

# GRAUSTARK

... By ...

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CHAPTER 1.—Grenfall Lorry, a wealby 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 Guggensloeker, 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 Guggensloeker 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 Guggensloeker 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 Guggensloeker, 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 Guggensloeker. Danno, the guard, is in the abduction plot. He tells Lorry with a terrible blow. Anguish to the rescue. XI.—Lorry quartered in the castle. The princess visits him, but forbids all talk of love. XII.—Graustark is bankrupt and owes the neighboring principedom of Axphain \$30,000,000. The creditor demands cash or the cession of the richest districts of Graustark. XIII.—The Prince of Axphain offers to extend the loan if the princess will marry his son Lorenz. Prince Gabriel of Dawsirgen also bids for the princess's hand with offer of a loan. Yetteve tells Lorry that she belongs to her people and will marry Lorenz.

So it was that the Princess of Graustark, erstwhile Miss Guggensloeker, was being dragged through the most unhappy affairs that ever beset a sovereign. Within a month she was to sign away two-thirds of her domain, transforming multitudes of her beloved and loving people into subjects of the hated Axphain or to sell herself, body and soul, to a loathsome bidder in the guise of a suitor, and, with all this confronting her, she had come to the realization of a truth so sad and distracting that it was breaking her tortured heart. She was in love, but with no royal prince! Of this, however, the countess knew nothing, so Lorry had one great secret to cherish alone.

"Has she chosen the course she will pursue?" asked Lorry as the countess concluded her story. His face was turned away.

"She cannot decide. We have wept together over this dreadful, this horrible thing. You do not know what it means to all of us, Mr. Lorry. We love her, and there is not one in our land who would sacrifice her to save this territory. As for Gabriel, Graustark would kill her before she should go to him. Still she cannot let herself sacrifice those northern subjects when by a single act she can save them. You see, the princess has not forgotten that her father brought this war upon the people, and she feels it her duty to pay the penalty of his error, whatever the cost."

"Is there no other to whom she can turn—no other course?" asked Lorry.

"There is none who would assist us, bankrupt as we are. There is a question I want to ask, Mr. Lorry. Please look at me. Do not stare at the fountain all the time. Why have you come to Edelweiss?" She asked the question so boldly that his startled embarrassment was an unspoken confession. He calmed himself and hesitated long before answering, weighing his reply. She sat close beside him, her clear gray eyes reading him like a book.

"I came to see a Miss Guggensloeker," he answered at last.

"For what purpose? There must have been an urgent cause to bring you so far. You are not an American banker?"

"I had intended to ask her to be my wife," he said, knowing that secrecy was useless and seeing a faint hope.

"You did not find Miss Guggensloeker?"

"No; I have not found her."

"And are you going home disappointed, Mr. Lorry, because she is not here?"

"I leave the answer to your tender imagination."

There was a long pause.

"May I ask when you expect to leave Graustark?" she asked somewhat timidly.

"Why do you wish to know?" he asked in turn.

"Because I know how hopeless your quest has been. You have found Miss Guggensloeker, but she is held behind a wall so strong and impregnable that you cannot reach her with the question you came to ask. You have come to that wall, and now you must turn back. I have asked how soon?"

"Not until your princess bids me take up my load and go. You see, my lady, I love to sit beneath the shadow of the wall you describe. It will require a royal edict to compel me to abandon my position."

"You cannot expect the princess to drive you from her country, you who have done so much for her. You must go, Mr. Lorry, without her bidding."

"I must?"

"Yes, for your presence outside that wall may make the imprisonment all the more unendurable for the one your love cannot reach. Do you understand me?"

"Has the one behind the wall instructed you to say this to me?" he asked miserably.

"She has not. I do not know her heart, but I am a woman and have a woman's foresight. If you wish to be kind and good to her, go."

"I cannot!" he exclaimed, his pent feelings bursting forth. "I cannot go!"

"You will not be so selfish and so cruel as to increase the horror of the wreck that is sure to come," she said, frowning back.

"You know, countess, of the life saving crews who draw from the wrecks of ships lives that were hopelessly lost. There is to be a wreck here. Is there to be a life saver? When the night is darkest, the sea wildest, when hope is gone, is not that the time when rescue is most precious? Tell me, you who know all there is of this approaching disaster."

"I cannot command you to leave Edelweiss. I can only tell you that you will have something to answer for if you stay," said the countess.

"Will you help me if I show to you that I can reach the wreck and save the one who clings to it despairingly?" he asked, smiling, suddenly calm and confident.

"Willingly, for I love the one who is going down in the sea. I have spoken to you seriously, though, and I trust you will not misunderstand me. I like you, and I like Mr. Anguish. You could stay here forever so far as I am con-

cerned."

He thought long and intently over what she had said as he smoked his cigar on the great balcony that night. He saw in one moment the vast chasm between the man and the princess; in the next he laughed at the puny space.

