

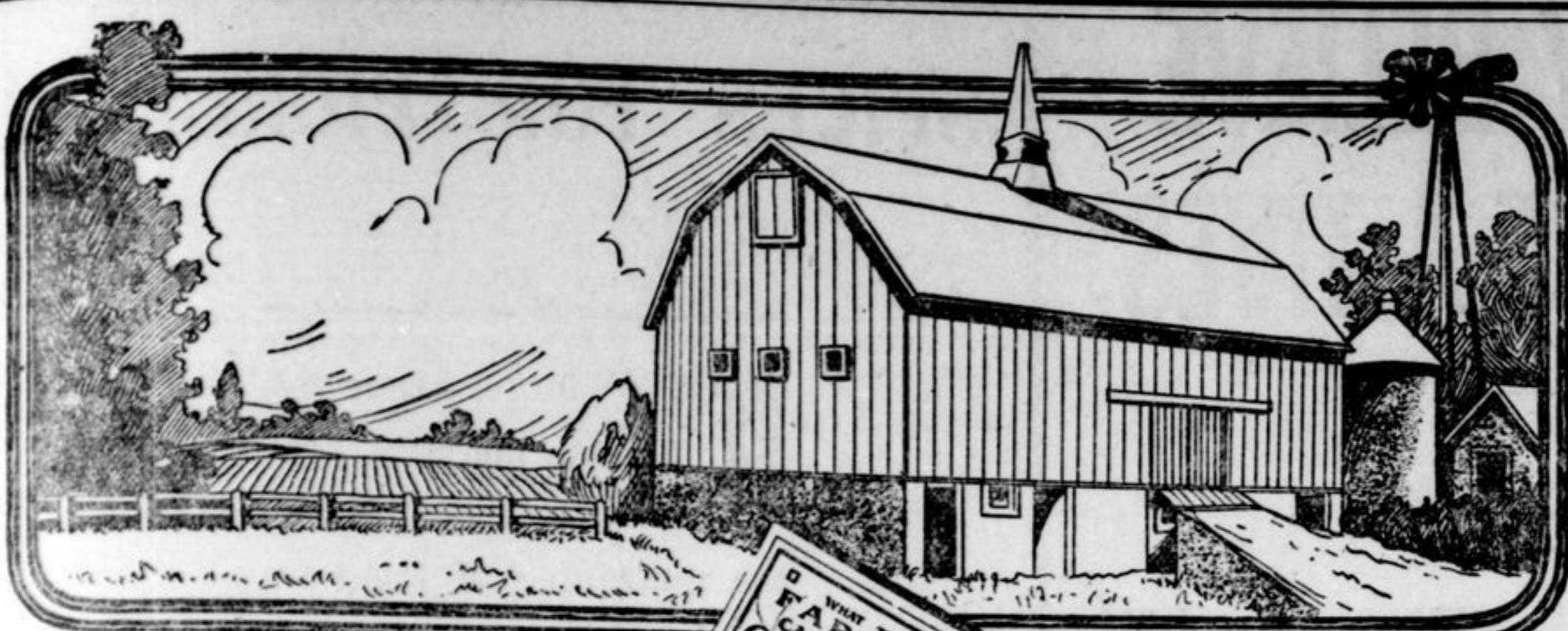
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The Man From Brodneyn's

By **GEORGE BARR M'GUTCHEON**

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CHAPTER XXVI.
CENTURIES TO FORGET.

"My lord," said Saunders the next day, appearing before his lordship after an agitated hour of preparation, "it's come to a point where something's got to be done." He got that far and then turned quite purple. His collar seemed to be choking him. "If what Mr. Chase says is true, we've got a precious short time to live. Well, we've—were concluded to get all we can out of the time that's left, my lord. So I've come to ask if it will be all right with you and her ladyship, sir. We don't want to do anything that would seem forward and out of place, sir."

"It's very considerate of you, Saunders, but what the devil are you talking about?"

"Miss—Miss Pelham and I have decided to get—er—get married before it is too late."

Deppingham stared hard for a moment and then grinned broadly. "You mean before you die?"

"That's it exactly, my lord. Haw, haw! It would be a bit late, wouldn't it, if we waited till afterward. Haw, haw! Splendid! So I have come to ask if you think it will interfere with your arrangements if—if we should be married tonight?"

"I'm sure, Saunders, that it won't discommode me in the least," said his lordship genially. "By all means, Saunders, let it be tonight, for tomorrow we may die."

"Will you kindly speak to her ladyship, sir?"

"Gladly. And I'll take it as an honor if you will permit me to give away the bride."

"Thank you, my lord," cried Saunders, his face beaming. His lordship shook hands with him, whereupon his cup of happiness overflowed, notwithstanding the fact that his honeymoon was likely to be of scarcely any duration whatsoever.

The wedding took place that night in the little chapel. Chase deliberately took possession of the princess after the hollow wedding supper had come to an end. Her mood had changed. Now she was quite at ease with him. The taunting gleam in her eyes presaged evil moments for his peace of mind.

"I'm inspired," he said to her. "A wedding always inspires me."

"It's very strange that you've never married," she retorted. She was striding freely by his side, confident in her power to resist sentiment with mockery.

