

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. III.—Lorry dines with the foreign party, consisting of Miss Guggenslocker, Uncle Caspar and Aunt Yvonne. They are natives of Graustark, a country Lorry had never heard of before. IV.—Lorry shows the foreigners the sights of Washington. They leave for New York to sail on the Kaiser Wilhelm. Miss Guggenslocker naively calls Lorry her "ideal American" and invites him to come and see her at Edelweiss. V. Wildly infatuated, Lorry hurries to New York. The name Guggenslocker is not on the steamer list. He sees the steamer off. Miss G. waves him a kiss from the deck.

After all, who was Miss Guggenslocker—brewer, baker, gardener or sausage maker?

Traveling of course was pleasant at this time of the year, and the two Americans saw much that interested them along the way. Their French, especially Anguish's, was of great value to them, for they found occasion to use it at all times and in all places. Both spoke German fairly well and took every opportunity to brush up in that language, Lorry remembering that the Guggenslockers used many expressions that showed a preference for the Teutonic. The blithe Anguish, confident and in high feather, was heart and soul in the odd expedition of love and talked incessantly of their reception by the faraway hostess, their impressions and the final result. His camera and sketching materials were packed away with his traps. It was his avowed intention to immortalize the trip by means of plate, palette and brush.

At the end of two days they reached a certain large city, the first change, and then 700 miles to another. The distance from this point to the capital of Graustark was 200 miles or more, chiefly through mountainous lands. Somewhat elated by the cheerful information there received, they resumed the journey to Edelweiss, the city of vale, slope and park—summer, fall and winter. Changing cars at the end of the second day out, they sat back in the dusty seats of their carriage and sighed with relief.

"Unless we jump the track this train will land us in the city we are looking for," said Anguish, stretching out his legs comfortably. "I'll admit it has been a tiresome journey, and I'll be glad when we can step into a decent hotel, have a rub and feel like white men once more. I am beginning to feel like these dirty Slavs and Huns we saw 'way back there."

"There's one thing certain," said Lorry, looking out of the window. "The people and the habitations are different and the whole world seems changed since we left that station. Look at those fellows on horseback over there."

"What did I tell you about brigands and robbers?" exclaimed Anguish. "If those fellows are not bandits, I'll lose faith in every novel I ever read."

The train rolled slowly past three mounted men whose steeds stood like statues upon a little knoll to the right of the track, men and beasts engaged in silent contemplation of the cars. The men, picturesquely attired and looking fierce, carrying long rifles, certainly bore an aspect that suggested the brigand. When the guard entered the carriage, Anguish asked in German for some information concerning the rid-

ers.

"Dey're frontier police guards," responded the man in English, smiling at their astonishment. Both Americans rose and shook hands with him.

"By George, it's good to hear a man talk white man's language," cried Anguish.

"How do you come to be holding a job on this road? An Englishman?" demanded Lorry. He looked anything but English.

"I'm not an Englishman," said the guard, flushing slightly. "My name's Sitzky, an' I'm an American, sir."

"An American!" exclaimed Lorry. Sitzky grew loquacious.

"Sure! I used to be a sailor on a United States man-o'-war. A couple of years ago I got into trouble down at Constantinople an' had to get out of de service. After dat I drifted up dis way and went to railroadin'." He hadn't exactly the manner of a man-o'-warsman.

"How long have you been on this road?" asked Grenfall.

"'Bout a year, I should t'ink. Been on dis branch only two months, dough."

"Are you pretty well acquainted in Edelweiss?"

"Oh, I run in dere every other day—in an' out ag'in. It's a fine place—purtyest you ever saw in your life. The town runs right up the mountain to the tiptop, where the monks are—clear up in de clouds. Dey say it snows up dere almost all de time."

Later on from the loquacious guard the two Americans learned quite a good bit about the country and city to which they were going. His knowledge was somewhat limited along certain lines, but quite clear as to others.

"Dis Graustark, 's fer as I know, is eeder a sort o' state or somethin' belongin' to de umpire, governed by its own rulers. Edelweiss is de capital; de big guns of de land lives dere. I've walked out an' saw de castle where de princess an' de royalty hangs out. De people speak a language of deir own, and I can't get next to a t'ing dey say. But once in awhile you find some guy dat talks French or German. Dey've got a little standin' army of two t'ree t'ousand men, an' dey've got de hottest uniforms you ever did see—red an' black an' gold. I don't see why de United States can't get up somethin' foxy fer her soldiers to wear. Had a war over here not long ago, I understand—somethin' like ten or fifteen years ago. Dere's another little country up north of Graustark, an' dey got in a wrangle 'bout somethin', an' dey tell me in Edelweiss dat for 'bout a year dey fought like Sam Patch."

"Which was victorious?" demanded Lorry, deeply interested.

"I'm not sure. To hear de Edelweiss people talk you'd t'ink dey licked de daylighters out of de other slob, but somehow I got next to de fact dat dem other fellows captured de city an' went after a slashin' big war indemnity. I don't know much 'bout it, an' maybe I'm clear off, but I t'ink de Graustark army was t'ashed. Everyt'ing is prosperous now, dough, an' you'd never know dere'd been a war. It's de most peaceable town I ever saw."

