

GRAUSTARK

From Page Four

"I am afraid, Caspar, he did not understand a word you said. You were much excited." The sweet old attempts at English were much laborious than her husband's. "He did not understand my English," she was very good at guessing," her husband grimly.

"I told me you had threatened to call him out," ventured the young man. "Call him out? Ach, a railroad conductor!" exclaimed Uncle Caspar in scorn.

"Caspar, I heard you say that you would call him out," interposed his wife with reproving eyes.

"Oh, God! I have made a mistake! I meant to say that the other word I meant to say was 'out'! I intended to call him down, as you Americans say. I thought he will not think I challenged him. He was very much perturbed. I thought he was afraid you would," said Lorry.

"You should have no fear. I could not be a railroad conductor. Will you tell him I could not so condescend. Besides, dueling is murder in this country, I am told."

"Usually is, sir. Much more so than Europe." The others looked at him curiously. "I mean that in America two men pull their revolvers and shoot at each other some one is killed—frequently both. In Europe, to understand it, a scratch with a sword ends the combat."

"You have been misinformed," exclaimed Uncle Caspar, his eyebrows raised.

"Why, Uncle Caspar has fought more than he can count," cried the girl.

"I have slain his man every day," asked Grenfall smilingly, glancing from one to the other. Aunt Yvonne gave a reproving look at the girl, whose face paled instantly, her eyes going dimly in affright to the face of her husband.

"Lorry heard the old gentleman mutter. He was looking at his bill of fare, but his eyes were fixed and unseeing. The card was crumpling between the long, bony fingers. The American realized that a forbidden, had been touched upon.

"He has fought and he has slain," he said as quick as a flash. "He is no gardener, no cobbler. That's his business."

"Tell us, Uncle Caspar, what you told the conductor," cried the young man nervously.

"Tell them, Caspar, how alarmed we were," added soft voiced Aunt Yvonne.

"Grenfall was a silent, interested spectator. He somehow felt as if a scene of some tragedy had been reproduced in that briefest of moments. He smiled and composedly, a half smile on his face, the soldierly Caspar related the story of the train's run from one station to the other.

"He did not miss you until we had reached the other station. Then Aunt Yvonne asked me where you were. I told her I had not seen you but went into the coach ahead to see if you were not there. Then I went on to the dining car. Ach, you were not there. In alarm I returned to the car. Your aunt and I looked everywhere. You were not anywhere. I sent Hedrick ahead to summon the conductor, but he had hardly left us when the engine whistled sharply and the train began to slow up in a jerky motion. I rushed to the platform, and found Hedrick, who was as much alarmed as I. He said the train had stopped and that there must be something wrong. Your aunt came out and told me that she had made a discovery."

"Grenfall observed that he was addressing himself exclusively to the young lady.

"He had found that the gentleman in the next section was also missing.

While we were standing there in doubt and perplexity the train came to a standstill, and soon there was shouting on the outside. I climbed down from the car and saw that we were at a little station. The conductor came running toward me excitedly.

"Is the young lady in the car?" he asked.

"No. For heaven's sake, what have you heard?" I cried.

"Then she has been left at O—," he exclaimed, and used some very extraordinary American words.

"I then informed him that he should run back for you, first learning that you were alive and well. He said he would be damned if he would—pardon the word, ladies. He was very angry and said he would give orders to go ahead, but I told him I would demand restitution of his government. He laughed in my face, and then I became shamelessly angry. I said to him:

"Sir, I shall call you down—not out, as you have said—and I shall run you through the mill."

"That was good American talk, sir, was it not, Mr. Lorry? I wanted him to understand me, so I tried to use your very best language. Some gentlemen who are traveling on this train and some very excellent ladies also joined in the demand that the train be held. His dispatch from O— said that you, Mr. Lorry, insisted on having it held for twenty minutes. The conductor insulted you, sir, by saying that you had more—ah, what is it?—gall than any idiot he had ever seen. When he said that, although I did not fully understand that it was a reflection on you, so ignorant am I of your language, I took occasion to tell him that you were a gentleman and a friend of mine. He asked me your name, but as I did not know it I could only tell him that he would learn it soon enough. Then he said something which has puzzled me ever since. He told me to close my face. What did he mean by that, Mr. Lorry?"

"Well, Mr. Guggenlocker, that means in refined American 'stop talking,'" said Lorry, controlling a desire to shout.

"Ach, that accounts for his surprise when I talked louder and faster than ever. I did not know what he meant. He said positively he would not wait, but just then a second message came from the other station. I did not know what it was then, but a gentleman told me that it instructed him to hold the train if he wanted to hold his job. Job is situation, is it not? Well, when he read that message he said he would wait just twenty minutes. I asked him to tell me how you were coming to us, but he refused to answer. Your aunt and I went at once to the telegraph man and implored him to tell us the truth, and he said you were coming in a carriage over a very dangerous road. Imagine our feelings when he said some people had been killed yesterday on that very road.

"When your aunt and I returned to the train we saw the conductor holding his watch. He said to me, 'In just three minutes we pull out. If they are not here by that time they can get on the best they know how. I've done all I can.' I did not say a word, but went to my section and had Hedrick get out my pistols. If the train left before you arrived it would be without its conductor.

