

GRAUSTARK

... By ...
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CHAPTER I.—Greenfall 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 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. 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 Guggenslockers there. VII. Lorry sees his charmer driving 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 Guggenslocker, 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 Guggenslocker, Dannox, the guard, is in the abduction plot. He tells Lorry with a terrible blow. Anguish to the rescue.

Standing there with her head on her aunt's shoulder, her face grave and troubled, the princess asked:

"Why should they seek to abduct me? Was it to imprison or to kill me? Oh, Aunt Yvonne, have I not been good to my people? God knows I have done all that I can! I could have done no more. Is it a conspiracy to force me from the throne? Who can be so cruel?"

And no one could answer. They could simply offer words of comfort and promises of protection. Later in the day gruff Dangloss marched in and apologized to the Americans for his suspicions concerning them, imploring their assistance in running down the chief villain. And as the hours went by Count Halfont came in and, sitting beside Greenfall, begged his pardon and asked him to forget the deception that had been practiced in the United States. He explained the necessity for traveling incognito at that time. After which the count entered a plea for her royal highness, who had expressed contrition and wished to be absolved.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE IN A CASTLE.

AS the day wore on Lorry grew irritable and restless. He could not bring himself into full touch with the situation, notwithstanding Harry's frequent and graphic recollections of incidents that had occurred and that had led to their present condition. Their luncheon was served in the count's room, as it was inadvisable for the injured man to go to the dining hall until he was stronger. The court physician assured him that he would be incapacitated for several days, but that in a very short time his wound would lose the power to annoy him in the least. The Count and Countess Halfont, Anguish and others came to cheer him and to make his surroundings endurable. Still he was dissatisfied, even unhappy.

The cause of his uneasiness and depression was revealed only by the manner in which it was removed. He was lying stretched out on the couch, staring from the window, his head aching, his heart full of a longing that knows but one solace. Anguish had

come out in the grounds after assuring himself that his charge was asleep, so there was no one in the room when he awakened from a sickening dream to shudder alone over its memory. He turned on his side and curiously felt the bandages about his head. How lonely those bandages made him feel, away off there in Graustark!

The door to his room opened softly, but he did not turn, thinking it was Anguish—always Anguish—and not the one he most desired to—

"Her royal highness," announced a maid, and then:

"May I come in?" asked a voice that went to his troubled soul like a cooling draft to the fevered throat. He turned toward her instantly, all the irritation, all the uneasiness, all the loneliness, vanishing like mist before the sun. Behind her was a lady in waiting.

"I cannot deny the request of a princess," he responded, smiling gayly. He held forth his hand toward her, half fearing she would not take it.

The Princess Yvonne came straight to his couch and laid her hand in his. He drew it to his lips and then released it lingeringly. She stood before him, looking down with an anxiety in her eyes that would have repaid him had death been there to claim his next breath.

"Are you better?" she asked, with her pretty accent. "I have been so troubled about you."

"I thought you had forgotten me," he said, with childish petulance.

"Forgotten you!" she cried, quick to resent the imputation. "Let me tell you, then, what I have been doing while forgetting. I have sent to the Regenetz for your luggage and your friend's. You will find it much more comfortable here. You are to make this house your home as long as you are in Edelweiss. That is how I have been forgetting."

"Forgive me!" he cried, his eyes gleaming. "I have been so lonely that I imagined all sorts of things. But, your highness, you must not expect us to remain here after I am able to leave. That would be imposing!"

"I will not allow you to say it!" she objected decisively. "You are the guest of honor in Graustark. Have you not preserved its ruler? Was it an imposition to risk your life to save one in whom you had but passing interest, even though she were a poor princess? No, my American, this castle is yours in all rejoicing, for had you not come within its doors today would have found it in mournful terror. Besides, Mr. Anguish has said he will stay a year if we insist."

"That's like Harry," laughed Lorry. "But I am afraid you are glorifying two rattle brained chaps who should be in a home for imbeciles instead of in the castle their audacity might have blighted. Our rashness was only surpassed by our phenomenal good luck. By chance it turned out well. There were ten thousand chances of ignominious failure. Had we failed would we have been guests of honor? No! We would have been stoned from Graustark. You don't know how thin the thread was that held your fate. It makes me shudder to think of the crime

our act might have been. Ah, had I but known you were the princess, no chances should have been taken," he said fervently.

"And a romance spoiled," she laughed.

"So you are a princess—a real princess," he went on, as if he had not heard her. "I knew it. Something told me you were not an ordinary woman!"

"Oh, but I am a very ordinary woman," she remonstrated. "You do not know how easy it is to be a princess and a mere woman at the same time. I have a heart, a head; I breathe and eat and drink and sleep and love. Is it not that way with other women?"

"You breathe and eat and drink and sleep and love in a different world, though, your highness."

