

GRAUSTARK

By...
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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SYNOPSIS

Chapter I.—Grenfell Lorry, a wealthy American globe trotter, stumbles into acquaintance with a charming foreign girl on the train from Denver to Washington. The pair are left behind when the first steps for repairs in West Virginia.

CHAPTER II.

LORRY waited very little time. He dashed into the depot and up to the operator's window.

"What's the nearest station west of here?"

"P—," leisurely answered the agent in some surprise.

"How far is it?"

"Four miles."

"Telegraph ahead and hold the train that just left here."

"The train doesn't stop there."

"It's got to stop there or there'll be more trouble than this road has had since it began running."

The conductor pulled out and left two of his men—gave wrong information—and he'll have to hold his train there or bring her back here. If you don't send that order, I'll report you as well as the conductor."

Grenfell's manner was commanding. The agent's impression was that he was important, that he had a right to give orders, but he hesitated.

"There's no way for you but to get to P— anyway," he said while turning the matter over in his mind.

"You stop that train! I'll get there inside of twenty minutes. Now, be quick! Wire them to hold her, or there'll be an accident from here on for some thirty day lay offs."

The agent stared at him, then turned to his instrument, and the message went forward. Lorry rushed out. On the platform he nearly ran over the hurrying figure in the tan coat.

"Fardon me, I'll explain things in a minute," he gasped and dashed away. Her troubled eyes blinked with astonishment.

At the end of the platform stood a mountain coach, along the sides of which was printed in yellow letters, "Happy Springs." The driver was climbing up to his seat, and the cumbersome trap was empty.

"Want to make \$10?" cried Grenfell.

"What say?" demanded the driver, half falling to the ground.

"Get me to P— inside of twenty minutes, and I'll give you \$10. Hurry tri! Answer!"

"Yes, but, you see, I'm tired to—"

"Oh, that's all right! You'll never make money easier. Can you get us there in twenty minutes?"

"It's four mile, pardner, and not very good road, either. Pile in, and we'll make it or kill old Hipp and Jim. Well, the train?"

"Get yourself ready for a race with an express train, and don't ask questions. Kill 'em both if you have to. I'll be back in a second!"

Back to the station he rode. She was standing near the door looking up at the track miserably. Already night was falling. Men were lighting the switch lanterns, and the mountains were turning into great dark shadows.

"Come quickly, I have a wagon out here."

Reluctantly she was hurried along and fairly shoved through the open door of the old looking coach. He was beside her on the seat in an instant, and her bewildered eyes heard him say:

"There like the very deuce!" Then the door slammed, and the driver clattered up to his seat, and the horses were off with a rush.

"Where are we going?" she demanded, sitting very straight and defiant.

"After that train. I'll tell you all about it when I get to P—. This is to be the quickest escape from a dilemma on record, provided it is an escape." By this time they were lurching along the flinty road at a lively rate, jolting about on the seat in a most disconcerting manner. After a few long, deep breaths he told her how the ride in the Springs hack had been conceived and of the arrangement he had made with the dispatcher. He, furthermore, acquainted her with the cause of his being left when he might have caught the train.

"Just as I reached the track, out of breath, but rejoicing, I remembered having seen you on that side street and knew that you would be left. It would have been heartless to leave you here without protection, so I for it my duty to let the train go and help you out of a very ugly predicament."

"How can I ever repay you?" she murmured. "It was so good and so thoughtful of you! Oh, I should have died had I been left alone! Do you not think my uncle will miss me and have the train sent back?" she went on eagerly.

"That's all," he exclaimed, somewhat disconcerted. "But I don't know, either. He may not miss you for a long time, thinking you are in some other car, you know. That could easily happen," triumphantly.

"It has been no trouble," he foundered. "An adventure like this is worth an end of—or—inconvenience, as you call it. I'm sure I must have lost my head completely, and I am ashamed of myself. How much anxiety I could have saved you had I been possessed of an ounce of brains!"

"Just let me allow you to say that. You would have me appear not grateful when I certainly am not. Ah, how he is driving! Do you think it dangerous?" she cried as the hack gave two or three wild lurches, throwing him into the corner and the girl half upon him.

