

GRAUSTARK

...By...
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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 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. VII.—Lorry sees his charmer diving in a carriage with a beautiful companion of her own sex. He gets a glance of recognition, but the carriage rolls on, leaving the mystery unsolved. Later he receives a note at his hotel signed Sophia Guggenlocker, inviting him to visit her next day. VIII.—In the evening Lorry and Anguish ramble about the grounds of the castle where dwells the court of the Princess of Graustark. They overhear a plot to abduct the princess and resolve to capture the plotters red handed. IX.—Following the conspirators, Lorry finds himself in a room he heard them designate as that of the princess. X.—Lorry tells the princess of the plot. Mutual recognition; she is Miss Guggenlocker. Dannox, the guard, is in the abduction plot. He falls Lorry with a terrible blow. Anguish to the rescue.

"That settles you!"

Some one lifted his head from the carpet, and a woman's voice was crying something unintelligible. He was conscious of an effort on his part to prevent the blood from streaming over her gown—a last bit of gallantry. The sound of rushing feet, shouts, firearms—oblivion!

When Lorry regained consciousness, he blinked in abject amazement. There was a dull, whirring sound in his ears, and his eyes had a glaze over them that was slow in wearing off. There were persons in the room. He could see them moving about and could hear them talking. As his eyes tried to take in the strange surroundings a hand was lifted from his forehead, and a soft, dreamlike voice said:

"He is recovering, Mr. Anguish. See, his eyes are open! Do you know me, Mr. Lorry?"

The unsteady eyes wandered until they fell upon the face near his pillow. A brighter gleam came into them, and there was a ray of returning intelligence. He tried to speak, but could only move his lips. As he remembered her she was in white, and he was puzzled now to see her in a garment of some dark material suggestive of the night or the green of a shady hillside. There was the odor of roses and violets and carnations. Then he looked for the fatal, fearful, glaring chandelier. It was gone. The room was becoming lighter and lighter as his eyes grew stronger, but it was through a window near where he lay. So it was daylight! Where was he?

"How do you feel, old man?" asked a familiar voice. A man sat down beside him on the couch or bed, and a big hand grasped his own. Still he could not answer.

"Doctor," cried the voice near his head, "you really think it is not serious?"

"I am quite sure," answered a man's voice from somewhere out in the light. "It is a bad cut, and he is just recovering from the effect of the ether. Had the blow not been a glancing one his skull would have been crushed. He will be perfectly conscious in a short time. There is no concussion, your

highness."

"I am so happy to hear you say that," said the soft voice. Lorry's eyes sought hers and thanked her. A lump came into his throat as he looked up into the tender, anxious blue eyes. A thrill came over him. Princess or not, he loved her—he loved her! "You were very brave—oh, so brave!" she whispered in his ear, her hand touching his hair caressingly. "My American!"

He tried to reach the hand before it faded, but he was too weak. She glided away, and he closed his eyes again as if in pain.

"Look up, old man. You're all right," said Anguish. "Smell this handkerchief. It will make you feel better." A moist cloth was held beneath his nose, and a strong, pungent odor darted through his nostrils. In a moment he tried to raise himself to his elbow. The world was clearing up.

"Lie still a bit, Lorry. Don't be too hasty. The doctor says you must not."

"Where am I, Harry?" asked the wounded man weakly.

"In the castle. I'll tell you all about it presently."

"Am I in her room?"

"No, but she is in yours. You are across the hall in"—here he whispered—"Uncle Caspar's room. Caspar is a count."

"And she is the princess—truly?"

"What luck?"

"What misery—what misery!" half moaned the other.

"Bosh! Be a man! Don't talk so loud either! There are a half dozen in the room."

Lorry remained perfectly quiet for ten minutes, his staring eyes fixed on the ceiling. He was thinking of the abyss he had reached and could not cross.

"What time is it?" he asked at last, turning his eyes toward his friend.

"It's just 7 o'clock. You have been unconscious or under the influence of ether for over four hours. That guard hit you a fearful crack."

"I heard a shot—a lot of them. Was any one killed? Did those fellows escape?"

"Killed! There have been eight executions besides the one I attended to. Lord, they don't wait long here before handing out justice."

"Tell me all that happened. Was she hurt?"

"I should say not! Say, Gren, I have killed a man. Dannox got my bullet right in the head, and he never knew what hit him. Ghastly, isn't it? I feel beastly queer. It was he who turned on the lights and went at you with a club. I heard you call and was in the door just as he hit you. His finish came inside of a second. You and he spoiled the handsomest rug I ever saw."

"Ruined it?"

