelving ledge projected over the hanging garden. A rope dangling from this ledge would fall into the garden not far from the edge nearest the cliff. The summit of the cliff could be gained only by traversing the mountain slope from the other side. It was impossible to scale it from the floor of the valley which it bounded.

The rope was undoubtedly attached to the trunk of a sturdy tree at the brow of the cliff. She could look no longer. It seemed hours since he started from the top. Every heart beat brought him nearer to safety, but would he hold out? Any instant might bring him crashing to her feet—dead, after all that he may have lived through during that awful night.

At last she heard his heavy panting—grunting almost—the creaking and straining of the rope, the scraping of his hands and body. She opened her eyes and saw the bulky, swaying shadow not twenty feet above the garden. Slowly it drew nearer the grass-covered floor, foot by foot.

straining, struggling, gasping in the final supreme effort, and then with a sudden rush the black mass collapsed the taut rope sprang loose, the end switching and leaping violently. Geneva rushed frantically across the garden, half fearful, half joyous. As she came up the mass seemed to divide itself into two parts. One sank limply to the ground, the other stood erect for a second and then dropped beside the prostrate, gasping figure.

Chase had come down the rope with another human being clinging to his body.

Geneva fell to her knees beside the man who had accomplished this miracle. She grasped his hands, warm and sticky with blood. She tried to lift his head from the ground, moaning with pity all the time, uttering words of encouragement in his ear.

Many minutes passed. At last Chase gave over gasping and began to breathe regularly, but heavily. The strain had been tremendous. Only superhuman strength and will had carried him through the ordeal. He groaned with pain as the two beside him lifted him to a sitting posture.

"Tell Selim to come ahead," he gasped, his bloody hand at his throat. "We're all right!"

Then, for the first time, Geneva peered in the darkness at the figure beside her—a slight, graceful woman in oriental garb. The woman turned and lifted her face to the heights from which she had descended. In a shrill, eager voice she called out something in a language strange to the princess.

A faint shout came from on high, and once more the rope began to writhe. The princess passed her hand over her eyes, bewildered. The face of the woman in the light, half shaded, half illumined, was gloriously beautiful—young, dark, brilliant!

"Oh," she exclaimed, starting to her feet, a look of understanding coming into her eyes. This was one of the Persians! He had saved her! A feeling of revulsion swept over her, combating the first natural, womanly pride in the deed of a brave man.

Chase struggled weakly to his feet. He saw the tense, strained figure before him and, putting out his hand, said:

"She is Selim's wife. I am stronger than he, so I brought her down. Then, looking upward anxiously, he shouted: "Be careful, Selim! It's easy if you take your time to it."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

NEENAH.

SELIM'S wife, Neenah, saved his life. It was the next morning, and Chase was relating his experiences to an eager, jarveling company in the breakfast room. "She has a sister whose husband was one of the leaders in the attack," Neenah told Selim, and Selim told me. That's all. Days ago Selim and I reached the rope at the top of the cliff, anticipating just such an emergency as this and intending to use it if we could reach the chateau in no other way. I figured that they would cut off all other means of getting into your grounds."

"Neenah came up from the village ahead of the attacking party, out of breath and terribly frightened. We didn't waste a second, let me tell you. Grabbing up our guns, we got out through the rear and made a dash across the stable yard. It was near midnight. The servants, all of whom were up and ready to join the fight, attempted to head us off. We had a merry little tussle of real warfare just back of the stables. It was as dark as pitch, and I don't believe we hit anybody. But it was lively scrambling for a minute or two, let me tell you."

Deppegham's big blue eyes were fairly snapping. His wife put her hand on his shoulder with an impulse strange to her, and Geneva saw a light blaze in her eyes. "I hope you potted a few of 'em. Serve 'em jolly well right!"