"Will you be my wife?" he asked abruptly. She caught her breath before laughing tolerantly and then looked into his eyes with a tantalizing ingenuousness.

"By no means," she responded. "I am not oppressed by the same views that actuated Miss Pelham. You see, Mr. Chase, I am quite confident that we are not to die in two weeks."

"I could almost wish that we could die at that time," he said.

"How very diabolical!"

"It may seem odd to you, but I'd rather see you dead than married to Prince Karl." She was silent. He went on, "Would you consent to be my wife if you felt in your heart that we should never leave this island?"

"I think I shall go in, Mr. Chase," she said, with a warning shake of her head.

"Don't, please! I'm not asking you to marry me if I should leave the island. You must give me credit for that," he argued whimsically.

"Ah, I see," she said, apparently very much relieved. "You want me only with the understanding that death should be quite close at hand to relieve you. And if I were to become your wife, here and now, and we should be taken from this dreadful place—what then?"

"You probably would have to go through a long and miserable career as plain Goodwife Chase," he explained.

"If it will make you any happier," she said, with a smile in which there lurked a touch of mischievous triumph, "I can say that I might consent to marry you if I were not so positive that I will leave the island soon. You seem to forget that my uncle's yacht is to call here, even though your cruises will not."

"I'll risk even that," he maintained stoutly.

She stopped suddenly, her hand upon his arm.

"Do you really love me?" she demanded earnestly.

"With all my soul, I swear to you," he replied, staggered by the abrupt change in her manner.

"Then don't make it any harder for me," she said. "You know that I could not do what you ask. Please, please be fair with me. I—I can't even just about it. It is too much to ask of me," she went on, with a strange firmness in her voice. "It would require centuries to make me forget that I am a princess, just as centuries were taken up in creating me what I am. I am no better than you, dear, but—but—do you understand?" She said it so pleadingly, so hopelessly, that he understood what it was that she could not say to him. "We seldom, if ever, marry the men whom God has made for us to love."

He lifted her hands to his breast and held them there. "If you will just go on loving me I'll some day make you forget you're a princess." She smiled and shook her head. Her hair gleamed red and bronze in the kindly light; a soft perfume came up to his nostrils.

The next day three of the native servants became violently ill, seized by the most appalling convulsions. At first a thrill of horror ran through the chateau. The plague—the plague in reality!

But these fears were quickly dissipated. The sufferers soon began to mend. By nightfall they were fairly well recovered. The mysterious seizure however, was unexplained. Chase alone divined the cause. Poison! He was sure of it! But who the poisoner?

All previous perils and all that the future seemed to promise were forgotten in the startling discovery that came with the fall of night.

Lady Deppingham and Robert Browne were missing! They had disappeared as if swallowed by the earth itself! Neenah, the wife of Selim, was the last of those in the chateau to see the heirs. They crossed the swift torrent by the narrow bridge at the base of the cliff and stopped below the mouth of the cavern which blew its cool breath out upon the hanging garden. Later on she saw them climb the stanch ladder and stand in the black opening, apparently enjoying the cooling wind that came from the damp bowels of the mountain. Her attention was called elsewhere, and that was the last glimpse she had of the two people about whom centered the struggle for untold riches.

"Chase, they are lost in there!" groaned Deppingham, numb with apprehension. He was trembling like a leaf.

"There's just one thing to do," said Chase. "We've got to explore that cavern to the end. They may have lost their bearings and strayed off into one of the lateral passages."

"I—I can't bear the thought of her wandering about in that horrible place," Deppingham cried as he started resolutely toward the ladder.

"She'll come out of it all right," said Chase, a sudden compassion in his eyes.

Drusilla Browne was standing near by, cold and silent with dread, a set expression in her eyes. Her lips moved slowly, and Deppingham heard the bitter words: "You will find them, Lord Deppingham. You will find them!"

He stopped and passed his hand over his eyes. Then, without a word, he snatched a rifle from the hands of one of the patrol and led the way up the ladder. Chase turned to the white faced princess and said between his teeth:

"If Skaggs and Wyckholme had been in the employ of the devil himself they could not have foreseen the result of their infernal plotting. I am afraid—mortally afraid!"

"Take care of him, Hollingsworth," she whispered shuddering.

"Goodby, Geneva, my princess," said Chase softly and then was off with Britt and Selim. As he passed Drusilla he seized her hand and passed long enough to say:

"It's all right, little woman, take my word for it. If I were you, I'd cry. You'll see things differently through your tears."

The four men, with their lights, vanished from sight a few moments later. Chase grasped Deppingham's arm and held him back, gravely suggesting that Selim should lead the way.

Continued on page 7.

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Mr. Jas. Ross, of the mill, has erected a large addition to his barn and has it all ready to receive the harvest.

Miss Mary McNally, after spending a most enjoyable vacation at the old home, leaves for Toronto on Tuesday.

Miss Mary McArthur, of the 10th con., returned home on Saturday from Port Elgin, where she had been the guest of Miss Spurrel, her former teacher, for a week.

Mr. Ronald Martin has R. Waite engaged for the harvest. Ronald purchased a new Peter Hamilton binder from A. B. McLellan, of Durham.

W. J. Cook had mason McLean, of Priceville, replace the chimney on his house that lightning demolished July 12th. He made a neat job.

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