

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 train 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 Guggenlocker, 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 Guggenlocker 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 Guggenlocker is not on the steamer list. He sees the steamer off. Miss G. waves him a kiss from the deck. VI.—Lorry joins his old friend, Harry Anguish, an American artist, in Paris. Graustark and its capital, Edelweiss, are located by a guide book. The Americans get no trace of the Guggenlockers there.

They found the little apartment in which drinks were served at tables, and before they said goodby to Sitzky in front of the hotel, a half hour later, that worthy was in exceeding good humor and very much flushed in the face. He said he would be back in two days, and if they needed him for any purpose whatever they could reach him by a note at the railway station. "Funny how you run across an American in every nook and corner of the world," mused Lorry as they watched the stocky ex-man-of-war stroll off toward his hotel.

"If we can run across the Guggenlockers as easily, we'll be in luck. When shall we begin the hunt? Tonight?"

"We can make a few inquiries concerning them. They certainly are people of importance here."

"I don't see the name on any of the brewery signs around town," observed Anguish consolingly. "There's evidently no Guggenlocker here."

They strolled through the streets near the hotel until after 6 o'clock, wondering at the quaint architecture, the pretty gardens and the pastoral atmosphere that enveloped the city. Everybody was busy, contented, quiet and happy. There was no bustle or strife, no rush, no beggars. At 6 they saw hundreds of workmen on the streets, going to their homes. Shops were closed, and there came to their ears the distant boom of cannon, evidently fired from different points of the compass and from the highland as well as the lowland.

"The toy army is shooting off the good night guns," speculated Anguish. "I suppose everybody goes to bed now."

"Or to dinner," substituted Lorry, and they returned to the Regenetz. The dining hall was spacious and beautiful, a mixture of the oriental and the mediæval. It rapidly filled.

"Who the dickens can all these people be? They look well," Anguish whispered, as if he feared their nearest neighbors might understand his English.

"They are unquestionably of the class in which we must expect to find the Guggenlockers."

Before the meal was over the two strangers saw that they were attracting a great deal of attention from the other guests of the house. The women as well as the men were eying them and commenting quite freely, it was easy to see. Toward the end of the dinner several officers came in, and the Americans took particular pains to study them. They were cleanly built fellows, about medium height, wiry and active. As a class the men ap-

peared to average 5 feet 7 inches in height, some a little taller, some a little shorter. The two strangers were over six feet tall, broad shouldered and athletic. They looked like giants among these Graustark men.

"They're not very big, but they look as if they'd be nasty in a scrap," observed Anguish, unconsciously throwing out his chest.

"Strong as wildcats, I'll wager. The women are perfect, though. Have you ever seen a smarter set of women, Harry?"

"Never, never! A paradise of pretty women. I believe I'll take out naturalization papers."

When the two strangers left the dining room they were conscious that every eye in the place was upon them.

"We seem to be the whole show here, Gren," said Anguish as they sat down at one of the tables in the garden.

"I guess Americans are rare."

"I've found one fellow who can speak German and French, and not one, except our guard, who can talk English. That clerk talks German fairly well. I never heard such a language as these other people use. Say, old man, we'd better make inquiry about our friends tonight. That clerk probably won't be on duty tomorrow."

"We'll ask him before we go to bed," agreed Lorry, and upon leaving the brilliantly lighted garden they sought the landlord and asked if he could tell them where Caspar Guggenlocker lived. He looked politely incredulous and thoughtful, and then, with profound regret, assured them he had never heard the name. He said he had lived in Edelweiss all his life and knew everybody of consequence in the town.

"Surely there must be such people here!" cried Lorry, almost appealingly. He felt disheartened and cheated. Anguish was biting his lips.

"Oh, possibly among the poorer classes. If I were you, sir, I should call on Captain Dangloss, the chief of police. He knows every soul in Edelweiss. I am positive I have never heard the name. You will find the captain at the tower tomorrow morning."

The two Americans went to bed, one so dismayed by his disappointment that he could not sleep for hours.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LADY IN THE CARRIAGE.

THEY slept rather late in the morning, first because they were very much fatigued after their long journey, and second

for the reason that they had been unable to woo slumber until long past midnight. Anguish stretched himself lazily in bed when he heard Lorry's voice from the adjoining room.

"I suppose we are to consult the police in order to get a clue to your charmer," he yawned. "Nice friends you pick up on railway journeys! I'd be ashamed."

"Well, Harry, I'll confess I'm disgusted. This has been the most idiotic thing I've ever done, and if you say the word we'll get out of here on the first train—freight or passenger. The Guggenlockers—pigs!"—Mr. Lorry was savage.

"Not a bit of it, my boy; not a bit of it. We'll make a house to house canvass if the police fail us. Cheer up, cheer up!"

"You go to thunder!"