"Ach, my little maid, Therese, sleeps as soundly, eats as heartily and loves as warmly as I, so a fig for your judgment."

"You may breathe the same air, but would you love the same man that your maid might love?"

"Is a man the only excuse for love?" she asked. "If so, then I must say that I breathe and eat and drink and sleep—and that is all."

"Pardon me, but some day you will find that love is a man, and"—here he laughed—"you will neither breathe nor eat nor sleep except with him in your heart. Even a princess is not proof against a man."

"Is a man proof against a princess?" she asked as she leaned against the easement.

"It depends on the"—he paused—"the princess, I should say."

"Alas! There is one more fresh responsibility acquired. It seems to me that everything depends on the princess," she said merrily.

"Not entirely," he said quickly. "A great deal—a very great deal—depends on circumstances. For instance, when you were Miss Guggenslocker it wouldn't have been necessary for the man to be a prince, you know."

"But I was Miss Guggenslocker because a man was unnecessary," she said, so gravely that he smiled. "I was without a title because it was more womanly than to be a 'freak,' as I should have been had every man, woman and child looked upon me as a princess. I did not travel through your land for the purpose of exhibiting myself, but to learn and unlearn."

"I remember it cost you a certain coin to learn one thing," he observed.

"It was money well spent, as subsequent events have proved. I shall never regret the spending of that half gavel. Was it not the means of bringing you to Edelweiss?"

"Well, it was largely responsible, but I am inclined to believe that a certain desire on my part would have found a way without the assistance of the coin. You don't know how persistent an American can be."

"Would you have persisted had you known I was a princess?" she asked.

"Well, I can hardly tell about that, but you must remember I didn't know who or what you were."

"Would you have come to Graustark had you known I was its princess?"

"I'll admit I came because you were Miss Guggenslocker."

"A mere woman."

"I will not consent to the word 'mere.' What would you think of a man who came half way across the earth for the sake of a mere woman?"

"I should say he had a great deal of curiosity," she responded coolly.

"And not much sense. There is but one woman a man would do so much for, and she could not be a mere woman in his eyes." Lorry's face was white and his eyes gleamed as he hurled this bold conclusion at her.

"Especially when he learns that she is a princess!" said she, her voice so cold and repellent that his eyes closed involuntarily, as if an unexpected hor-

ror had come before them. "You must not tell me that you came to see me."

"But I did come to see you, and not her royal highness the Princess Yvonne of Graustark. How was I to know?" he cried impulsively.

"But you are no longer ignorant," she said, looking from the window.

"I thought you said you were a mere woman!"

"I am, and that is the trouble!" she said, slowly turning her eyes back to him. Then she abruptly sank to the window seat near his head. "That is the trouble, I say. A woman is a woman although she be a princess. Don't you understand why you must not say such things to me?"

"Because you are a princess," he said bitterly.

"No; because I am a woman. As a woman I want to bear them; as a princess I cannot. Now, have I made you understand? Have I been bold enough?" Her face was burning.

"You—you don't mean that you"—he half whispered, drawing himself toward her, his face glowing.

"Ach! What have I said?"

"You have said enough to drive me mad with desire for more," he cried, seizing her hand, which she withdrew instantly, rising to her feet.

"I have only said that I wanted to hear you say you had come to see me. Is not that something for a woman's vanity to value? I am sorry you have presumed to misunderstand me." She was cold again, but he was not to be baffled.

"Then be a woman and forget that you are a princess until I tell you why I came," he cried.

"I cannot—I mean I will not listen to you," she said, glancing about helplessly, yet standing still within the danger circle.

"I came because I have thought of you and dreamed of you since the day you sailed from New York. Can I ever forget that day?"

"Please do not recall"—she began, blushing and turning to the window.

"The kiss you threw to me? Were you a princess then?" She did not answer, and he paused for a moment, a thought striking him which at first he did not dare to voice. Then he blurted it out: "If you do not want to hear me say these things, why do you stand there?"

"Oh!" she faltered.

"Don't leave me now. I want to say what I came over here to say, and then you can go back to your throne and your royal reserve, and I can go back to the land from which you drew me. I came because I love you. Is not that enough to drag a man to the end of the world? I came to marry you if I could, for you were Miss Guggenslocker to me. Then you were within my reach, but not now! I can only love a princess!" He stopped because she had dropped to the couch beside him, her serious face turned appealingly to his, her fingers clasping his hands fiercely.

"I forbid you to continue—I forbid you! Do you hear? I, too, have thought and dreamed of you, and I have prayed that you might come. But you must not tell me that you love me—you shall not!"

"I only want to know that you love me," he whispered.

"Do you think I can tell you the truth?" she cried. "I do not love you!"

Before he had fairly grasped the importance of the contradictory sentences she left his side and stood in the window, her breast heaving and her face flaming.

(Continued)

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