"Not in the least," he gasped, the hack knocked out of his body. Just the same he was very much alarmed. It was as dark as pitch outside and he could not help wondering how near the edge of the mountain side they were running. A false move of the flying horse, and they might go rolling to the bottom of the ravine hundreds of feet below. Still he must not let her see his apprehension. "This fellow is considered the best driver in the mountains," he preyarated.

"Oh, then we need feel no alarm," she said, reassured.

"There was such a roaring and clattering that conversation became almost impossible. When either spoke, it was with the mouth close to the ear of the other. At such times Grenfell could feel her breath on his cheek. Her sweet voice went tingling to his toes with every word she uttered. He was in a daze, out of which came the mad wish that he might clasp her in his arms, kiss her and then go tumbling down the mountain. She trembled in the next few minutes, but gave forth no complaint. He knew that she was in terror, but too brave to murmur.

Unable to resist, he released the strap to which he had clung so grimly and placed his arms firm hand encouragingly over the little one that gripped his arm with the clutch of death. It was very dark and very lonely too.

"Oh," she cried as his hand clasped hers. "You must hold to the strap."

"It is broken," he lied gladly. "There is no danger. See my hand does not tremble, does it? Be calm! It cannot be much farther."

"Will it not be dreadful if the conductor refuses to stop?" she cried, her hand resting calmly beneath its protector. He detected a tone of security in her voice.

"But let us wait. Your uncle will see to it that even if the operator fails."

"My uncle will kill him if he does not stop or come back for me," she said complacently.

"I was not wrong," thought Grenfell. "He looks like a duelist. Who the devil are they, anyhow?" Then aloud: "At this rate we'd be able to beat the train to Washington in a straightaway race. Isn't it a delightful wild ride?"

"I have acquired a great deal of knowledge in America, but this is the first time I have heard your definition of delight. I agree that it is wild."

For some moments there was silence in the noisy conveyance. Outside, the track of the driver's whip, his hoarse cries and the nerve destroying crash of the wheels produced impressions of a mighty storm rather than of peace and pleasure.

"I am curious to know where you obtained the coin you lost in the car yesterday," she said at last, as if relieving her mind of a question that had been long troubling her.

"The one you so kindly found for me?" he asked procrastinatingly.

"Yes. They are certainly rare in this country."

"I never saw a coin like it until after I had seen you," he confessed. He felt her arm press his a little tighter, and there, the train to Washington in a straightaway race. Isn't it a delightful wild ride?"

"I believe I thought as much at the time. Oh, confound this road!" For half a mile or more the road had been fairly level, but, as the elevation increased, a rough place had been reached. It was a bump back to the corner of the road, and a sharp movement of some kind. The pain was almost unbearable, but it was caused by the fact that she had voluntarily thrown her arm across his chest, her hand grasping his shoulder spasmodically.

"Oh, we shall be killed," she half shrieked. "Can you not stop this? This is madness—madness!"

"I'm a bit calm! I was to blame, for I had been careless. He is earning his money; that's all. It was not stipulated in the contract that he was to consider the comfort of his passengers." Grenfell could feel himself turn pale as something warm began to trickle down his neck. "Now, tell me which dispatch it was. I read all of them."

"You did? Of what interest could they have been?"

"Curiously does not recognize reason."

"You read every one of them?"

"Assuredly."

"Then I shall grant you the right to guess which interested me the most. You Americans delight in puzzles, I am told."

"Now, that is unfair."

"So it is. Did you read the dispatch from Constantinople?" Her arm fell to her side suddenly as if she had just realized his position.

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In my purse there are several at this minute."

"Isn't it strange that this particular coin should have reminded you of home?"

"You have no right to question me, sir," she said coldly, drawing away, only to be lured back again. In spite of herself she laughed audibly.

"By your pardon," he said tantalizingly.

"When did he give it you?"

"The porter, sir."

"You have no right to question me," he said.

"Oh," she gasped. "I did not mean to be impudic."

"But I grant the right. He gave it me inside of two hours after I first entered the car."

"At Denver?"

"How do you know I got on at Denver?"

"Why you passed me in the aisle with your luggage. Don't you remember?"

Did he remember! His heart almost turned over with the joy of knowing that she had really noticed and remembered him. Involuntarily his glad fingers closed down upon the gloved hand that lay upon his knee.