"Hold on! Don't talk like that or I'll go back on you in a minute. I'm here because I choose to be, and I've more heart in the chase at this minute than you have. I've not lost hope. We'll find the Guggenlockers if we have to hire detectives to trace 'em from the United States to their very doorstep. We're going to see the police after breakfast."

After breakfast they did go to see the Baron Dangloss. After some inquiry they found the gloomy, foreboding prison, and Mr. Anguish boldly pounded on the huge gates. A little shutter flew open, and a man's face appeared. Evidently he asked what was wanted, but he might as well have demanded their lives, so far were they from understanding his query.

"Baron Dangloss?" asked Anguish promptly. The man asked something else, but as the Americans shook their heads deprecatingly he withdrew his face and presently swung open the gates. They entered and he closed the doors behind them, locking them in. Then he directed them across the court to an open door in the aged mass of gray stone. As they strode away from the guard Lorry created consternation by demanding:

"How are we to talk to the chief if he doesn't understand us or we him? We should have brought an interpreter."

"I forgot about the confounded language. But if he's real he can talk Irish," Lorry told him he wasn't funny.

"Is this his excellency Baron Dangloss?" asked Anguish, stepping into a small room and stopping suddenly in the presence of the short, fierce man they had seen the day before. The American spoke in French.

"It is, gentlemen. Of what service can I be to MM. Lorry and Anguish?" responded the grim little chief, politely rising from beside his desk. The visitors looked at one another in surprise.

"If he knows our names on such short notice, he'll certainly know the Guggenlockers," said Anguish to his friend in English.

"Ah, you are looking for some one named Guggenlocker?" asked the chief, smiling broadly and speaking excellent English. "You must not be surprised, gentlemen. I speak many languages. I heard last night that you were inquiring about one Caspar Guggenlocker, and I have racked my brain, searched my books, questioned my officers, and I am sorry to inform you that there is no such person in Edelweiss."

"I was so well assured of it, Baron Dangloss," Lorry said.

"The name is totally unknown to me, sir. May I ask why you are searching for him?"

"Certainly. I met Mr. Guggenlocker, his wife and his niece last spring in the United States. They invited me to come and see them if I ever happened to be in this part of the world. As my friend and I were near here, I undertook to avail myself of their invitation."

"And they said they lived in Edelweiss, Graustark?"

"They did, and I'll humbly confess I did not know much of the principality of Graustark."

"That is certainly complimentary, but, then, we are a little out of the beaten path; so it is pardonable. I was at first under the impression that you were American detectives with extradition papers for criminals bearing the name you mention."

"Oh!" gasped Anguish. "We couldn't find ourselves if we should be separated, captain."

The grizzly bearded captain laughed lightly with them and then asked Lorry if he would object to giving him the full story of his acquaintanceship with the alleged Graustarkians. The bewildered and disheartened American

promptly told all he knew about them, omitting certain tender details, of course. As he proceeded the chief grew more and more interested, and when at last Lorry came to the description of the strange trio he gave a sudden start, exposed a queer little smile for a second or two and then was as sphinxlike as before. The ever vigilant Anguish observed the involuntary start and smile, quick as the chief had been to recover himself, and felt a thrill of triumph. To his anger and impatience, however, the old officer calmly shook his head at the end of the narrative and announced that he was as much in the dark as ever.

"Well, we'll search awhile for ourselves," declared Anguish stubbornly, not at all satisfied.

"You will be wasting your time," said the chief meaningly.

"We've plenty to waste," retorted the other.

After a few moments they departed, Baron Dangloss accompanying them to the gate and assuring them that he and his men always would be at their command. His nation admired the American people, he warmly declared.

"That old codger knows our people, and I'll bet a thousand on it," said Harry angrily when they had gone some little distance down the street. Then he told of the queer exposure Dangloss had unwittingly made. Lorry, more excited than he cared to show, agreed that there was something very suspicious about this new discovery.

They walked about the quaint town for an hour or two, examining the buildings, the people and the soldiery with deep interest. From the head of the main street, Castle avenue, they could plainly see the royal palace, nearly a mile away. Its towers and turrets, gray and gaunt, ran up among the green treetops and were outlined plainly against the yellow hills. Countless houses studded the steep mountain slope, and many people were discerned walking and riding along the narrow, ledgelike streets which wound toward the summit, far up in the clouds. Clearly and distinctly could be seen the grim monastery, perched at the very pinnacle of the mountain, several miles away. Up there it looked bleak and cold and uninviting, in great contrast to the loveliness and warmth of the valley. Down below the grass was moist and soft, trees were approaching the stage where yellow and red tints mingle with the rich green, flowers were blooming, the land was redolent of the sweet fragrance of autumn, the atmosphere warm, clear and invigorating. It was paradise surmounted by desolation, drear and deadening.

(Continued)

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