

GREEN FANCY
 BY **GEORGE BARR**
MC CUTCHEON

Author of "GRAUSTARK," "THE HOLLOW OF HER HAND," "THE PRINCE OF GRAUSTARK," ETC.

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"Without divulging the name of the house I will say that its sympathies have been from the outset friendly to the entente allies—especially with France. There are two branches of the ruling family, one in power, the other practically in exile. The state is a small one, but its integrity is of the highest. Its sons and daughters have married into the royal families of nearly all of the great nations of the continent. The present—or I should say, the late ruler, for he died on a field of battle not many months ago, had no direct heir. He was young and unmarried. I am not permitted to state with what army he was fighting, nor on which front he



"Six Months Ago a Royal House Was Despoiled of Its Crown Jewels, Seal and Charter."

was killed. It is only necessary to say that his little state was gobbled up by the Teutonic allies. The branch of the family mentioned as being in exile lent its support to the cause of Germany, not for moral reasons but in the hope and with the understanding, I am to believe, that the crown lands would be the reward. The direct heir to the crown is a cousin of the late prince. He is now a prisoner of war in Austria. Other members of the family are held by the Bulgarians as prisoners of war. It is not stretching the imagination very far to picture them as already dead and out of the way. At the close of the war, if Germany is victorious, the crown will be placed upon the head of the pretender branch. Are you following me?"

"Yes," said Barnes, his nerves tingling. He was beginning to see a great light.

"Almost under the noses of the forces left by the Teutonic allies to hold the invaded territory the crown jewels, charter and so forth, heretofore mentioned, as they say in legal parlance, were surreptitiously removed from the palace and spirited away by persons loyal to the ruling branch of the family. As I have stated, I am engaged in the effort to recover them."

"Now we come to the present situation. Some months ago a member of the aforesaid royal house arrived in this country by way of Japan. He is a distant cousin of the crown, and in a way remotely looked upon as the heir apparent. Later on he sequestered himself in Canada. Our agents in Europe learned but recently that while he pretends to be loyal to the ruling house he is actually scheming against it. I have been ordered to run him to earth, for there is every reason to believe that the men who secured the treasure have been duped into regarding him as the avowed champion of the crown. Now, Mr. Barnes, without telling you how I have arrived at the conclusion, I am prepared to state that I believe this man to be at Green Fancy, and that in time the look-to-us-a-harsh-word-will be delivered to him there. I am here to get it, one way or another, when that comes to pass."

"What led you to suspect that he is at Green Fancy, Mr. Sprouse?"

"History. It is known that this Mr. Curtis has spent a great deal of time in the country alluded to. As a matter of fact, his son, who lived in London, had rather extensive business interests there. This son was killed in the Balkan war several years ago. It is said that the man I am looking for was a friend of young Curtis, who married a Miss O'Dowd in London—the Honorable Miss O'Dowd, daughter of an Irish peer and sister of the chap you have met at Green Fancy. About six weeks ago a former enquire in the

royal household arrived in New York. Through him I learned that the daughter of the gentleman in whose house the senior Mr. Curtis was a frequent guest had been in the United States since some time prior to the beginning of the war. She was visiting friends in the States and has been unable to return to her own land, for reasons that must be obvious. I may as well confess that her father was, by marriage, an uncle of the late ruler.

"Since the invasion and overthrow of her country by the Teutonic allies she has been endeavoring to raise money here for the purpose of equipping and supporting the remnants of the small army that fought so valiantly in defense of the crown. These men, a few thousand only, are at present interned in a neutral country. I leave you to guess what will happen if she succeeds in supplying them with arms and ammunition. Her work is being carried on with the greatest secrecy. To bring the story to a close, I was instructed to keep close watch on the man O'Dowd. I traced him to this place. I was on the point of reporting to my superiors that he was in no way associated with the much-sought-after crown-cousin, and that Green Fancy was as free from taint as the village chapel, when out of a clear sky and almost under my very nose two men were mysteriously done away with at the very gates of the place. The killing of those two men changed the aspect completely. You will certainly agree with me after I have explained to you that the one known as Andrew Roon was no other than the enquire who had undertaken to find the young woman."

