

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 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 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 signen 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. 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 Alpha a \$30,000,000. The creditor demands cash or the ceasing of the richest districts of Graustark. XIII.—The Prince of Alpha offers to extend the loan if the princess will marry his son Lorenz. Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen also bids for the princess's hand with offer of a loan. Yetive tells Lorry that she belongs to her people and will marry Lorenz.

With an exclamation of delight he resumed his position beside her. His



"Allode!" she cried in frantic terror

hand trembled as he took up hers to carry it to his lips. "We are children—playing with fire," he murmured, this ingrate, this fool!

She allowed her hand to lie limply in his, her head sinking to the back of the chair. When her hand was near his feverish lips, cool and white and trusting, he checked the upward progress. Slowly he raised his eyes to study her face, finding that hers were closed, the semblance of a smile touching her lips as if they were in a happy dream.

The lips! The lips! The lips! The madness of love rushed into his heart; the expectant hand was forgotten; his every hope and every desire measured itself against his discretion as he looked upon the tempting face. Could he kiss those lips but once his life would

be complete.

With a start she opened her eyes, doubtless at the command of the masterful ones above. The eyes of blue met the eyes of gray in a short, sharp struggle, and the blue went down in surrender. His lips triumphed slowly, drawing closer and closer as if restrained and impelled by the same emotion—arrogant love.

"Open your eyes, darling," he whispered, and she obeyed. Then their lips met—her first kiss of love!

She trembled from head to foot, perfectly powerless beneath the spell. Again he kissed a princess on her throne. At this second kiss her eyes grew wide with terror, and she sprang from his side, standing before him like one bereft of reason.

"Oh, my God! What have you done?" she wailed. He staggered to his feet, dizzy with joy.

"Ha!" cried a gruff voice from the doorway, and the guilty ones whirled to look upon the witness to their blissful crime. Inside the curtains, with carbine leveled at the head of the American, stood Allode, the guard, his face distorted with rage. The princess screamed and leaped between Lorry and the threatening carbine.

"Allode!" she cried in frantic terror. He angrily cried out something in his native tongue and she breathlessly, imploringly replied. Lorry did not understand their words, but he knew that she had saved him from death at the hand of her loyal, erring guard. Allode lowered his gun, bowed low and turned his back upon the throne.

"He—he would have killed you," she said tremulously, her face the picture of combined agony and relief. She remembered the blighting kisses and then the averted disaster.

"You—what did you say to him?" he asked.

"I—I—oh, I will not tell you!" she cried.

"I beg of you!"

"I told him that he was to—was to put down his gun."

"I know that, but why?" he persisted.

"I—ach, to save you, stupid!"

"How did you explain the—the?" He hesitated generously.

"I told him that I had not been—that I had not been—"

"Say it!"

"That I had not been—offended!" she gasped, standing stiff and straight, with eyes glued upon the obedient guard.

"You were not?" he rapturously cried.

"I said it only to save your life!" she cried, turning fiercely upon him. "I shall never forgive you—never! You must go—you must leave here at once! Do you hear? I cannot have you near me now; I cannot see you again. What have I given you the right to say of me?"

"Stop! It is as sacred as"—

"Yes, yes; I understand! I trust you, but you must go! Find some excuse to give your friend and go today! Go now!" she cried intensely, first putting her hands to her temples, then to her eyes.

Without waiting to hear his remonstrance, if indeed he had the power to utter one, she glided swiftly toward the curtains, allowing him to follow at

his will. Dazed and crushed at the sudden end to everything, he dragged his footsteps after. At the door she spoke in low, imperative tones to the motionless Allode, who dropped to his knees and muttered a reverential response. As Lorry passed beneath the hand that held the curtain aside he glanced at the face of the man who had been witness to their weakness. He was looking straight ahead, and from his expression it could not have been detected that he knew there was a man on earth save himself. In the hall she turned to him, her face cold and pale.

"I have faithful guards about me now. Allode has said he did not see you in the throneroom. He will die before he will say otherwise," she said, her lips trembling with shame.

"By your command?"

"By my request. I do not command my men to lie."

Side by side they passed down the quiet hall, silent, thoughtful, the strain of death upon their hearts.

"I shall obey the only command you have given, then. This day I leave the castle. You will let me come again—to see you? There can be no harm!"

"No! You must leave Graustark at once!" she interrupted, the tones low.

