

GRAUSTARK

...By...

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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CHAPTER I.—Grenfall Lorry, a wealthy American globe trotter, stumbles into acquaintance with a charming foreign girl on the train from Denver to Washington. The pair is left behind when the flier stops for repairs in West Virginia. II.—Lorry wires ahead to hold the train. He and the unknown girl ride twenty miles at a tearing pace in a mountain coach. There is no love-making, but a near approach to it as the rolling stage tumbles the passengers about.

CHAPTER III. MISS GUGGENSLOCKER.

HE laughed, looking down into her serious, upturned face. She broke away from him and threw herself into the arms of tall, excited Uncle Caspar. The conductor, several trainmen and a few eager passengers came up, the former crusty and snappish.

"Well, get aboard!" he growled. "We can't wait all night."

The young lady looked up quickly, her sensitive face cringing beneath the rough command. Lorry stepped instantly to the conductor's side, shook his finger vigorously under his nose and exclaimed in no uncertain tones:

"Now, that's enough from you! If I hear another word out of you, I'll make you sweat blood before tomorrow morning. Understand, my friend."

"Aw, who are you?" demanded the conductor belligerently.

"You'll learn that soon enough. After this you'll have sense enough to find out whom you are talking to before you open that mouth of yours. Not another word!" Mr. Grenfall Lorry was not president of the road, nor was he in any way connected with it, but his well assumed air of authority caused the trainman's ire to dissolve at once.

"Excuse me, sir. I've been worried to death on this run. I meant no offense. That old gentleman has threatened to kill me. Just now he took out his watch and said if I did not run back for his niece in two minutes he'd call me out and run me through. I've been nearly crazy here. For the life of me I don't see how you happened to be—"

"Oh, that's all right. Let's be off," cried Lorry, who had fallen some distance behind his late companion and her uncle. Hurrying after them, he reached her side in time to assist her in mounting the car steps.

"Thank you," smiling down upon him bewitchingly. At the top of the steps she was met by her aunt, behind whom stood the anxious man servant and the maid. Into the coach she was drawn by the relieved old lady, who was critically inspecting her personal appearance when Lorry and the foreigner entered.

"Ach, it was so wild and exhilarating. Aunt Yvonne," the girl was saying, her eyes sparkling. She stood straight and firm, her chin in the air, her hands in those of her aunt. The little traveling cap was on the side of her head, her hair was loose and very much awry, strands straying here, curls blowing there in utter confusion. Lorry fairly gasped with admiration for the levelness that would not be vanquished.

"We came like the wind. I shall never, never forget it," she said.

"But how could you have remained there, child? Tell me how it happened. We have been frantic," said her aunt, half in English, half in German.

"Not now, dear Aunt Yvonne. See my hair! What a fright I must be! Fortunate man, your hair cannot be so

unruly as mine. Oh!" The exclamation was one of alarm. In an instant she was at his side, peering with terrified eyes at the bloodstains on his neck and face. "It is blood! You are hurt! Uncle Caspar, Hedrick—quick! Attend him! Come to my room at once. You are suffering. Minna, find bandages!"

She dragged him to the door of her section before he could interpose a remonstrance.

"It is nothing—a mere scratch. Bumped my head against the side of the coach. Please don't worry about it; I can care for myself. Really, it doesn't—"

"But it does! It has bled terribly. Sit there! Now, Hedrick, some water."

Hedrick rushed off and was back in a moment with a basin of water, a sponge and a towel, and before Grenfall fully knew what was happening the man servant was bathing his head, the others looking on anxiously, the young lady apprehensively, her hands clasped before her as she bent over to inspect the wound above his ear.

"It is quite an ugly cut," said Uncle Caspar critically. "Does it pain you, sir?"

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"I think not. The flow is stanching. If the gentleman will allow Hedrick to trim the hair away for a plaster and then bandage it I think the wound will give him no trouble." The old man spoke slowly and in very good English.

"Really, uncle, is it not serious?"

"No, no," interposed Grenfall Lorry. "I knew it was a trifle. You cannot break an American's head. Let me go to my own section, and I'll be ready to present myself as good as new in ten minutes."

"You must let Hedrick bandage your head," she insisted. "Go with him, Hedrick."

Grenfall arose and started toward his section, followed by Hedrick.

"I trust you were not hurt during that reckless ride," he said, more as a question, stopping in the aisle to look back at her.

"I should have been a mass of bruises, gashes and lumps had it not been for one thing," she said, a faint flush coming to her cheek, although her eyes looked unfalteringly into his. "Will you join us in the dining car? I will have a place prepared for you at our table."

"Thank you. You are very good. I shall join you as soon as I am presentable."

"We are to be honored, sir," said the old gentleman, but in such a way that Grenfall had a distinct feeling that it was he who was to be honored. Aunt Yvonne smiled graciously, and he took his departure. While Hedrick was dressing the jagged little cut Grenfall complacently surveyed the patient in the mirror opposite and said to himself a hundred times: "You lucky dog! It was worth forty gashes like this. By Jove, she's divine!"