Barnes drew a long breath. His mind was made up. He had decided to pool issues with the secret agent, but not until he was convinced that the result of their co-operation would in no way inflict a hardship upon the young woman who had appealed to him for help. He was certain that she was the fair propagandist described by Sprouse.

"And the young woman, what of her? She would, in any case, be held for examination and—"

"My dear sir, I may as well tell you now that she is a loyal subject, and, far from being in bad grace at court, is an object of extreme solicitude to the ambassador. From what I can gather she has disappeared completely. Roon was sent over here for the sole purpose of finding her and inducing her to return with him to Paris."

"And to take the treasure with her, I suppose," said Barnes dryly.

"Naturally."

"Well," began Barnes, introducing a harsh note into his voice. "I should say that if she is guilty of receiving this stolen property she ought to be punished. Jail is the place for her, Mr. Sprouse."

Sprouse put down his coffee cup rather suddenly. A queer pallor came into his face.

"You do not understand the situation. Haven't I made it plain to you that she is innocent of any intent to do wrong?"

"You have said so, Mr. Sprouse, but your idea of wrong and mine may not file."

"There cannot be two ways of looking at it, sir," said Sprouse, after a moment. "She could do no wrong."

Whereupon Barnes reached his hand across the table and laid it on Sprouse's. His eyes were dancing.

"That's just what I want to be sure about," he said. "It was my way of finding out your intentions concerning her."

"What do you mean?"

"Come with me to my room," said Barnes, suppressing his excitement. "I think I can tell you where she is—and a great deal more that you ought to know."

In the little room upstairs he told the whole story. The little man listened without so much as a single word of interruption or interrogation. Somewhat breathlessly Barnes came to the end.

"And now, Mr. Sprouse, what do you make of it all?" he inquired.

Sprouse leaned back in his chair, suddenly relaxing. "I am completely at sea," he said, and Barnes looked at him in surprise.

"By Jove, I thought it would all be as clear as day to you. Here is your man, and also your woman, and the traveling bag full of—"

"Right you are," interrupted Sprouse. "That is all simple enough. But, my dear Barnes, can you tell me what Mr. Secretary Loeb's real name is? Why has he established himself so close to the Canadian line, and why the mobilization? I refer to his army of hussars."

"He's apparent really have some sort of a bodyguard, don't they?"

Sprouse was staring thoughtfully at the ceiling. When he finally lowered his eyes it was to favor Barnes with a deep, inscrutable smile.

"I dare say the first thing for me to do is to advise the Canadian authorities to keep a sharp lookout along the border."

CHAPTER XII.
The First Wayfarer Accepts an Invitation.

Barnes insisted that the first thing to be considered was the release of Miss Cameron.

"If we can't think of any other way to get her out of this devilish predicament, Sprouse, I shall apply to Washington for help."

"And be laughed at, my friend," said the secret agent. "It is not a matter for the government to meddle in at all."

"Well, something has to be done at once," said Barnes doggedly. "She is depending on me. If you could have seen the light that leaped into her glorious eyes when I—"

"Yes, I know. I've heard she is quite a pretty girl. You needn't—"

"Quite a pretty girl!" exclaimed Barnes. "Why, she is the loveliest thing that God ever created. She has the face of—"

"I am beginning to understand O'Dowd's interest in her, Mr. Barnes. He has probably fallen in love with her with as little difficulty as you have experienced, and almost as expeditiously. He has seen a little more of her than you, but—"

"Don't talk nonsense. I'm not in love with her."

"Can you speak with equal authority for Mr. O'Dowd? He is a very susceptible Irishman, I am told."

"I don't believe he will get much encouragement from her, Mr. Sprouse," said Barnes slyly.

"If she is as clever as I think she is she will encourage him tremendously. I would if I were in her place. Mr. O'Dowd is only human. He isn't immune."

"I catch the point, Mr. Sprouse," said Barnes, rather gloomily. He did not like to think of the methods that might have to be employed in the subjugation of Mr. O'Dowd. "There is a rather important question I'd like to ask. Is she even remotely eligible to her country's throne?"

"Remotely, yes," said Sprouse.