"Selim says he stumbled over something that groaned as we were racing for the back road. I was looking out for Neenah." He glanced involuntarily from Lady Agnes to the princess, a touch of confusion suddenly assailing him. "Selim covered the retreat," he added hastily. "Instead of keeping the road we turned up the embankment and struck into the forest, dropping down behind the bushes, we watched those devils from the town race pell-mell, howling and shooting down the chateau road. There must have been a hundred of 'em. Five minutes later the bungalow was aflame. It was as bright as day, and I had no trouble in recognizing Rasula in the crowd. Selim led the way, and I followed with Neenah. Hang it all, Browne, I didn't have time to save that case of cigarettes. I'm out nearly a hundred boxes."

"You might have saved the cigarettes if you hadn't been so occupied in saving the fair Neenah," said her ladyship, with a provoking smile.

"Alas, I thought of that also, but too late! Still, virtue was its own reward. Imagine my delight when we stopped to rest to have Neenah divide her own little store of Turkish cigarettes with me. We had a bully smoke up there in the wood."



"They will dispose of us wholesale, not by the piece."

"Selim, too?" asked Browne casually. "Oh, no! Selim was exploring," said Chase easily.

"Neenah is very beautiful," ventured Lady Agnes. "She is exquisite," replied Chase with the utmost sang froid. "Selim thought her last winter for a tea party and a pint of sapphires."

"That explains her overwhelming love for Selim," said the princess quietly. Chase looked into her eyes for a moment and smiled inwardly.

"We finally got to the edge of the cliff and unseathed the rope, which we already had fastened to the trunk of a tree. I was obliged to carry Neenah for the last quarter of a mile, poor little girl. She was tied to my back, leaving my throat and chest free, and down we came. Simplest thing in the world, 'tresto! Here am I with my happy family at my heels!"

"Well, we can't sit here and dawdle all day," exclaimed Deppegham. "We must be moving about arrange our batteries and all that don't you know. We've got to stave these devils off for two or three weeks at least, and we'll have to look sharp. Browne, that's the third cup of coffee you've had. Come along! This isn't Boston!"

As they left the breakfast room Chase stepped to Geneva's side and walked with her. At the foot of the stairs, where they were to part, she extended her hand, a bright smile in her eyes.

"You were and are very brave and good," she said. He withheld his hand, and she dropped hers, hurt and strangely vexed. "Don't you care for my approval, or do you?"

"You forget, princess, that my hands are still suffering from the bravery you would land," he said, holding them resolutely behind his back.

"Oh, I remember," she cried in quick comprehension. "They were cut and bruised by the rope. How thoughtless of me! What are you doing for them? Come, Mr. Chase, may I not dress them for you? I am capable—I am not afraid of wounds. We have had many of them in our family, and fatal ones too."

She was eager now and earnest. He shook his head with a smile on his lips. "I thank you. They are better, much better, and they have been quite properly bandaged already."

"Neenah?" "Yes," he replied gently. She seemed to search his mind with a quick, intense look into his eyes. Then she smiled and said, "I'll promise not to bruise the wounds if you'll only be so good as to shake hands with me."

He took her slender hand in his broad, white swathed palm and pressed it fervently regardless of the pain which would have caused him to cringe if engaged in any other pursuit.

There was no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the disappointed islanders. Von Blitz and Rasula had convinced them that their cause was seriously jeopardized. They were made to see the necessity for permanently removing the white pretenders from their path.

Deppegham, on account of his one time position in the British army, was chosen chief officer of the beleaguered "citadel." A strict espionage was set upon the native servants despite Ballio's assurances of loyalty. Lookouts were posted in the towers, and a ceaseless watch was to be kept day and night. Chase on his first visit to the west tower discovered a long unused searchlight of powerful dimensions. Fortunately for the besieged, the electric light plant was located in the chateau grounds and could not be tampered with from the outside.

Britt was put in charge of the night patrol, Saunders the day. Selim under orders had severed the long rope with a single rifle shot. No one could hope to reach the chateau by way of the cliff.

Extra precautions were taken to guard the women from attacks from the inside. The window bars were locked securely, and heavy bolts were placed on the doors leading to the lower regions. It was now only too apparent that Skaggs and Wyckhouse had wrought well in anticipation of a rebellion by the native shareholders. Each window had its adjustable cranes; every outer door was protected by heavy iron gates.

