

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 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 Guggenslocher, 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 Guggenslocher 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 Guggenslocher 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 Guggenslochers 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 Guggenslocher, 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 Guggenslocher. Danno, the guard, is in the abduction plot. He tells Lorry with a terrible blow. Anguish to the rescue.

"Then I am to believe you do," he groaned after a moment. "I find a princess and lose a woman!"

"I did not intend that you should have said what you have, or that I should have told you what I have. I knew you loved me or you would not have come to me," she said softly.

"You would have been selfish enough to enjoy that knowledge without giving joy in return. I see. What else could you have done? A princess! Oh, I would to God you were Miss Guggenslocher, the woman I sought!"

"Amen to that!" she said. "Can I trust you never to renew this subject? We have each learned what had better been left unknown. You understand my position. Surely you will be good enough to look upon me ever afterward as a princess and forget that I have been a woman unwittingly. I ask you, for your sake and my own, to refrain from a renewal of this unhappy subject. You can see how hopeless it is for both of us. I have said much to you that I trust you will cherish as coming from a woman who could not have helped herself and who has given to you the power to undo her with a single word. I know you will always be the brave, true man my heart has told me you are. You will let the beginning be the end."

The appeal was so earnest, so noble, that honor swelled in his heart and came from his lips in this promise:

"You may trust me, your highness. Your secret is worth a thousandfold more than mine. It is sacred with me. The joy of my life has ended, but the happiness of knowing the truth will never die. I shall remember that you love me—yes, I know you do—and I shall never forget to love you. I will not promise that I shall never speak of it again to you. As I lie here there comes to me a courage I did not know I could feel."

"No, no!" she cried vehemently.

"Forgive me! You can at least let me say that as long as I live I may cherish and encourage the little hope that all is not dead. Your highness, let me say that my family never knows when it is defeated, either in love or in war."

"The walls which surround the heart

of a princess are black and grim, impenetrable when she defends it, my boasting American," she said, smiling sadly.

"Yet some prince of the realm will batter down the wall and win at a single blow that which a mere man could not conquer in ten lifetimes. Such is the world."

"The prince may batter down and seize, but he can never conquer. But enough of this! I am the Princess of Graustark, you are my friend, Grenfall Lorry, and there is only a dear friendship between us," she cried, resuming her merry humor so easily that he started with surprise and not a little displeasure.

"And a throne," he added, smiling.



"I forbid you to continue" however.

"And a promise," she reminded him.

"From which I trust I may some day be released," said he, sinking back, afflicted with a discouragement and a determination of equal power. He could see hope and hopelessness ahead.

"By death!"

"No; by life! It may be sooner than you think!"

"You are forgetting your promise already."

"Your highness' pardon," he begged.

They laughed, but their hearts were sad, this luckless American and hapless sovereign who would if she could be a woman.

"It is now 3 o'clock—the hour when you were to have called to see me," she said, again sitting unconcernedly before him in the window seat. She was not afraid of him. She was a princess.

"I misunderstood you, your highness. I remembered the engagement, but it seems I was mistaken as to the time. I came at 3 in the morning."

"And found me at home!"

"In an impregnable castle, with ogres all about."

CHAPTER XII.

A WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

LORRY was removed to another room before dinner, as she had promised.

After they had dined the two

strangers were left alone for several hours. Anguish regaled his friend with an enthusiastic dissertation on the charms of the Countess Dagmar, lady in waiting to the princess. In conclusion he said glowingly, his cigar having been out for half an hour or more because his energy had been spent in another direction:

"You haven't seen much of her, Lorry, but I tell you she is rare. And she's not betrothed to any of these confounded counts or dukes either. They all adore her, but she's not committed."

"How do you know all this?" demanded Lorry, who but half heard through his dreams.

"Asked her, of course. How in thunder do you suppose?"

"And you've known her but a day! Well, you are progressive!"

"Oh, perfectly natural conversation, you know," explained Anguish composedly. "She began it by asking me if I were married, and I said I wasn't even engaged. Then I asked her if she were married. You see, from the title, you can't tell whether a countess is married or single. She said she wasn't, and I promptly and very properly expressed my amazement. By Jove, she has a will and a mind of her own, that young woman has! She's not going to marry until she finds a man of the right sort, which is refreshing. I like to hear a girl talk like that, especially a pretty girl who can deal in princes, counts and all kinds of nobility when it comes to a matrimonial trade. By Jove, I'm sorry for the princess, though!"

