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Brewster's Millions By GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON (RICHARD GREAVES)

CHAPTER XXVI. MONTY was on deck when the inspiration seized him, and he lost no time in telling his guests, who were at breakfast. Although he had misgivings about their opinion of the scheme, he was not prepared for the ominous silence that followed his announcement.

"Are you in earnest, Mr. Brewster?" asked Captain Perry, who was the first of the company to recover from the surprise.

"Of course I am. I chartered this boat for four months, with the privilege of another month. I can see no reason to prevent us from prolonging the trip." Monty's manner was full of self assurance as he continued, "You people are so in the habit of protesting against every suggestion I make that you can't help doing it now."

"But, Monty," said Mrs. Dan, "what if your guests would rather go home?" "Nonsense; you were asked for a five months' cruise. Besides, think of getting home in the middle of August, with every one away."

Brave as he was in the presence of his friends, in the privacy of his stateroom Monty gave way to the depression that was bearing down upon him. It was the hardest task of his life to go on with his scheme in the face of opposition. He knew that every man and woman on board was against the proposition, for his sake at least, and it was difficult to be arbitrary under the circumstances. Purposely he avoided Peggy all forenoon. His single glance at her face in the salon was enough to disturb him immeasurably.

The spirits of the crowd were subdued. The North cape had charms, but the proclamation concerning it had been too sudden—had reversed too quickly the general expectation and desire. Many of the guests had plans at home for August, and even those who had none were satiated with excitement. During the morning they gathered in little knots to discuss the situation. They were all generous, and each one was sure that he could cruise indefinitely if on Monty's account the new voyage were not out of the question. They felt it their duty to take a desperate stand.

The hearted little gatherings resolved themselves into ominous groups, and in the end there was a call for a general meeting in the main cabin. Captain Perry, the first mate and the chief engineer were included in the call, but Montgomery Brewster was not to be admitted. Joe Bragdon loyally agreed to keep him engaged elsewhere while the meeting was in progress. The doors were locked, and a cursory glance assured the chairman of the meeting, Dan DeMille, that no member of the party was missing save the devoted Bragdon. Captain Perry was plainly nervous and disturbed. The others were the victims of a suppressed energy that presaged subsequent eruptions.

"Captain Perry, we are assembled for a purpose," said DeMille, clearing his throat three times. "First of all, as we understand it, you are the sailing master of this ship. In other words, you are, according to maritime law, the commander of this expedition. You alone can give orders to the sailors, and you alone can clear a port. Mr. Brewster has no authority except that vested in a common employer. Am I correct?"

"Mr. DeMille, if Mr. Brewster instructs me to sail for the North cape I shall do so," said the captain firmly. "This boat is his for the full term of the lease, and I am engaged to sail her with my crew until the 16th of next September."

"We understand your position, captain, and I am sure you appreciate ours. It isn't that we want to end a very delightful cruise, but that we regard it as sheer folly for Mr. Brewster to extend the tour at such tremendous expense. He is—or was—a rich man, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that he is plunging much too heavily. In plain words, we want to keep him from spending more of his money on this cruise. Do you understand our position, Captain Perry?"

"Fully. I wish with all my soul that I could help you and him. My hands are tied by contract, however, much as I regret it at this moment."

"How does the crew feel about this additional trip, captain?" asked DeMille.

"They shipped for five months and will receive five months' pay. The men have been handsomely treated, and they will stick to Mr. Brewster to the end," said the captain.

"There is no chance for a mutiny, then?" asked Smith regretfully. The captain gave him a hard look, but said nothing. Everybody seemed uncomfortable.

"Apparently the only way is the one suggested by Mr. Smith this morning," said Mrs. Dan, speaking for the women. "No one will object, I am sure, if Captain Perry and his chief officers are allowed to hear the plan."

groups of three and four, and the mystery that hung about them was almost perceptible. Not one was willing to face the excited, buoyant Brewster without help. They found strength and courage in companionship.

Peggy was the one rebel against the others, and yet she knew that the others were justified in the step they proposed to take. She reluctantly joined them in the end, but felt that she was the darkest traitor in the crowd. Forgetting her own distress over the way in which Monty was squandering his fortune, she stood out the one defender of his rights until the end and then admitted fearfully to Mrs. DeMille that she had been "quite unreasonable" in doing so.