"Did you ever hear of the Guggenslockers?" asked the irrepressible An-

guish, and Lorry felt like kicking him. "In Edelweiss? Never did. Friends of yours?"

"Acquaintances," interposed Lorry hastily, frowning at Anguish.

"You won't have any trouble findin' 'em if dere anybody at all," said Sitzky easily. "De hotel people ought to be able to tell you all 'bout 'em."

"By the way, what is the best hotel there?" asked Anguish.

"Dere's de Burnowentz, one block north of de depot." The travelers looked at one another and smiled, Sitzky observing the action. "Oh," he said pleasantly, "dere's a swell joint up-town called de Regengetz. It's too steep fer me, but maybe you gents can stand it. If you'll hang around de depot fer a little while after we get in I'll steer you up dere."

"We'll make it worth your while, Sitzky," said Lorry.

"Never mind dat now. Americans ought to stick together, no matter where dey are. We'll have a drink an' 'at's all, just to show we're fellow countrymen."

"We'll have several drinks, and we'll eat and drink tonight at the 'swell joint' you talk about," said Anguish.

"We may drink dere, but I'll not eat dere. Dey wouldn't let a railroad guard inside de feedin' pen. Why, nothin' but royal guys eat dere when dey're downtown shoppin' or exposin' demselves to public gaze."

True to his word, when they reached Edelweiss late that afternoon Sitzky,



"I'm not an Englishman," said the guard, their friend of uncertain origin, hurriedly finished his work and joined the travelers in the station. Lorry and Anguish were deeply interested in all they saw—the strange people, the queer buildings, the odd costumes and the air of antiquity that prevailed. Once upon the narrow, clean street they saw that Edelweiss was truly a city of the mountain side. They had expected something wonderful, but were not prepared for what they found. The city actually ran up into the clouds. There was something so grand, so improbable, so unusual in the spectacle confronting them, that they stared like children, aghast and stupefied. Each had the startling impression that a great human dotted mountain was falling over upon his head. It was impossible to subdue the sensation of dizziness that the toppling town inspired.

"I know how you feel," observed Sitzky, laughing. "I was just de same at first. Tomorrow you walk a little ways up de side of de mountain an' you'll see how much of de city dere is on level ground down here. Dem buildin's up dere ain't more'n one-fiftieth part of de town. Dey're mostly summer homes. It gets hot as blazes down here in de valley in de middle of de summer, an' de rich ones move up de mountain."

"How in thunder do people get up to those houses?" demanded Anguish.

"Mules," answered Sitzky specifically. "Say! See dat little old feller comin' on horseback, wid de white uniform? Well, dat's de chief of police, an' de fellers behind him are police guards. 'At's old Dangloss himself. He's a peach, dey say."

A short, grizzly faced man, attired in a white uniform with red trimmings, followed by three men similarly garbed, rode by, going in the direction of the station. Dangloss, as Sitzky had called him, was quite small in stature, rather stout, gray bearded and eagle nosed. His face was keen and red and not at all the kind to invite familiarity. As he passed them the railroad guard of American citizenship touched his cap, and the two travelers bowed, whereupon the chief of police gave them a most profound salutation, fairly sweeping his saddle skirts with his white cap.

"Polite old codger," observed Anguish.

"His company manners. Just let him get you in de sweat box if you t'ink he's polite."

"Ever been there?"

"Well," a little confusedly, "I pasted a Graustark baggage smasher down in de yards two weeks ago, an' dey had me up. I proved de feller insulted a lady, an' old Dangloss let me off, sayin' I'd ought to have a medal. Dese guys are great on gallantry when ladies is concerned. If it hadn't been fer dat, I'd be in de lockup now. An', say, you ought to see de lockup! It's a tower, wid dungeons an' all dat sort of t'ing. A man couldn't no more get out 'n he could fly up to de monastery. Dey're great on law an' order here too. De princess has issued strictest kind of rules, an' everybody has to live up to 'em like as if dey was real gospel. I t'ought I'd put you next, gents, so's you wouldn't be doin' anyt'ing crooked here."

"Thanks," said Lorry dryly. "We shall try to conduct ourselves discreetly in the city."

Probably a quarter mile farther down the narrow, level street they came to the bazaars, the gaudy stores and then the hotel. It was truly a hostelry to inspire respect and admiration in the mind of such as Sitzky, for it was huge and well equipped with the modern appointments. As soon as the two Americans had been given their rooms they sent for their luggage. Then they went out to the broad piazza, with its columns and marble balustrades, and looked for Sitzky, remembering their invitation to drink. The guard had refused to enter the hotel with them, urging them to allow him to remain on the piazza. He was not there when they returned, but they soon saw him. On the sidewalk he was arguing with a white uniformed police guard, and they realized that he had been ejected from sacred precincts.

They promptly rescued him from the officer, who bowed and strode away as soon as they interceded.

"Dese fellers is slick enough to see you are swells an' I'm not," said Sitzky, not a bit annoyed by his encounter. "I'll bet my head 'at inside ten minutes old Dangloss will know who you are, where you come from an' what you're doin' here."

"I'll bet fifty heads he won't find out what we're doing here," grinned Anguish, looking at Lorry. "Well, let's hunt un the thirteenth department."

(Continued)

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