

TRUXTON KING

A Story of ... Graustark

By GEORGE BARR M'GUTCHEON

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CHAPTER XII

mean? Forgive me! I see now. You are bound; you are suffering; you are years older. What have you done? What have I done? "Don't shrink from me," he urged. "Try to calm yourself." Then, with the utmost gentleness, he persuaded her to rise and walk about the little room with him. "It will give you courage," he urged. "Poor little girl!" She looked up into his face, a new light coming into her eyes. "Don't talk now," he said softly. "Take your time. Hold to my arm, please. There!" For five or ten minutes he led her back and forth across the room very tenderly. At first she was faint and uncertain; then, as her strength and wits came back to her, courage took the place of despair. She smiled wanly and asked him to sit down with her. "Where are we? What is it all about?" she asked. "Not so loud," he cautioned. "I'll be perfectly candid with you. You'll have to be very, very brave. But wait! Perhaps it will be easier for you to tell me what has happened to you, so far as you know. I can throw light on the whole situation, I think." She became more excited. Her eyes flashed; she spoke rapidly. On the morning of the 23d she had gone for her gallop in the famous Ganlook road, attended by two faithful grooms from the royal stables. "I was in for a longer ride than usual," she said, with sudden constraint. She looked away from her eager listener. "I was nervous and had not slept the night before. A girl never does, I suppose." He looked askance. "Yes?" he queried. She was blushing, he was sure of it. "I mean a girl is always nervous and distrustful after—after she has promised, don't you see?" "No; I don't see." "I had promised Count Vos Engo the night before that I— Oh, but it really has nothing to do with the story. I— Truxton was actually glaring at her. "You mean that you had promised to marry Count Vos Engo?" he stammered. "How very strangely you talk! Are you sure—I mean, do you think it is fever? One suffers so?" He sighed deeply. "Well, that's over! Whew! It was a dream, by Jove!" She waited a moment and then, looking down, said very gently, "I'm so sorry for you." Then she resumed her story. She had gone six or eight miles down the Ganlook road when she came up with five troopers of the royal guard. One of the troopers came forward and respectfully requested her to turn off into another road until a detachment passed. In charge of a gang of desperadoes taken at the inn of the Hawk and Raven the night before. Unsuspecting, she rode off into the forest lane for several hundred yards. It was a trap. The men were not troopers, but brigands got up in the uniform of the guard. Once away from the main highway, they made prisoners of her and the two grooms. Then followed a long ride through roads new to her. When night came they were high in the mountains back of the monastery, many hours ahead of any pursuit. They became stupidly careless, and the two grooms made a dash for freedom. One of them was killed, but one had escaped. Some time during the slow, torturing ride through the forest she awoke. When she came to her senses she was in a dimly lighted room, surrounded by men. The guard had been removed from her mouth. She would have shrieked out in her terror had not her gaze rested upon the figure of a man who sat opposite, his elbows on the back of the chair which he straddled, his chin on his arms. He was staring at her steadily, his black eyes catching her gaze and holding it as a snake holds the bird it has charmed. She recognized the hard, hawklike face. There could be no mistake. She was looking into the face that made the portrait of the Iron Count so abhorrent to her—the leathery head of a cadaver with eyes that lived. She broke down and cried herself into the sleep of exhaustion. All the next day she sat limp and helpless in the chair they had brought to her. She could neither eat nor drink. Late in the afternoon Marianx came again. She knew not from whence he came; he stood before her suddenly as if produced by the magic of some fabled genie, smiling blandly, his hands clasped behind his back, his attitude one of designing calculation. "He laughed when I demanded that he should restore me to my friends. He chided me when I pleaded and begged for mercy. My questions were never answered. Where am I, Mr. King? Oh, this dreadful place! Why are you here—you and I?" King's heart throbbled fiercely once more. A vast hunger possessed his soul. In that moment he could have laid down his life for her with a smile of rejoicing. Then he told her why she was there, why he was there and of the 29th—the dreadful 29th! "God in heaven!" she repeated over and over again in a piteous whisper. The light was going out. "Quick!" he cried. "The candle! Light a fresh one. My hands are bound." She crept to the candles and joined the wicks. A new light grew as the old one died. Then she stood erect, looking down upon him. "You are bound. I forgot." She started forward, dropping to her knees beside him, an eager gleam in her eyes. "If I can untie the rope—will that help? There must be one little chance for you—for us. Let me try." "By Jove," he whispered admiringly, his spirits leaping to meet hers, "you've got pluck. You put new life in me. I— I was almost a— a quitter." At last, after many despairing tugs, the knot relaxed. "There!" she cried, sinking back exhausted. "Oh, how it must have hurt you! Your wrists are raw!" His arms were stiff and sore and hung like lead at his sides. She watched him with narrowed eyes while he stood off and tried to work blood and strength back into his muscles. "Do you think you can—can do anything now, Mr. King?" she asked after a long interval. "We must escape," she said as if it were all settled. "It cannot be tonight," he gently informed her, a sickness attacking his heart. "Don't you think you'd better try to get some sleep?" He prevailed upon her to lie down, with his coat for a pillow. In two minutes she was asleep. For an hour or more he sat there looking sorrowfully at the tired, sweet face, the utmost despair in his soul. At last he stretched himself out on the floor near the door, and as he went to sleep he prayed that Providence might open a way for him to prove that she was not depending on him in vain. (To Be Continued.)