In a fever of eager haste he bathed and attired himself for dinner, the imperturbable Hedrick assisting. One query filled the American's mind, "I wonder if I am to sit beside her." And

men. "I have sat beside her. There can never again be such delight!"

It was 7 o'clock before his rather unusual toilet was completed. "See if they have gone to the diner, Hedrick," he said to the manservant, who departed ceremoniously.

"I don't know why he should be so very polite," observed Lorry, gazing wonderingly after him. "I'm not a king. That reminds me. I must introduce myself. She doesn't know me from Adam."

Hedrick returned and announced that they had just gone to the dining car and were awaiting him there. He hurried to the diner and made his way to their table. Uncle Caspar and his niece were facing him as he came up between the tables, and he saw, with no little regret, that he was to sit beside the aunt—directly opposite the girl, however. She smiled up at him as he stood before them, bowing. He saw the expression of inquiry in those deep, liquid eyes of violet as their gaze wandered over his hair.

"Your head? I see no bandage," she said reproachfully.

"There is a small plaster, and that is all. Only heroes may have dangerous wounds," he said laughingly.

"Is heroism in America measured by the number of stitches or the size of the plaster?" she asked pointedly. "In my country it is a joy and not a calamity. Wounds are the misfortune of valor. Pray be seated, Mr. Lorry—is it not?" she said, pronouncing it quaintly.

He sat down rather suddenly on hearing her utter his name. How had she learned it? Not a soul on the train knew it, he was sure.

"I am Caspar Guggenslocker. Permit me, Mr. Lorry, to present my wife and my niece, Miss Guggenslocker," said the uncle more gracefully than he had ever heard such a thing uttered before.

In a daze, stunned by the name—Guggenslocker—mystified over their acquaintance with his own when he had been foiled at every fair attempt to learn theirs, Lorry could only mumble his acknowledgments. In all his life he had never lost command of himself as at this moment. Guggenslocker!



"You lucky dog!"

He could feel the dank sweat of disappointment starting on his brow. A butcher—a beer maker—a cobbler—a gardener—all synonyms of Guggenslocker. A sausage manufacturer's niece—Miss Guggenslocker! He tried to glance unconcernedly at her as he took up his napkin, but his eyes wavered helplessly. She was looking serenely at him, yet he fancied he saw a shadow of mockery in her blue eyes.

"If you were a novel writer, Mr. Lorry, what manner of heroine would you choose?" she asked, with a smile so tantalizing that he understood instinctively why she was reviving a topic once abandoned. His confusion was increased. Her uncle and aunt

were regarding him calmly—ly, he imagined.

"I—I have no ambition to be a writer," he said, "so I have no study of heroines."

"But you would have an opportunity," she persisted.

"I'm sure I—I don't—this would not necessarily be a lesson, of course, it would require a pose as an idealistic prosaic fellow as I."

"To begin with, you would have to be as good as Clarabel Montrose or something as impossible. You know of a heroine in a novel as melodramatic as phony. That is an exacting thing to ask of a man who was an open taunt, and he persisted. It aroused his indignation and

"I would first give my heroine a distinguished name. No matter what the heroine's name might be, otherwise, I could easily change it in the last chapter." She beneath his now bright, keen the ready though unexpected. Uncle Caspar placed his lips and coughed. Aunt Yvonne inspected her bill of fare matter what you call a rose, ways sweet," he added meaningfully.

At this she laughed goodly. He marveled at her white red lips. A rose, after all, was a Guggenslocker, rose, not Guggenslocker. No, no! A rose only! He caught a sly look of triumph, uncle's swift glance toward Guggenslocker. Guggenslocker! Still he did not look the indeed. That extraordinary butcher, a gardener, a—Aunt Yvonne? Yet they were Guggenslockers.

"Here is the waiter," he served to his relief. "I am after my pleasant drive, bracing, was it not, Mr. Grenfall?"

"Give me a mountain ride as an appetizer," he said obligingly so ended the jest about a name.

The orders for the dinner were and the quartet sat back in the to await the coming of the soup. The fall was still wondering how he learned his name, and was point of asking several times the conventional discussion of weather, the train and the matter. He considerably refrained, unwilling to embarrass her.

"Aunt Yvonne tells me she expected to see me alive after the agent telegraphed that we were lying overland in that awful old mountain. He also increased the of my uncle and aunt by telling that a wagon rolled off yesterday, a man, two women and my Dear Aunt Yvonne, how true must have been!"

"I'll confess there were times I thought we were rolling over a mountain," said Lorry, with a shake of the head.

"Sometimes I thought we were falling through space, whether downward I could not tell. I failed to come to earth, did we?" she laughingly asked.

"Emphatically! Earth and grief," he said, putting his head.

"Does it pain you?" she asked.

"Not in the least. I was going to see if the cut were Mr.—Mr. Guggenslocker, the conductor object to holding the asked, remembering what the doctor had told him of the old actions.

"At first, but I soon came to that it should be held," said quietly.

"My husband spoke very the poor man," added Aunt Yvonne.

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