Alone in her stateroom after signing the arrangement she wondered what he would think of her. She owed him so much that she at least should have stood by him. She felt that he would be conscious of this. How could she have turned against him? He would never understand—of course he would never understand. And he would hate her with the others—more than the others. It was all a wretched muddle, and she could not see her way out of it.

Monty found his guests very difficult. They listened to his plans with but little interest, and he could not but see that they were uncomfortable. The situation was new to their experience and they were under a strain. "They mope around like a lot of pouting boys and girls," he growled to himself. "But it's the North cape now in spite of everything. I don't care if the whole world deserts me. My mind is made up."

Try as he would, he could not see Peggy alone. He had much that he wanted to say to her, and he hungered for the consolation her approval would bring him, but she clung to Pettigrew with a tenacity that was discouraging. The old feeling of jealousy that was connected with Como again disturbed him.

"She thinks that I am a hopeless, brainless idiot," he said to himself. "And I don't blame her either." Just before nightfall he noticed that his friends were assembling in the bow. As he started to join the group Subway Smith and DeMille advanced to meet him. Some of the others were smiling a little sheepishly, but the two men were pictures of solemnity and decision.

"Monty," said DeMille steadily, "we have been conspiring against you and have decided that we sail for New York tomorrow morning."

Brewster stopped short, and the expression on his face was one they never could forget. Bewilderment, uncertainty and pain succeeded each other like flashes of light. Not a word was spoken for several seconds. The real of humiliation slowly mounted to his cheeks, while in his eyes wavered the look of one who has been hunted down.

"You have decided?" he asked lifelessly, and more than one heart went out in pity to him.

"We hated to do it, Monty, but for your own sake there was no other way," said Subway Smith quickly. "We took a vote, and there wasn't a dissenting voice."

"It is a plain case of mutiny, I take it," said Monty, utterly alone and heart-sick.

"It isn't necessary to tell why we have taken this step," said DeMille. "It is heartbreaking to oppose you at this stage of the game. You've been the best ever and—"

"Cut that!" cried Monty, and his confidence in himself was fast returning. "This is no time to throw bouquets."

"We like you, Brewster," Mr. Valentine came to the chairman's assistance because the others had looked at him so appealingly. "We like you so well that we can't take the responsibility for your extravagance. It would disgrace us all."

"That side of the matter was never mentioned," cried Peggy indignantly and then added, with a catch in her voice, "We thought only of you."

"I appreciate our motives, and I am grateful to you," said Monty. "I am more sorry than I can tell you that the cruise must end in this way, but I, too, have decided. The yacht will take you to some point where you can catch a steamer to New York. I shall secure passage for the entire party, and very soon you will be at home. Captain Perry, will you oblige me by making at once for any port that my guests may agree upon?" He was turning away deliberately when Subway Smith detained him.

"What do you mean by getting a

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steamer to New York? Isn't the Flitter good enough?" he asked. "The Flitter is not going to New York just now," answered Brewster firmly, "notwithstanding your ultimatum. She is going to take me to the North cape."

CHAPTER XXVII.

NOW will you be good?" cried Reggie Vanderpool to DeMille as Monty went down the companionway. The remark was precisely what was needed, for the pent up feelings of the entire company were now poured forth upon the unfortunate young man. Subway Smith was for hanging him to the yardarm, and the denunciation of the others was so decisive that Reggie sought refuge in the chart house. But the atmosphere had been materially cleared, and the leaders of the mutiny were in a position to go into executive session and consider the matter. The women waited on deck while the meeting lasted. They were unanimous in the opinion that the affair had been badly managed.

"They should have offered to stay by the ship provided Monty would let Mr. DeMille manage the cruise," said Miss Valentine. "That would have been a concession, and at the same time it would have put the cruise on an economical basis."

"In other words, you will accept a man's invitation to dinner if he will allow you to order it and invite the other guests," said Peggy, who was quick to defend Monty.

"Well, that would be better than helping to eat up every bit of food he possessed." But Miss Valentine always avoided argument when she could and gave this as a parting thrust before she walked away.

