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THE CHRONICLE

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Balance of the Year To New Subscribers

The Man From Brodneys

By GEORGE BARR M CUTCHEON

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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 rolls and coffee and strolled out in the shady park for a smoke.

"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 your handsome devils? It's a most dangerous habit—thinking of other men."

"Your logic is splendid. Pray resume your thoughts of me—if they were pleasant and agreeable. I'll not blow 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. Titan never even dreamed of hair like Pong's."

"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 intruding," Chase said as he came up. His gaze was as much for Deppingham as for the princess.

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

"We met ages ago," she said, with an ingenuous smile, which would have 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?"

"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 on your guard up here. After the next steamer arrives and they learn that Sir John will not withdraw me in submission to Rasula's demand, with the additional news that your solicitors have filed injunctions and have begun a bitter contest that may tie up the estate for years—then, I say, we may have trouble. It is best that you should know what to expect. I am not a traitor to my cause in telling you this. It is no more than I would expect from you were the conditions reversed."

"It's mighty decent in you, Chase, to put us on our guard. Would you mind talking it over with Browne and me after luncheon? You'll stay to luncheon, of course?"

"Thank you. It may be my death sentence, but I'll stay."

In the wide east gallery they saw Lady Deppingham and Bobby Browne deeply engrossed in conversation. Deppingham started and involuntarily allowed his hand to go to his temple as if to check the thought that flitted through his brain.

"Good Lord," he said to himself, "is it possible that they are considering that—Saunders' proposition? Surely they can't be thinking of that!"

As he led the way across the green Browne's voice came to them distinctly. He was saying earnestly: "The mere fact that we have come out to this blessed isle is a point in favor of the islanders. Chase won't overlook it, and you may be sure Sir John Brodneys is making the most of it. Our coming is a guarantee that we consider the will valid. It is an admission that we regard it as sound. If not, why should we recognize its provisions, even in the slightest detail? Britt is looking for hallucinations and all!"

"Sh!" came in a loud hiss from somewhere near at hand, and the two in the gallery looked down with startled eyes upon the distressed face of Lord Deppingham. They started to their feet at once, astonishment and wonder in their faces. They could scarcely believe their eyes. The enemy!

He was smiling broadly as he lifted his helmet, smiling in spite of the discomfort that showed so plainly in Deppingham's manner.

Chase was warmly welcomed by the two heirs. Lady Agnes was especially cordial. Her eyes gleamed joyously as she lifted them to meet his admiring gaze. She was amazingly pretty. The conviction that Chase had mistaken her for Lady Agnes the evening before took a fresh grasp upon the mind of the Princess Geneva. A shameless wave of relief surged through her heart.

Chase was presented to Drusilla Browne, who appeared suddenly upon the scene, coming from no one knew where. There was a certain strained look in the Boston woman's face and a suspicious redness near the bridge of her little nose.

must say that it doesn't seem as far from the chateau to the bungalow as it does from the bungalow to the chateau. There have been times when the chateau seemed to be thousands of miles away."

"When in reality it was at your very feet," she said, with a bright look into his eyes. For some unaccountable reason Geneva resented that look and speech.

"Is that really where you live?" she asked, so innocently that Chase had difficulty in controlling his expression. At that instant something struck sharply against the stone column above Chase's head. At least three persons saw the little puff of smoke in the hills far to the right. Every one heard the distant crack of a rifle. The bullet had dropped at Chase's feet before the sound of the report came floating to their ears. No one spoke as he stooped and picked up the warm, deadly missile. Turning it over in his fingers, he said coolly, although his cheek had gone white:

"With Von Blitz'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 marksman. 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."

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