"So remotely that she could marry a chap like O'Dowd without giving much thought to future complications?" he ventured.

"She'd be just as safe in marrying O'Dowd as she would in marrying you," was Sprouse's unsatisfactory response. The man's brow was wrinkled in thought. "See here, Mr. Barnes, I am planning a visit to Green Fancy tonight. How would you like to accompany me?"

"I'd like nothing better," said Barnes, with enthusiasm.

"Will you agree to obey instructions? I can't have you muddling things up, you know."

"The grounds are carefully guarded," said Barnes, after they had discussed the project for some time. "Miss Cameron is constantly under the watchful eye of one or more of the crowd."

"I know. I passed a couple of them last night," said Sprouse calmly. "By the way, don't you think it would be very polite of you to invite the Green Fancy party over here to have an old-fashioned country dinner with you tonight?"

"It would be useless, Mr. Sprouse. They will not come."

"I am perfectly aware of that, but it won't do any harm to ask them, will it?"

Barnes chuckled. "I see. Establishing myself as an innocent bystander, eh?"

"Get O'Dowd on the telephone and ask him if they can come," said Sprouse.

"But there is Jones to consider. The telephone is in his office. What will he think—"

"Jones is all right," said Sprouse briefly. "Come along. You can call up from my room." He grinned slyly. "Such a thing as tapping the wire, you know."

Sprouse had installed a telephone in his room, carrying a wire upstairs from an attachment made in the cellar of the Tavern. He closed the door to his little room on the top floor.

"With the landlord's approval," he explained, pointing to the instrument, "but unknown to the telephone company, you may be sure. Call him up about half past ten. O'Dowd may be up at this ungodly hour, but not she. Now I must be off to discuss literature with Mrs. Jim Cooley. The hardest part of my job is to keep her from subscribing for a set of Dickens. Conley's house is not far from Green Fancy, Savvy?"

Barnes, left to his own devices, wandered from taproom to porch, from porch to forge, from forge to taproom, his brain far more active than his legs, his heart as heavy as lead and as light as air by turns. More than once he felt like resorting to a well-known expedient to determine whether he was awake or dreaming. Could all this be real?

"So valuable a life, but as for the rest of the party, they begged him to say they were sorry to hear of the expected death of so promising a chap and that, while they couldn't come to his funeral, in short, it would be impossible for them to accept his kind invitation. The Irishman was so gay and good-humored that Barnes took hope."

"By the way, O'Dowd, I'd like to speak with Miss Cameron if she can come to the telephone."

"Don't be surprised if you are cut off suddenly. The coast is clear for the moment, but— Here, Miss Cameron. Careful now."

Her voice, soft and clear and trembling with eagerness, caressed Barnes' eager ear.

"Mr. O'Dowd will see that no evil befalls me here, but he refuses to help me to get away. I quite understand and appreciate his position. I cannot ask him to go so far as that. Help



"Hello! How Are You This Morning?"

will have to come from the outside. It will be dangerous—terribly dangerous—"

"You say O'Dowd will not assist you to escape?"

"He urges me to stay here and take my chances. He believes that everything will turn out well for me in the end, but I am frightened. I must get away from this place."

"Then keep your eyes and ears open for the next night or two. Can you tell me where your room is located?"

"It is on the first floor; the first of the two windows in my room is the third to the right of the entrance. I am confident that someone is stationed below my windows all night long."

"You still insist that I am not to call on the authorities for help?"

"Yes, yes! That must not even be considered. I have not only myself to consider, Mr. Barnes. I am a very small atom in—"

"All right! We'll get along without them," he said cheerily. "Afterward we will discuss the importance of atoms."

"And your reward as well, Mr. Barnes," she said. Her voice trailed off into an indistinct murmur. He heard the receiver click on the hook, and after calling "hello" twice hung up his own with a sigh. Evidently O'Dowd had warned her of the approach of a less considerate person than himself.

CHAPTER XIII.
The Second Wayfarer Receives Two Visitors at Midnight.

The coroner's inquest over the bodies of Roon and Paul was held that afternoon at St. Elizabeth. Witnesses from Hart's Tavern were among those to testify. The verdict was "Murder at the hands of parties unknown."