"I believe I do remember, now that you speak of it," he said in a stifled voice. "You were standing at a window."

"Yes, and I saw you kissing those ladies good-by. Was one of them your wife, or were they all your sisters?"

"They were—cousins," he informed her confusedly, recalling an incident that had been forgotten. He had kissed Mary Lyons and Edna Burge, but their brothers were present.

"A foolish habit, isn't it?"

"I do not know. I have no grown cousins," she replied demurely. "You Americans have such funny customs, though. Where I live no gentleman would think of pressing a lady's hand until it pained her. Is it necessary?"

In the question there was a quiet dignity, half submission in scorn, so potent, so unmistakable, that he flushed, turned cold with mortification and hastily released the nervous fingers.

"I crave your pardon. It is such a strain to hold myself and you against the rolling of this wagon that I unconsciously gripped your hand harder than I knew. You—you will not mind my having done so?"

"I could not misunderstand something that does not exist," she said simply, proudly.

"By Jove, she's beyond comparison!" he thought.

"You have explained, and I am sorry I spoke as I did. I shall not again forget how much I owe you."

"Your indebtedness, if there be one, does not deprive you of the liberty to speak to me as you will. You could not say anything unjust without asking my forgiveness, and when you do that you more than pay the debt. It is worth a great deal to me to hear you say that you owe something to me, for I only too glad to be your creditor. If there is a debt, you shall never pay it. It is too pleasant an account to be settled with 'you're welcome.' If you insist that you owe much to me, I shall refuse to cancel the debt and allow it to draw interest forever."

"What a duelist," she cried. "That just was worthy of a courier's deepest dexterity. Let me say that I am proud to owe you a gratitude to you. You will not permit it to grow less."

"That was either irony or the prettiest speech a woman ever uttered," he said warmly. "I also am curious about something. You were reading over my shoulder in the express car?"

"I was not," she exclaimed indignantly. "How did you know that?"

He innocently went on.

"You forgot the mirror in the opposite side of the car."

"Ach! Now I am offended!"

"With a poor old offender? For shame! Yet, in the name of our American glory, I ask your forgiveness. It shall not happen again. You will admit that you were trying to read over my shoulder. Thanks for that immodest nod. Well, I am curious to know what you were so eager to read."

"Since you presume to believe the mirror instead of me, I will tell you. There was a dispatch on the first page that interested me deeply."

"I believe I thought as much at the time. Oh, confound this road!" For half a mile or more the road had been fairly level, but, as the elevation increased, a rough place had been reached. It was a bump back to the corner of the road, and a sharp movement of some kind. The pain was almost unbearable, but it was caused by the fact that she had voluntarily thrown her arm across his chest, her hand grasping his shoulder spasmodically.

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"You did? Of what interest could they have been?"

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"The one that told of the French ambassador's visit to the Sultan?"

"Concerning the small matter of a loan of some millions—yes. Well, that was of interest to me inasmuch as the loan, if made, will affect my country."

"Will you tell me what country you are from?"

"I am from Graustark."

"Yes; but I don't remember where that is."

"Is it possible that your American schools do not teach geography? Ours tell us where the United States is located."

"I confess ignorance."

"Then I shall insist that you study a map. Graustark is small, but I am as proud of it as you are of this great continent. It reaches from ocean to ocean. I can scarcely wait until I again see our dear crags and valleys, our rivers and ever blue skies, our plains and our towns. I wonder if you worship your country as I love mine."

"From the tenor of your remarks I judge that you have a very fierce love for your native land."

"We have seen something of Asia, Australia, Mexico and the United States since we left Edelweiss six months ago. Now we are going home—home!" She uttered the word so longingly, so longingly, so tenderly, that he smiled the housewrecker.

There was a long break in the conversation, both evidently wrapped in thought which could not be disturbed by the whirl of the coach. He was wondering how he could give her up, now that she had been tossed into his keeping so strangely. She was asking herself and over again how so thrilling an adventure would end.

They were so tired and fatigued with the strain on nerve and flesh. It was an experience never to be forgotten, this romantic ride over the wild mountain road, the result still in doubt. Ten minutes ago—strangers, now—friends at least, neither knowing the other.