"Sorry for the princess? Why?" asked the other, alert at once.

"Oh, just because it's not in her power to be so independent. The countess says she cries every night when she thinks of what the poor girl has to contend with."

"Tell me about it."

"I don't know anything to tell. I'm not interested in the princess, and I didn't have the nerve to ask many questions. I do know, however, that she is going to have an unpleasant matrimonial alliance forced upon her in some way."

"That is usual."

"That's what I gather from the countess. Maybe you can pump the countess and get all you want to know in connection with the matter. It's a pretty serious state of affairs, I should say, or she wouldn't be weeping through sympathy."

Lorry recalled a part of the afternoon's sweetly dangerous conversation, and the perspiration stood cold and damp on his brow.

There was a rap at the door, and Anguish hastened to open it. A servant presented Count Halfont's compliments and begged leave to call.

"Shall we see the old boy?" asked Harry.

"Yes, yes," responded the other. The servant understood the sign made by Anguish and disappeared. "Diplomatic call, I suspect."

"He is the prime minister, I understand. Ah, good evening, your excellency! We are honored."

The count had entered the room and was advancing toward the couch, tall, easy and the personification of cordiality.

"I could not retire until I had satisfied myself as to Mr. Lorry's condition and his comfort," said he in his broken English. He seated himself near the couch and bent sharp, anxious eyes on the recumbent figure.

"Oh, he's all right!" volunteered Anguish readily. "Be able to go into battle again tomorrow."

"That is the way with you aggressive Americans, I am told. They never give up until they are dead," said the count courteously. "Your head is better?"

"It does not pain me as it did, and I'm sure I'll be able to get out tomorrow. Thank you very much for your interest," said Lorry. "May I inquire after the health of the Countess Hal-

font? The excitement of last night has not had an unpleasant effect, I hope."

"She is with the princess, and both are quite well. Since our war, gentlemen, Graustark women have nothing to acquire in the way of courage and endurance. You, of course, know nothing of the horrors of that war."

"But we would be thankful for the story of it, your excellency. War is a hobby of mine. I read every war scare that gets into print," said Anguish eagerly.

"We of Graustark at present have every reason to recall the last war and bitterly to lament its ending. The war occurred just fifteen years ago—but will the recital tire you, Mr. Lorry? I came to spend a few moments socially and not to go into history. At any other time I shall be"—

"It will please and not tire me. I am deeply interested. Pray, go on." Lorry hastened to say, for he was interested more than the count suspected.

"Fifteen years ago Prince Ganlook of this principality, the father of our princess, became incensed over the depredations of the Axphain soldiers who patrolled our border on the north. He demanded restitution for the devastation they had created, but was refused. Graustark is a province comprising some 800 square miles of the best land in this part of the world. Our neighbor is smaller in area and population. Our army was better equipped, but not so hardy. For several months the fighting in the north was in our favor, but the result was that our forces were finally driven back to Edelweiss, hacked and battered by the fierce thousands that came over the border. The nation was staggered by the shock, for such an outcome had not been considered possible. We had been too confident. Our soldiers were sick and worn by six months of hard fighting, and the men of Edelweiss—the merchants, the laborers and the nobility itself—flew to arms in defense of the city. For over a month we fought, hundreds of our best and bravest citizens going down to death. They at last began a bombardment of the city. Today you can see the marks on nearly every house in Edelweiss. Hundreds of graves in the valley to the south attest the terrors of that siege. The castle was stormed, and Prince Ganlook, with many of the chief men of the land, met death. The prince was killed in front of the castle gates, from which he had sallied in a last brave attempt to beat off the conquerors. A bronze statue now marks the spot on which he fell. The princess, his wife, was my sister, and as I held the portfolio of finance it was through me that the city surrendered, bringing the siege to an end. Fifteen years ago this autumn—the 20th of November, to be explicit—the treaty of peace was signed in Sofia. We were compelled to cede a portion of territory in the far northeast, valuable for its mines. Indemnity was agreed upon by the peace commissioners, amounting to 20,000,000 gavvos, or nearly \$30,000,000 in your money. In fifteen years this money was to be paid, with interest. On the 20th of November, this year, the people of Graustark must pay 25,000,000 gavvos. The time is at hand, and that is why we recall the war so vividly. It means the bankruptcy of the nation, gentlemen."

(Continued)

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