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\$150 AN ACRE—270 acres, foothill land, about 6 miles from Medford; there are about 85 acres on this place now planted to fruit, which includes about 26 acres in bearing. The bearing varieties are Newtown and Spitzberg apples and Comice pears. There are 25 acres of Newtowns in their second year with peach fillers and about 6 acres of Newtowns just planted; also 20 acres of Jonathans and 10 acres of Bartlett and Anjou pears just planted. About 200 acres of first-class fruit land on the place. There are many springs on the place and considerable water could be developed for irrigation; two houses, good barn and other buildings. Would subdivide nicely. Easy terms. \$2500—Sixty acres, 6 miles from Medford, about 15 acres cleared and partly planted; small buildings. \$250 AN ACRE—70 acres, about 4 miles from Medford, free soil; 25 acres planted to Newtown and Spitzberg apples, mostly 3 years old; in addition, about 25 acres under cultivation, balance easily cleared; good new 6-room plastered house, new barn; also set of old buildings. Could be subdivided into two or three tracts nicely. easy terms. \$5500—Six miles from Medford, good new buildings, about 8 acres planted to Newtowns, Spitzbergs and pears, 1 and 2 years old; about 7 acres additional cleared, balance not hard clearing; good team, wagon and machinery goes with the place. This is a 40-acre tract. \$15,000—This price holds till April 1 only; 47 1/2 acres, close to Central Point, good new buildings, level land, all first-class fruit and alfalfa land. This tract has about 7 acres in alfalfa and the balance is all planted as follows: Eight acres Comice in fourth season, 2 acres Newtowns in third season, 5 acres Bartlett in third season, 3 acres Winter Nelis in third season, 9 acres Newtowns and 1 acre Spitz in second season, 6 acres Bartlett in second season, balance just planted. The price quoted is but a trifle more than \$300 an acre, which is very much less than owners are asking for adjoining land. \$12,525—Eleven acres in Comice pears, 10 years old; 9 acres in Bartlett and Anjou pears, 1 to 3 years old; close in; good soil; terms. \$12,000—Eleven acres in Comice and Bose pears, 14 years old; these trees are in full bearing and will pay a good income on the price asked. \$7000—Thirty-five acres of black sticky, 3 miles from Medford, all under the ditch and can be irrigated. \$13,000—Thirty-two acres, close to Medford, 8 acres in Newtowns and Spitzbergs, 5 to 7 years of age; 14 acres in alfalfa, 3 acres in peaches, 2 acres in berries; irrigated; buildings. \$14,000—Thirty-five acres; buildings; exceptionally fine place for a home; 12 acres in apples and pears 3 years old; about an acre of bearing orchard; 11 acres in alfalfa; all fine deep free soil. \$150 to \$200 PER ACRE—Stewart acre tracts; 2 miles from Medford; tracts are from 10 to 25 acres in size; fine building spots on all; can all be irrigated; cheapest tracts in Medford neighborhood; easy terms. \$300 PER ACRE—Finest 5 and 10-acre orchard and garden tracts in the valley; easy terms.

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