"Then came the sound of carriage wheels and galloping horses. Almost before we knew it you were with us. I am so happy that you were not a minute later."

There was something so cool and grim in the quiet voice, something so determined in those brilliant eyes, that Grenfall felt like looking up the conductor to congratulate him. The dinner was served, and while it was being discussed his fair companion of the drive graphically described the experience of twenty strange minutes in a shackled mountain coach.

Somehow the real flavor of romance was stricken from the ride by her candid admissions. What he had considered a romantic treasure was being calmly robbed of its glitter, leaving for his memory the blur of an adventure in which he had played the part of a gallant gentleman and she a grateful lady. He was beginning to feel ashamed of the conceit that had misled him. Down in his heart he was saying, "I might have known it. I did know it. She is not like other women." The perfect confidence that dwelt in the rapt faces of the others forced into his wondering mind the impression that this girl could do no wrong.

"And, Aunt Yvonne," she said, in conclusion, "the luck which you say is mine as birthright asserted itself. I escaped unhurt, while Mr. Lorry alone possesses the pain and unpleasantness of our ride."

"I possess neither," he objected. "The pain that you refer to is a pleasure."

"The pain that a man endures for a woman should always be a pleasure," said Uncle Caspar smilingly.

"But it could not be a pleasure to him unless the woman considered it a pain," reasoned Miss Guggenlocker. "He could not feel happy if she did not respect the pain."

"And encourage it," supplemented Lorry dryly. "If you do not remind me occasionally that I am hurt, Miss Guggenlocker, I am liable to forget it." To himself he added, "I'll never learn how to say it in one breath."

"If I were not so soon to part from you, I should be your physician, and, like all physicians, prolong your ailment interminably," she said prettily.

"To my deepest satisfaction," he said warmly, not lightly. There was nothing further from his mind than servile flattery, as his rejoinder might imply. "Alas," he went on, "we no sooner meet than we part. May I ask when you are to sail?"

"On Thursday," replied Mr. Guggenlocker.

"On the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse," added his niece, a faraway look coming into her eyes.

"We are to stop off one day, tomorrow, in Washington," said Aunt Yvonne, and the jump that Lorry's heart gave was so mighty that he was afraid they could see it in his face.

"My uncle has some business to transact in your city, Mr. Lorry. We are to spend tomorrow there and Wednesday in New York. Then we sail. Ach, how I long for Thursday!" His heart sank like lead to the depths from which it had sprung. It required no effort on his part to see that he was alone in his infatuation. Thursday was more to her than his existence. She could forget him and think of Thursday, and when she thought of Thursday, the future, he was but a thing of the past, not even of the present.

"Have you always lived in Washington, Mr. Lorry?" asked Mrs. Guggenlocker.

"All my life," he replied, wishing at that moment that he was homeless and free to choose for himself.

"You Americans live in one city and then in another," she said. "Now, in our country generation after generation lives and dies in one town. We are not migratory."

"Mr. Lorry has offended us by not knowing where Graustark is located on the map," cried the young lady, and he could see the flash of resentment in her eyes.

"Why, my dear sir, Graustark is in"—began Uncle Caspar, but she checked him instantly.

"Uncle Caspar, you are not to tell him. I have recommended that he study geography and discover for himself. He should be ashamed of his ignorance."

He was not ashamed, but he mentally vowed that before he was a day older he would find Graustark on the map and would stock his negligent brain

with all that history and the encyclopedia had to say of the unknown land. Her uncle laughed, and, to Lorry's disappointment, obeyed the young lady's command.

"Shall I study the map of Europe, Asia or Africa?" asked he, and they laughed.

"Study the map of the world," said Miss Guggenlocker proudly.

"Edelweiss is the capital?"

"Yes, our home city, the queen of the crags," cried she. "You should see Edelweiss, Mr. Lorry. It is of the mountain, the plain and the sky. There are homes in the valley, homes on the mountain side and homes in the clouds."

"And yours? From what you say it must be above the clouds—in heaven."

"We are farthest from the clouds, for we live in the green valley, shaded by the white topped mountains. We may, in Edelweiss, have what climate we will. Doctors do not send us on long journeys for our health. They tell us to move up or down the mountain. We have balmy spring, glorious summer, refreshing autumn and chilly winter, just as we like."

"Ideal! I think you must be pretty well toward the south. You could not have July in January if you were far north."

"True; yet we have January in July. Study your map. We are discernible to the naked eye," she said, half ironically.

"I care not if there are but three inhabitants of Graustark, all told, it is certainly worthy of a position on any map," said Lorry gallantly, and his listeners applauded with patriotic appreciation. "By the way, Mr. Guggenlocker, you say the conductor asked you for my name, and you did not know it. May I ask how you learned it later on?" His curiosity got the better of him, and his courage was increased by the champagne the old gentleman had ordered.

"I did not know your name until my niece told it to me after your arrival in the carriage," said Uncle Caspar.

"I don't remember giving it to Miss Guggenlocker at any time," said Lorry.

"You were not my informant," she said demurely.

"Surely you did not guess it?"

"Oh, no, indeed. I am no mind reader."

"My own name was the last thing you could have read in my mind in that event, for I have not thought of it in three days."

She was sitting with her elbows on the table, her chin in her hands, a dreamy look in her blue eyes.

(Continued)

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