Sprouse did not appear at the Tavern until long after nightfall. The secret agent listened somewhat indifferently to the latter's account of his telephone experiences. At nine o'clock he yawned prodigiously and announced that he was going to bed, greatly to the surprise of Mr. Barnes, who followed him from the taproom and demanded an explanation.

"People usually go to bed at night, don't they?" said Sprouse patiently. "It is expected, I believe."

"But, my dear man, we are to undertake—"

"I have some cause for believing that one of those chaps in there is from Green Fancy. Go to bed at ten o'clock, my friend, and put out your light. I don't insist on your taking off your clothes, however. I will rap on your door at eleven o'clock. By the way, don't forget to stick your revolver in your pocket."

A few minutes before eleven there came a gentle tapping on Barnes' door. He sprang to his feet and opened it, presenting himself before Sprouse fully dressed and, as the secret agent said later on, "fit to kill."

The light was as black as pitch. Barnes, trusting to the little man's eyes and hanging close upon his coat-tails, followed blindly but gallantly in the tracks of the leader. It seemed to him that they stumbled along parallel to the road for miles before Sprouse came to a halt. "This is the short cut to Green Fancy," he whispered, laying his hand on Barnes' arm. "We save four or five miles, coming this way. Do you know where we are?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

"About a quarter of a mile below Curtis' house. Are you all right?"

"Fine as a fiddle, except for a barked knee and a skinned elbow, a couple of more or less busted ribs. I've banged into more trees than—"

"Sh!" After a moment of silence, intensified by the mournful squawk of night birds and the chorus of katydids, Sprouse whispered, "Did you hear that?"

Barnes thrilled. This was real melodrama. "Hear what?" he whispered slyly.

"Listen!" After a second or two: "There!"

"It's a woodpecker hammering on the limb of a—"

"Woodpeckers don't hammer at night, my lad. Don't stir! Keep your ears open."

Sprouse clutched his companion's arm and, dropping to his knees in the thick underbrush, pulled the other down after him.

Presently heavy footsteps approached. An unseen pedestrian passed within ten yards of them. They scarcely breathed until the sounds passed entirely out of hearing. Sprouse put his lips close to Barnes' ear.

"Telegraph," he whispered. "It's a system they have of reporting to each other. There are two men patrolling the grounds near the house. You see what we're up against, Barnes. Do you still want to go on with it?"

"I'll stay by you," replied Barnes sturdily.

Several minutes went by. There was not a sound save the restless patter of rain in the tree tops. At last the faraway thud of footsteps came to the ears of the tense listener. They drew nearer, louder, and once more seemed to be approaching the very spot where he crouched.

Then came the sound of a dull, heavy blow, a hoarse gasp, a momentary commotion in the shrubbery, and—again silence. Barnes' blood ran cold. He waited for the next footfall of the passing man. It never came.

A sharp whisper reached his ears. "Come here—quick!"

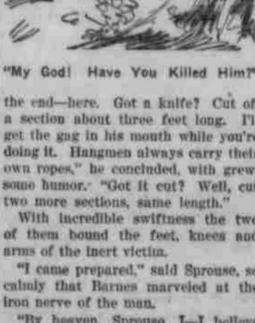
He floundered through the brush and almost fell prostrate over the kneeling figure of a man.

"Take care! Lend a hand," whispered Sprouse.

Dropping to his knees, Barnes felt for and touched what, coarse garments, and gasped:

"My God! Have you killed him?"

"Temporarily," said Sprouse, between his teeth. "Here, unwind the rope I've got around my waist. Take



"My God! Have You Killed Him?"

the end—here. Got a knife? Cut off a section about three feet long. I'll get the gag in his mouth while you're doing it. Hangmen always carry their own ropes." he concluded, with greivous humor. "Got it cut? Well, cut two more sections, same length."

With incredible swiftness the two of them bound the feet, knees and arms of the inert victim.

"I came prepared," said Sprouse, so calmly that Barnes marveled at the iron nerve of the man.