"I refuse to go! I shall remain in Edelweiss, near you, just so long as I feel that I may be of service to you."

"I cannot drive you out as I would a thief," she said pointedly.

At the top of the broad staircase he held out his hand and murmured:

"Goodby, your highness."

"Goodby," she said simply, placing her hand in his after a moment's hesitation. Then she left him.

An hour later the two Americans, one strangely subdued, the other curious, excited and impatient, stood before the castle waiting for the carriage. Count Halfont was with them, begging them to remain, as he could see no reason for the sudden leavetaking. Lorry assured him that they had trespassed long enough on the court's hospitality and that he would feel much more comfortable at the hotel. Anguish looked narrowly at his friend's face, but said nothing. He was beginning to understand.

"Let us walk to the gates. The count will oblige us by instructing the coachman to follow," said Lorry, eager to be off.

"Allow me to join you in the walk, gentlemen," said Count Caspar, immediately instructing a lackey to send the carriage after them. He and Lorry walked on together, Anguish lingering behind, having caught sight of the Countess Dagmar. That charming and unconventional piece of nobility promptly followed the prime minister's example and escorted the remaining guest to the gate.

Far down the walk Lorry turned for a last glance at the castle from which love had banished him. Yetive was standing on the balcony, looking not at the monastery, but at the exile.

She remained there long after the carriage had passed her gates bearing the Americans swiftly over the white Castle avenue, and there were tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XV. THE BETROTHAL.

HARRY Anguish was a discreet, forbearing fellow. He did not demand a full explanation of his friend. There was enough natural wit in his merry head to see that in connection with their departure there was something that would not admit of discussion even by confidential friends. He shrewdly formed his own conclusions and held his peace. Nor did he betray surprise when Lorry informed him in answer to a question that he intended to remain in Edelweiss for some time, adding that he could not expect him to do likewise if he preferred to return to Paris. But Mr. Anguish preferred to remain in

Edelweiss. Had not the Countess Dagmar told him she would always be happy to see him at the castle, and had he any reason to renounce its walls? And so it was that they tarried together.

Lorry loitered aimlessly, moodily, about the town, spending gloomy days and wretched nights. He reasoned that it were wisdom to fly, but a force stronger than reason held him in Edelweiss. He ventured several times to the castle wall, but turned back resolutely. There was hope in his breast that she might send for him. There was at least the possibility of seeing her should she ride through the streets. Anguish, on the other hand, visited the castle daily. He spent hours with the pretty countess, undismayed by the noble moths that fluttered about her flame, and he was ever persistent, light hearted and gay. He brought to Lorry's ears all that he could learn of the princess. Several times he had seen her and had spoken with her. She inquired casually after the health of his friend, but nothing more. From the countess he ascertained that her highness was sleeping soundly, eating heartily and apparently enjoying the best of spirits, information decidedly irritating to the one who received it second hand.

They had been at the hotel for over a week when one afternoon Anguish rushed into the room out of breath and scarcely able to control his excitement.

"What's up?" cried Lorry. "Has the countess sacked you?"

"Not on your coin! But something is up, and I am its discoverer. You remember what you said about suspecting Prince Gabriel of being the chief rascal in the abduction job? Well, my boy, I am now willing to stake my life that he is the man." The news bearer sat down on the edge of the bed and drew the first long breath he had had in a long time.

"Why do you think so?" demanded the other, all interest.

"Heard him talking just now. I didn't know who the fellow was at first, but he was talking to some strange looking soldiers as I passed. As soon as I heard his voice I knew he was Michael. There isn't any question about it, Lorry. I am positive. He did not observe me, but I suppose by this time he has learned that his little job was frustrated by two Americans who heard the plot near the castle gates. He has nerve to come here, hasn't he?"

"If he is guilty, yes. Still he may feel secure because he is a powerful prince and able to resent any accusation with a show of force. Where is he now?"

"I left him there. Come on. We'll go down, and you can see for yourself."

They hurried to the corridor, which was swarming with men in strange uniforms. There were a few Graustark officers, but the majority of the buzzing conversationalists were dressed in a rich gray uniform.

"Who are these strangers?" asked Lorry.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Prince Lorenz is also here, and these gray fellows are a part of his retinue. Lorenz has gone on to the castle. What's the matter?" Lorry had turned pale and was reaching for the wall with unsteady hand.

"He has come for his answer," he said slowly, painfully.

(Continued)

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