"Not in her estimation. I'll wager she has it framed, blood and all. The stains will always be there as a reminder of your bravery, and that's what she says she's bound to keep. She was very much excited and alarmed about you until the room filled with men, and then she remembered how she was attired. I never saw anything so pretty as her embarrassment when the countess and her aunt led her into the next room. These people

are going out, so I'll tell you what happened after you left me with the cook. He was a long time falling under the influence, and I had barely reached the top of the stairs when I saw Dannox rush down the hall. Then you called, and I knew the jig was on in full blast. The door was open, and I saw him strike you. I shot him, but she was at your side before I could get to you. The other fellows who were in the room succeeded in escaping while I was bending over you, but neither of them shot at me. They were too badly frightened. I had sense enough left to follow and shoot a couple of times as they tore down the stairs. One of them stumbled and rolled all the way to the bottom. He was unconscious and bleeding when I reached his side. The other fellow flew toward the dining hall, where he was immediately nabbed by two white uniformed men and throttled.

"Other men in white—they were regular police officers—pounced upon me, and I was a prisoner. By George, I was knocked off my feet the next minute to see old Dangloss himself come puffing and blowing into the hall, redder and fiercer than ever. 'Now I know what you want in Edelweiss!' he shrieked, and it took me three minutes to convince him of his error. Then he and some of the men went up to the princess' room, while I quickly led the way to the big gate and directed a half dozen officers toward the ravine. They came up finally with the two fellows who had been stationed beneath the window and who were unable to find the gate. When I got back to where you were, the room was full of terrified men and women half dressed. I was still dazed over the sudden appearance of the police, but managed to tell my story in full to Dangloss and Count Halfont—that's Uncle Caspar—and then the chief told me how he and his men happened to be there. In the meantime the castle physician was attending to you. Dannox had been carried away.

"I never talked to a more interested audience in my life. There was the princess at my elbow, and the countess—pretty as a picture—back of her, all eyes, both of 'em, and there were the old gray haired lady, the Countess Halfont, and a half dozen shivering maids, with men galore. Dangloss and the count and a lot of servants—a great and increasing crowd. The captain of the guards, a young fellow named Quixnox, as I heard him called, came in worried and humiliated. I fancy he was afraid he'd lose his job. You see, it was this way: Old Dangloss has had a man watching us all day. Think of it—shadowing us like a couple of thieves! This fellow traced us to the castle gate and then ran back for reinforcements, confident that we were there to rob. In twenty minutes he had a squad of officers at the gate, the chief trailing along behind. A couple of guards came charging up to learn the cause of the commotion, and the whole crew sailed into the castle, arriving just in time.

"Well, just as soon as I had told them the full story of the plot, old Caspar, the chief and the captain held a short consultation, the result of which I can tell in mighty few words. At 6 o'clock they took the whole gang of prisoners down in the ravine and shot them. The mounted guards are still looking for the two Viennese who were left with the carriage. They escaped. About an hour after you were hurt you were carried over here and laid on this couch. They have been hanging over you as if you were a newborn baby, and everybody's charmed because you are a boy and are going to live."

Lorry was smiling faintly over his enthusiasm.

"You are the real hero, Harry. You saved my life and probably hers. I'll not allow you or anybody to give me the glory," he said, pressing the other's hand.

"Oh, that's nonsense! Anybody could have rushed in as I did. I was only capping the climax you had prepared—merely a timely arrival, as the novels say. There is a little of the credit due me, of course, and I'll take it gracefully, but I only come in as an accessory, a sort of bushwhacker who had only to do the shoot, slap bang work and close the act. You did the hero's work. But what do you think of the way they hand out justice over here? All but two of 'em dead!"

"Whose plan was it to kill those men?" cried Lorry, suddenly sitting upright.

"Everybody's, I fancy. They didn't consult me, though, come to think of it. Ah, here is her royal highness!"

The princess and Aunt Yvonne were at his side again, while Count Caspar was coming rapidly toward them.

"You must not sit up, Mr. Lorry," began the princess, but he was crying:

"Did they make a confession, Harry?"

"I don't know. Did they, Unc—Count Halfont? Did they confess? Great heavens, I never thought of that before."

"What was there to confess?" asked the count, taking Lorry's hand kindly. "They were caught in the act. My dear sir, they were not even tried."

"I thought your police chief was such a shrewd man," cried Lorry angrily.

"What's that?" asked a gruff voice, and Baron Dangloss was a member of the party, red and panting.

"Don't you know you should not have killed those men?" demanded Lorry. They surveyed him in amazement, except Anguish, who had buried his face in his hands dejectedly.

"And, sir, I'd like to know why not?" blustered Dangloss.

"And, sir, I'd like to know, since you have shot the only beings on earth who knew the man that hired them, how in the name of your alleged justice you are going to apprehend him?" said Lorry, sinking back to his pillow, exhausted.

No reserve could hide the consternation, embarrassment and shame that overwhelmed a very worthy but very impetuous nobleman, Baron Jasto Dangloss, chief of police in Edelweiss. He could only sputter his excuses and withdraw, swearing to catch the arch conspirator or to die in the attempt. Not a soul in the castle, not a being in all Graustark, could offer the faintest clew to the identity of the man or ex-



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plain his motive. No one knew a Michael, who might have been inadvertently addressed as "your" possible "highness." The greatest wonder reigned. Vexation, uneasiness and perplexity existed everywhere.

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