"By heaven, Sprouse, I—I believe he's dead. We—we haven't any right to kill a—"

"Don't be flincky," snapped Sprouse. "It wasn't much of a crack, and it was necessary." Straightening up, with a sigh of satisfaction, he laid his hand on Barnes' shoulder. "We've just got to go through with it now, Barnes. We'll never get another chance. Putting that fellow out of business quells us forever afterward." He dropped to his knees and began searching over the ground with his hands. "Here it is. You can't see it, of course, so I'll tell you what it is. A nice little block of sandalwood. I've already got his nice little hammer, so we'll see what we can raise in the way of wireless chit-chat."

Without the slightest hesitation he struck a succession of quick, confident blows upon the block of wood.

"By gad, you are a wonder!"

"Wait till tomorrow before you say that," replied Sprouse, sententiously. "Come along now. Stick to the trail. We've got to land the other one."

Turning sharply to the right, Sprouse guided his companion through the brush for some distance, and once more came to a halt. Again he stole on ahead, and as before the slow, confident, even careless progress of a man ceased as abruptly as that of the comrade who lay helpless in the thicket below.

Barnes laid a firm, detaining hand on the man's shoulder.

"See here, Sprouse," he whispered, "it's all very well for you, knocking men over like this, but just what is your object? What does all this lead up to?"

Sprouse broke in, and there was not the slightest trace of emotion in his whisper.

"Quite right. You ought to know. I suppose you thought I was bringing you up here for a Romeo and Juliet tete-a-tete with the beautiful Miss Cameron—and for nothing else. Well, in a way, you are right. But, first of all, my business is to recover the crown jewels and parchments. I am going into that house and take them away from the man you know as Loeb, if he has them. If he hasn't them my work here is a failure."

"Going into the house?" gasped Barnes. "Why, my God, man, that is impossible. You would be shot down as an ordinary burglar and—the law would justify them for killing you. I must insist—"

"I am not asking you to go into the house, my friend. I shall go alone," said Sprouse coolly.

"On the other hand, I came up here to rescue a helpless—"

"Keep cool! It's the only way. Now listen. She has designated her room and the windows that are hers. She is lying awake up there now, take it from me, hoping that you will come tonight. I shall lead you directly to her window. And then comes the only chance we take—the only instance where we gamble. There will not be a light in her window, but that won't make any difference. This nobby cane I'm carrying is in reality a collapsible fishing rod. First we use it to tap gently on her window ledge or shade or whatever we find. Then you pass up a little note to her. Here is paper and pencil. Say that you are below her window and—all ready to take her away. Tell her to lower her valuables, some clothes, etc., from the window by means of the rope we'll pass up on the pole. There is a remote possibility that she may have the jewels in her room. For certain reasons they may have permitted her to retain them. If such is the case our work is easy. If they have taken them away from her she'll say so, some way or another—and she will not leave! Now I've had a good look at the front of that house. It is covered with a lattice work and huge vines. I can shin up like a squirrel and go through her room to—"

"Are you crazy, Sprouse? You'd take your life in your hands and—"

"See here," said Sprouse shortly. "I am not risking my life for the fun of the thing. I am risking it for her, bear that in mind—for her and her people. And if I am killed they won't even say 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' So let's not argue the point. Are you going to stand by me or—back out?"

Barnes was ashamed. "I'll stand by you," he said, and they stole forward.

There were no lights visible. The house was even darker than the night itself; it was vaguely outlined by a deeper shade of black.

At last they were within a few yards of the entrance and at the edge of a small space that had been cleared of shrubbery. Here Sprouse stopped and began to adjust the sections of his fishing rod.

"Write," he whispered. "There is a faint glow of light up there to the right. The third window, did you say? Well, that's about where I should locate it."

The tiny metallic tip of the rod, held in the upstretched hand of Barnes, much the taller of the two men, barely reached the window ledge. He tapped gently, persistently on the hard surface. Just as they were beginning to think that she was asleep and that their efforts were in vain their straining eyes made out a shadowy object projecting slightly beyond the sill.

After a moment or two of suspense Barnes experienced a peculiar, almost electric shock. Someone had seized the tip of the rod; it stiffened suddenly, the vibrations due to its flexibility ceasing. Someone was untying the bit of paper he had fastened to the rod, and with fingers that shook and were clumsy with eagerness.