"There must be something more than we know about in Monty's extravagance," said Mrs. Dan. "He isn't the kind of man to squander his last penny without having something left to show for it. There must be method in his madness."

"He has done it for us," said Peggy. "He has devoted himself all along to giving us a good time, and now we are showing our gratitude."

Further discussion was prevented by the appearance of the conspiring committee, and the whole company was summoned to hear DeMille's report as chairman.

"We have found a solution of our difficulties," he began. And his manner was so jubilant that every one became hopeful. "It is desperate, but I think it will be effective. Monty has given us the privilege of leaving the yacht at any port where we can take a steamer to New York. Now, my suggestion is that we select the most convenient place for all of us, and obviously there is nothing quite so convenient as Boston."

"Dan DeMille, you are quite foolish," cried his wife. "Who ever conceived such a ridiculous idea?"

"Captain Perry has his instructions," continued DeMille, turning to the captain. "Are we not acting along the lines marked out by Brewster himself?"

"I will sail for Boston if you say the word," said the thoughtful captain. "But he is sure to countermand such an order."

"He won't be able to, captain," cried Subway Smith, who had for some time been eager to join in the conversation. "This is a genuine, dyed in the wool mutiny, and we expect to carry out the original plan, which was to put Mr. Brewster in irons until we are safe from all opposition."

"He is my friend, Mr. Smith, and at least it is my duty to protect him from any indignity," said the captain stiffly.

"You make for Boston, my dear captain, and we'll do the rest," said DeMille. "Mr. Brewster can't countermand your orders unless he sees you in person. We'll see to it that he has no chance to talk to you until we are in sight of Boston harbor."

The captain looked doubtful and shook his head as he walked away. At heart he was with the mutineers, and his mind was made up to assist them as long as it was possible to do so without violating his obligations to Brewster. He felt guilty, however, in surreptitiously giving the order to clear for Boston at daybreak. The chief officers were left into the secret, but the sailors were kept in darkness regarding the destination of the Flitter.

Montgomery Brewster's guests were immensely pleased with the scheme, although they were dubious about the outcome. Mrs. Dan regretted her hasty comment on the plan and entered into the plot with eagerness. In accordance with plans decided upon by the mutineers, Monty's stateroom door was guarded through the night by two men. The next morning as he emerged from his room he was met by Subway Smith and Dan DeMille.

"Good morning," was his greeting. "How's the weather today?"

"Bully," answered DeMille. "By the way, you are going to have breakfast in your room, old man."

Brewster unsuspectingly led the way into his stateroom, the two following.

"What's the mystery?" he demanded. "We've been deputized to do some very nasty work," said Subway as he turned the key in the door. "We are here to tell you what port we have chosen."

"It's awfully good of you to tell me." "Yes, isn't it? But we have studied up on the chivalrous treatment of prisoners. We have decided on Boston."

"Is there a Boston on this side of the water?" asked Monty in mild surprise. "No; there is only one Boston in the universe, so far as we know. It is a large body of intellect surrounded by the rest of the world."

"What are you talking about? You don't mean Boston, Mass.?" cried Monty, leaping to his feet.

"Precisely. That's the port for us, and you told us to choose for ourselves," said Smith.

"Well, I won't have it, that's all!"

exclaimed Brewster indignantly. "Captain Perry takes orders from me and from no one else."

"He already has his orders," said DeMille, smiling mysteriously. "I'll see about that." Brewster sprang to the door. It was locked, and the key was in Subway Smith's pocket. With an impatient exclamation he turned and pressed an electric button.

"It won't ring, Monty," explained Subway. "The wire has been cut. Now, be cool for a minute or two and we'll talk it over."

Brewster stormed for five minutes, the "delegation" sitting calmly by, smiling with exasperating confidence. At last he calmed down and in terms of reason demanded an explanation. He was given to understand that the yacht would sail for Boston and that he would be kept a prisoner for the entire voyage unless he submitted to the will of the majority.

Brewster listened darkly to the proclamation. He saw that they had gained the upper hand by a clever ruse and that only strategy on his part could outwit them. It was out of the question for him to submit to them now that the controversy had assumed the dignity of a struggle.

"But you will be reasonable, won't you?" said DeMille anxiously.