Down on the promenade he could see the figures of men and women strolling in the moonlight. To his ears came the occasional laugh of a man, the silvery gurgle of a woman. The royal military band was playing in the stand near the edge of the great circle. There were gaiety, comfort, charm and security about everything that came to his eyes and ears. Where was she? He had seen her in the afternoon and had talked with her, had walked with her. Their conversation had been bright, but of the commonplace kind. She had said nothing to indicate that she remembered the hour spent beside his couch a day or so before; he had uttered none of the words that struggled to rush from his lips—the questions, the pleadings, the vows. Where was she now? Not in that gay crowd below, for he had scanned every figure with the hawk's eye; closeted again, no doubt, with her ministers, wearying her tired brain, her brave heart into fatigue without rest.

Her court still trembled with the excitement of the daring attempt of the abductors and their swift punishment. Functionaries flocked to Edelweiss to inquire after the welfare of the princess, and indignation was at the highest pitch. There were theories innumerable as to the identity of the arch conspirator. Baron Dangloss was at sea completely. He cursed himself and everybody else for the hasty and ill timed execution of the hirelings. It was quite evident that the buzzing wonder and intense feeling of the people had for the moment driven out all thought of the coming day of judgment and its bitter atonement for all Graustark. Today the castle was full of the nobility, drawn to its walls by the news that had startled them beyond all expression. The police were at work, the military trembled with rage, the people clamored for the apprehension of the man who had been the instigator of this audacity. The general belief was that some brigand chief from the south had planned the great theft for the purpose of securing a fabulous ransom. Grenfall Lorry had an astonishing theory in his mind, and the more he thought it over the more firmly it was imbedded.

The warm, blue coils from the cigar wafted away into the night, carrying with them a myriad of tangled thoughts—of her, of Axphain, of the abductor, of himself, of everything. A light step on the stone floor of the shadowy balcony attracted his attention. He turned his head and saw the Princess Yetteve. She was walking slowly toward the balustrade, not aware of his presence. There was no covering for the dark hair, no wrap about the white shoulders. She wore an exquisite gown of white, shimmering with the reflections from the moon that scaled the mountain top. She stood at the balustrade, her hands clasping a bouquet of red roses, her chin lifted, her eyes gazing toward the mountain's crest, the prettiest picture he had ever seen. The strange dizziness of love overpowered him! How long he reveled in the glory of the picture he knew not, for it was as if he looked from a dream. At last he saw her look down upon the roses, lift them slowly and drop them over the rail. They fell to the ground below. He thought he understood—the gift of a prince despised.

They were not twenty feet apart. He advanced to her side, his hat in one hand, his stick—the one that felled the Viennese—trembling in the other.

"I did not know you were here," she exclaimed in half frightened amazement. "I left my ladies inside."

He was standing beside her, looking down into the eyes.

"And I am richer because of your ignorance," he said softly. "I have seen a picture that shall never leave my memory—never! Its beauty enthralled me enraptured. Then I saw the drama of the roses. Ah, your highness, the crown is not always a mask."

"The roses were—were of no consequence," she faltered.

"I have heard how you stand between two suitors and that wretched treaty. My heart has ached to tell you how I pity you."

"It is not pity I need, but courage. Pity will not aid me in my duty, Mr. Lorry. It stands plainly before me, this duty, but I have not the courage to take it up and place it about my neck forever."

"You do not, cannot love this Lorenz?" he asked.

"Love him!" she cried. "Ach, I forget! You do not know him. Yet I shall doubtless be his wife." There was an eternity of despair in that low, steady voice.

"You shall not! I swear you shall not!"

"Oh, he is a prince! I must accept the offer that means salvation to Graustark. Why do you make it harder with torture which you think is kindness? Listen to me. Next week I am to give my answer. He will be here in this castle. My father brought this calamity upon Graustark; I must lift it from the people. What has my happiness to do with it?"

Her sudden strength silenced him, crushed him with the real awakening of helplessness. He stood beside her, looking up at the cold monastery, strangely conscious that she was gazing toward the same dizzy height.

"It looks so peaceful up there," she said at last.

"But so cold and cheerless," he added drearily. There was another long silence in which two hearts communed through the medium of that faraway sentinel. "They have not discovered a clew to the chief abductor, have they?" he asked in an effort to return to his proper sphere.

"Baron Dangloss believes he has a clew—a meager and unsatisfactory one, he admits—and today sent officers to Ganlook to investigate the actions of a strange man who was there last week, a man who styled himself the Count of Arabazon and who claimed to be of Vienna. Some Austrians had been hunting stags and bears in the north, however, and it is possible he is one of them." She spoke slowly, her eyes still bent on the home of the monks.

"Your highness, I have a theory, a bold and perhaps a criminal theory, but you will allow me to tell you why I am possessed of it. I am aware that there is a Prince Gabriel. It is my opinion that no Viennese is guilty, nor are the brigands to be accused of this masterpiece in crime. Have you thought how far a man may go to obtain his heart's desire?"

She looked at him instantly, her eyes wide with growing comprehension, the solution to the mystery darting into her mind like a flash.

"You mean"—she began, stopping as if afraid to voice the suspicion.

"That Prince Gabriel is the man who bought your guards and hired Geddos and Ostrom to carry you to the place where he could own you, whether you would or no," said Lorry.

(Continued)

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