By nightfall Deppegham's forces were in full possession of every advantage that their position afforded.

Chase came from his room, still stiff and sore, but with fresh, white bandages on his blistered hands. He asked

and received permission to light a cigarette and then dropped wearily into a seat near the princess, who sat upon the stone railing. Her trim, graceful figure was outlined against the darkness. A delicate, sensuous fragrance exhaled from her person, filling him with an indescribable delight and languor; the spell of her beauty was upon him, and he felt the leap of his blood.

"If I were you," he said at last, reluctant to despoil the picture, "I wouldn't sit up there. It would be a very simple matter for one of our friends to pick you off with a shot from below. Please let me pull up a chair for you."

She smiled ingenuously without a trace of uneasiness in her manner. "Dear officer of the day, do you think they are so foolish as to pick us off in parties? Not at all. They will dispose of us wholesale, not by the piece. By the way, has Neenah been made quite comfortable?"

"I believe so. She and Selim have the room beyond mine, thanks to Lady Deppegham."

"Agnes tells me that she is very interesting—quite like a princess out of a fairy book. You recall the princesses who were always being captured by ogres and evil princes and afterward satisfactorily rescued by those dear knights admirable? Did Selim steal her in the beginning?"

"You forget the pot of sapphires and the big ruby."

"They say that princesses can be bought very cheaply."

"Depends entirely upon the quality of princess you desire. It's a very much like having rare coins or old paintings. I'd say. Speaking of princesses and ogres, has it occurred to you that you would bring a fortune in the market?"

"Mr. Chase?" "You know it's barely possible that you may be put in a matrimonial shop window if Von Blitz and his friends should capture you alive. Ever think of that?"

"Good heavens! You—why, what a horrible thing to say!"

"You won't bring as much in the south sea market as you would in Rupp's or Paris, but I dare say you could be sold for."

"Please, Mr. Chase, don't suggest anything so atrocious," she cried, something like terror in her voice.

"Neenah's father sold her for a handful of gems," said he, with distinct meaning in his voice. She was silent, and he went on after a moment. "Is there so much difference, after all, where one is sold, just so long as the price is satisfactory to all concerned?"

"You are very unkind, Mr. Chase," she said with quiet dignity. "I do not deserve your sarcasm."

"I humbly plead for forgiveness," he said, suddenly contrite. "It was beastly."

"American wit, I imagine you call it," she said scornfully. "I don't care to talk with you any longer."

"Won't you forgive me? I'm a poor brute—don't lash me. In two or three weeks I'll step down and out of your life; that will be penitently enough, don't you think?"

"For whom?" she asked in a voice so low that he could scarcely hear the words. Then she laughed ironically. "I do forgive. It is all that a prince or a princess is ever asked to do, I'm beginning to believe. I also forgive you for coming into my life."

"If I had been a trifle more intelligent I should not have come into it at all," he said. She turned upon him quickly, stung by the remark.

"Is that the way you feel about it?" she asked sharply.

"You don't understand. A man of intelligence would never have kicked Prince Karl. As a matter of fact, in trying to kick Prince Karl out of your life I kicked myself into it. A very simple process, and yet scarcely intellectual. A jackass could have done as much."

"A jackass may kick at a king," she paraphrased casually. "A cat may only look at him. But let us go back to realities. Do you mean to tell me that they—these wretches—would dare to sell me—as I mean—into the kind of slavery you mention?"

"Why not?" he asked soberly, arising and coming quite close to her side. "You are beautiful. If they should take you alive it would be a very simple matter for any one of these men to purchase you from the others. You might easily be kept on this island for the rest of your days and the world would be none the wiser, or you could be sold into Persia or Arabia or Turkey. I am not surprised that you shudder. Von Blitz and Rasula mean to destroy all of us. We are to disappear from the face of the earth. When our friends come to look for us we will have died from the plague and our bodies will have been burned, as they always are in Japan. There will be no one left to deny the story. Here tomorrow no ship is due to put in here for three weeks. They will see to it that none of us get out to that ship, nor will the ship's officers know of our peril. The word will go forth that the plague has come to the island. That is the first step, your highness. But there is one obstacle they have overlooked," he concluded. She looked inquiringly.