"I intend to fight it out to the bitter end," said Brewster, his eyes flashing. "At present I am your prisoner, but it is a long way to Boston."

For three days and two nights the Flitter steamed westward into the Atlantic, with her temporary owner locked in his stateroom. The confinement was irksome, but he rather liked the sensation of being interested in something besides money. He frequently laughed to himself over the absurdity of the situation. His enemies were friends, true and devoted; his jailers were relentless, but they were considerate. The original order that he should be guarded by one man was violated on the first day. There were times when his guard numbered at least ten persons and some of them served tea and begged him to listen to reason.

"It is difficult not to listen," he said fiercely. "It's like holding a man down and then asking him to be quiet. But my time is coming."

"Revenge will be his!" exclaimed Mrs. Dan tragically.

"You might have your term shortened on account of good conduct if you would only behave," suggested Peggy, whose reserve was beginning to soften. "Please be good and give in."

"I haven't been happier during the whole cruise," said Monty. "On deck I wouldn't be noticed, but here I am quite the whole thing. Besides I can get out whenever I feel like it."

"I have \$1,000 which says you can't," said DeMille, and Monty snatched him up so eagerly that he added, "that you can't get out of your own accord."

Monty acceded to the condition and offered odds on the proposition to the others, but there were no takers.

"That settles it," he smiled grimly to himself. "I can make \$1,000 by staying here, and I can't afford to escape."

On the third day of Monty's imprisonment the Flitter began to roll heavily. At first he gloated over the discomfort of his guards, who obviously did not like to stay below. Subway Smith and Bragdon were on duty and neither was famous as a good sailor. When Monty lit his pipe there was consternation, and Subway rushed on deck.

"You are a brave man, Joe," Monty said to the other and blew a cloud of smoke in his direction. "I knew you



Monty blew a cloud of smoke in his direction.

would stick to your post. You wouldn't leave it even if the ship should go down."

Bragdon had reached the stage where he dared not speak and was busying himself trying to "breathe with the motion of the boat, as he had called it."

"By Jove," continued Monty relentlessly. "This smoke is getting thick. Some of this toilet water might help if I sprinkled it about."

One whiff of the sweet smelling cologne was enough for Bragdon and he bolted up the companionway, leaving the stateroom door wide open and the prisoner free to go where he pleased. Monty's first impulse was to follow, but he checked himself on the threshold.

"Hang that bet with DeMille," he said to himself, and added aloud to the fleeing guard, "The key, Joe—I dare you to come back and get it!"

But Bragdon was beyond recall and

he had locked the door on the inside and passed the key through the ventilator.

On deck a small part of the company braved the spray in the lee of the deck house, but the others had long since gone below. The boat was pitching furiously in the ugliest sea it had encountered, and there was anxiety underneath Captain Perry's mask of unconcern. DeMille and Dr. Lotless talked in the senseless way men have when they try to conceal their nervousness. But the women did not respond; they were in no mood for conversation.

Only one of them was quite oblivious to personal discomfort and danger. Peggy Gray was thinking of the prisoner below. In a reflection of her own terror she pictured him crouching in the little stateroom like a doomed criminal awaiting execution, alone, neglected, forgotten, unpitied. At first she pleaded with the men for his release, but they insisted upon waiting in the hope that a scare might bring him to his senses. Peggy saw that no help was to be secured from the other women, much as they might care for Brewster's peace of mind and safety. Her heart was bitter toward every one responsible for the situation, and there was dark rebellion in her soul. It culminated finally in a resolve to release Monty Brewster at any cost.

With difficulty she made her way to the stateroom door, clinging to supports at times and then plunging violently away from them. For some minutes she listened, frantically clutching Brewster's door and the wall rail. There was no guard, and the tumult of the sea drowned every sound within. Her imagination ran riot when her repeated calls were not answered.

"Monty, Monty!" she cried, pounding wildly on the door.

"Who is it? What is the trouble?" came in muffled tones from within, and Peggy breathed a prayer of thanks. Just then she discovered the key which Monty had dropped and quickly opened the door, expecting to find him cowering with fear. But the picture was different. The prisoner was seated on the divan, propped up with many pillows and reading with the aid of an electric light "The Intrusions of Peggy."

(To be continued.)

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