He had written: "I am outside with a trusted friend, ready to do your bidding. Two of the guards are safely bound and out of the way. Now is our chance. We will never have another. If you are prepared to come with me now write me a word or two and drop it to the ground. I will pass up a rope to you and you may lower anything you wish to carry away with you. But be exceedingly careful. Take time. Don't hurry a single one of your movements." He signed it with a large "R."

It seemed an hour before their eyes distinguished the shadowy head above. As a matter of fact but a few minutes had passed. During the wait Sprouse had noiselessly removed his coat, a proceeding that puzzled Barnes. Something light fell to the ground. It was Sprouse who stooped and searched for it in the grass. When he resumed an upright posture he put his lips close to Barnes' ear and whispered:

"I will put my foot over your head. Here is a little electric torch. Don't flash it until I am sure the coast is arranged so that you can do so without a gleam of light getting out from under." He pressed the torch and a bit of closely folded paper in the other's hand and carefully draped the coat over his head.

Barnes read: "Thank God! I was afraid you would wait until tomorrow night. Then it would have been too

late. I must get away tonight but I cannot leave—I dare not leave without something that is concealed in another part of the house. I do not know how to secure it. My door is locked from the outside. What am I to do? I would rather die than to go away without it."

Hastily he wrote: "If you do not come at once, we will force our way into the house and fight it out with them all. My friend is coming up the vines. Let him enter the window. Tell him where to go and he will do the rest. He is a miracle man. Nothing is impossible to him. If he does not return in ten minutes, I shall follow."

There was no response to this. The head reappeared in the window, but no word came down.

Sprouse whispered: "I am going up. Stay here. If you hear a commotion in the house, run for it. Don't wait for me. I'll probably be done for."

"I'll do just as I please about running," said Barnes, and there was a deep thrill in his whisper. "Good luck. God help you if they catch you."

"Not even he could help me then. Good-by. I'll do what I can to induce her to drop out of the window if anything goes wrong with me downstairs."

A moment later he was silently scaling the wall of the house, feeling his way carefully, testing every precarious foothold, dragging himself painfully upwards by means of the most uncanny, animal-like strength and stealth.

Barnes could not recall drawing a single breath from the instant the man left his side until the faintly luminous square above his head was obliterated by the black of his body as it wriggled over the ledge.

We will follow Sprouse. When he crawled through the window and stood erect inside the room, he found himself confronted by a tall, shadowy figure, standing half-way between him and the door.

He advanced a step or two and uttered a soft hiss of warning.

"Not a sound," he whispered, drawing still nearer. "I have come four



"Not a Sound," He Whispered.

thousand miles to help you, countess. This is not the time or place to explain. We haven't a moment to waste. I need only say that I have been sent from Paris by persons you know to aid you in delivering the crown jewels into the custody of your country's minister in Paris. We must act swiftly. Tell me where they are. I will get them."

"Who are you?" she whispered tensely.

"My name is Theodore Sprouse. I have been loaned to your embassy by my own government. I beg of you do not ask questions now. Tell me where the prince sleeps, how I may get to his room—"

"You know that he is the prince?"

"And that you are his cousin."

She was silent for a moment. "Not only is it impossible for you to enter his room but it is equally impossible for you to get out of this one except by the way you entered. If I thought there was the slightest chance for you to—"

"Let me be the judge of that, countess. Where is his room?"

"The last to the right as you leave this door—at the extreme end of the corridor. Across the hall from his room you will see an open door. A man sits in there all night long, keeping watch. You could not approach Prince Up's door without being seen by that watcher."

"You said in your note to Barnes that the—er—something was in Curtis' study."

"The prince sleeps in Mr. Curtis' room. The study adjoins it, and can only be entered from the bedroom. There is no other door. What are you doing?"

"I am going to take a peep over the transom, first of all. If the coast is clear, I shall take a little stroll down the hall. Do not be alarmed. I will come back—with the things we both want. Pardon me." He sat down on the edge of the bed and removed his shoes. She watched him as if fascinated while he opened the bosom of his soft shirt and stuffed the wet shoes inside.

(Continued next Saturday.)