"Surely we must be almost at the end of this awful ride," she murmured, yielding completely to the long suppressed alarm. "Every bone in my body aches. What shall we do if they have not held the train?"

"Send for an undertaker," he replied grimly, seeing policy in jest. They were now ascending an incline, bumping over bowlders, hurtling through treacherous ruts and water washed holes, rolling, swaying, jerking, crashing. "You have been brave all along. Don't give up now. It is almost over. You'll soon be with your friends."

"How can I be with my friends, gripping his arm once more. Again his hand dropped upon hers and closed gently."

"I wish that I could do a thousand times as much for you," he said thrillingly, her disheveled hair touching his face, so close were his lips. "Ah, the lights of the town!" he cried an instant later. "Look!"

He held her so that she could peer through the rattling glass window. Close at hand, higher up the steep, many lights were twinkling against the blackness.

Almost before they realized how near they were to the lights the horses began to slacken their speed, a moment later coming to a standstill. The awful ride was over.

"The train, the train!" she cried in ecstasy. "Here, on the other side! Thank heaven!"

He could not speak for the joyful relief that drenched his heart almost to slacken their speed, a moment later coming to a standstill. The awful ride was over.

"Here's your man!" he exclaimed, gripping her arm once more. Again his hand dropped upon hers and closed gently.

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eyes sparkling. She stood straight and firm, her chin in the air, her hands in the folds of her skirt. The little traveling cap was on the side of her head, her hair was loose and very much awry, strands straying here, curls blowing there in utter confusion. Lorry gazed with admiration for the loveliness that would not be vanquished.

"We came like the wind. I shall never forget it," she said.

"But how could you have remained there, child? Tell me how it happened. We have been frantic!" said her aunt, half in English, half in German.

"Not now, dear Aunt Yvonne. See my hair! That's a fright I must beportune make, your hair cannot be so surely as mine. Oh!" The exclamation was one of alarm. In an instant she was at his side, peering with terrified eyes at the bloodstains on his neck and face. "Hedrick—quick! Attend him! Come to my room at once. You are suffering. Attend to him!"

She dragged him to the door of her section before he could interpose a remonstrance.

"It is nothing—a mere scratch. Bumped my head against the side of the coach. Please don't worry about it. I can care for myself. Really, it doesn't hurt."

"But it does. It has bled terribly. Sit there! Now, Hedrick, some water. Hedrick rushed off and was back in a moment with a basin of water, a sponge and a towel, and before Grenfell fully knew what was happening he was being bathed by her hand.

The others looking on anxiously, the young lady apprehensively, her hands clasped before her as she bent over to inspect the wound above his ear.

"It is quite an ugly cut," said Uncle Caspar critically. "Does it pain you, sir?"

"Not a great deal," answered Lorry, closing his eyes comfortably. It was all very pleasant, he thought.

"Should it not have aches, Uncle Caspar?" asked the sweet, eager voice.

"I think not. The flow is stanching. If the gentleman will allow Hedrick to clean the wound with a little antiseptic, then bandage it I think the wound will give him no trouble. The old man gave slowly and in very good English.

"Really, uncle, is it not serious?"

"No, no," interposed Grenfell Lorry. "I knew it was a trifle. You cannot break an American's head. Let me go to my room and I'll be ready to prevent myself as good as new in ten minutes."

"You must let Hedrick bandage your head," she insisted. "Go with him, Hedrick."

Grenfell arose and started toward his section, followed by Hedrick.

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Boundry Board

Notice is hereby given that the District Boundry Board of Josephine County, Oregon, will meet in the court house in the afternoon on January 7, 1904 to act on a petition now on file to change the boundary line of school district No. 38 and No. 7, so as to include the following described territory in school district No. 7, of Josephine County: Commencing at the point where the center line of Sec. 10, Township 38 North, Range 5 West of William & Meridian, touches Rogue River, thence running south on said line to the corner in the center of section 30 of same township and range, thence east one mile to the center of Sec. 29, thence North on the line in the center of sections 29 and 30 to the corner in the center of section 30 of same township and range, thence east one mile to the place of beginning.

LINCOLN SAVAGE,
County Supt. and Sec'y of Board.
Done at Grants Pass, Oregon, Dec. 5, 1903.

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