"My warships," he said, the whimsical smile broadening.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLAGUE IS ANNOUNCED.

THE next morning a steamship flying the English flag came to anchor off Ararat, delivered and received mail bags and after an hour's stay steamed away in the drift of the southeast trade winds—Bombay to Cape Colony. The men at the chateau gazed longingly, helplessly through their glasses at this black bulled visitor from the world they loved. They watched it until



Neenah had waited kisses to the proud dames above.

nothing was left to be seen except the faint cloud of smoke that went to a pin point in the horizon. There had been absolutely no opportunity to communicate with the officers of the ship. They sailed away hurriedly, as if in alarm. Their haste was significant.

"Perhaps Bowles succeeded in getting a word with the officer who came ashore," said Browne hopefully. "He knows the danger we are in."

"My dear Browne, Bowles hadn't the ghost of a chance to communicate with the ship," said Chase. "He can't bully 'em any longer with his Tommy Atkins coat. They've outgrown it just as he has. It was splendid while it lasted, but they're no more afraid of it now than they are of my warships. I wish there was some way to get him and his English assistants into the chateau. It's awful to think of what is coming to them sooner or later."

"Is there no way to help them?" groaned Deppegham.

"I'll never forget poor Bowles the first time I saw him in his dinky red jacket and that boogian cap of his," reflected Chase, as if he had not heard Deppegham's remark. "He put them on and tried to overawe the crowd that night when I was threatened in the market place. He did his best, poor chap, and I—"

"Look!" exclaimed Britt suddenly, pointing toward one of the big gates in the upper end of the park. "I believe they're making an attack."

The next instant the men in the balcony were leaving it pell-mell, picking up the ever ready rifles as they dashed off through the halls and out into the park. They kept themselves as well covered as possible by the boxed trees, although up to this time there had been no shooting.

Chase, in advance, suddenly gave vent to a loud cry and boldly dashed out into the open, disregarding all shelter. Two of the native park patrol were hastening toward the gate from another direction. Outside the huge, barred gate a throng of men and women were congregated. Some of the men were vigorously slashing away at the bars with sledges and crowbars; others were crouching with rifles leveled—in the other direction!

"It's Bowles!" shouted Chase eagerly. The situation at once became clear to those inside the walls. Bowles and his friends, a score all told, had managed to reach the upper gate and were now clamoring for admission, beset on all sides by the enemy's pickets.

"For God's sake, be quick!" shouted Bowles. "There's a thousand of them coming up the main road!"

The gates were unlocked by the patrol, and the panic stricken throng tumbled through them and scattered like sheep behind the high, sheltering walls. Once more the massive gates were closed and the bolts thrown down just in time to avoid a fusillade of bullets from the outside.

Once inside the chateau the fugitives, shivering with terror, fairly collapsed. There were three Englishmen in the party besides Bowles, and Chase recognized the Persian wives of Jacob von Blitz among the women who had been obliged to cast their lot with the refugees from Ararat. The sister of Neenah and five or six other women who had been sold to the island made up the remainder of the little group of trembling females.

The remainder of the men in the party, fourteen or fifteen in all, were of many castes and nationalities and of various ages. There were brown skinned fellows from Calcutta, a couple of sturdy Greeks, an Egyptian and a Persian, three or four Assyrians and as many Moors. As to their walks in life, among them were clerks and guards from the bank, members of the native constabulary, Indian fakirs and showmen and venders of foreign gewgaws.

Bowles, his thin legs still shaking perceptibly, although he strove mightily to hold them at strict "attention," was the spokesman. A valiant heart thumped once more against the seams of the little red jacket. If his hand trembled and his voice shook it was because of the unwonted exertion to which both had been put in that stirring fight at dawn.

"For some time we have been preparing for the outbreak," he said, fidgeting the glass of brandy that Britt had poured for him. Ever since Chase began to go in so noticeably for the ladies—ahem!"

(To be Continued)