

GRAUSTARK

By
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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CHAPTER VII.

THE LADY IN THE CARRIAGE.

THEY slept rather late in the morning, first because they were very much fatigued after their long journey, and second for the reason that they had been unable to woe slumber until long past midnight. Anguish stretched himself lazily in bed when he heard Lorry's voice from the adjoining room.

"I suppose we are to consult the police in order to get a clew to your charmer," he yawned. "Nice friends you pick up on railway journeys! I'd be ashamed."

"Well, Harry, I'll confess I'm disgusted. This has been the most futile thing I've ever done, and if you can't find the girl, I'll get out of here on the first train—freight or passenger. The Guggenlockers—please—Mr. Lorry was saying."

"Not a bit of it, my boy; not a bit of it. We'll make a house to house search if the police fail us. Cheer up, cheer up!"

"You go to thunder!"

"Hold on! I don't talk like that or I'll go back on you in a minute. I'm here because I choose to be, and I've more heart in the chase at this minute than you have. I've not lost hope. We'll find the Guggenlockers if we have to hire detectives to trace 'em from the United States to their very doorstep. We're going to see the police after breakfast."

After breakfast they did go to see the Baron Dangloss. After some inquiry they found the gloomy, forbidding prison, and Mr. Anguish boldly pounded on the huge gates. A little shutter flew open, and a man's face appeared. Evidently he asked what was wanted, but he might as well have demanded their lives, so far were they from understanding his query.

"Baron Dangloss?" asked Anguish promptly. The man asked something else, but as the Americans shook their heads deprecatingly he withdrew his face and presently swung open the gates. They entered and he closed the doors behind them, locking them in. Then he directed them across the court to an open door in the aged mass of gray stone. As they strode away from the guard Lorry created consternation by demanding:

"How are we to talk to the chief if he doesn't understand us or we him? We should have brought an interpreter."

"I forgot about the confounded language. But if he's real he can talk Irish." Lorry told him he wasn't funny.

"Is this his excellency Baron Dangloss?" asked Anguish, stepping into a small room and stopping suddenly in the presence of the short, fierce man they had seen the day before. The American spoke in French.

"It is, gentlemen. Of what service can I be to MM. Lorry and Anguish?" responded the grim little chief, politely rising from beside his desk. The visitors looked at one another in surprise.

"If he knows our names on such short notice, he'll certainly know the Guggenlockers," said Anguish to his friend in English.

"Ah, you are looking for some one named Guggenlocker?" asked the chief, smiling broadly and speaking excellent English. "You must not be surprised, gentlemen. I speak many languages. I heard last night that you were inquiring about one Caspar Guggenlocker, and I have racked my brain, searched my books, questioned my officers, and I am sorry to inform you that there is no such person in Edelweiss."

"I was so well assured of it, Baron Dangloss," Lorry said.

"The name is totally unknown to me, sir. May I ask why you are searching for him?"

"Certainly. I met Mr. Guggenlocker, his wife and his niece last spring in the United States. They invited me to come and see them if I ever happened to be in this part of the world. As my friend and I were near here, I undertook to avail myself of their invitation."

"And they said they lived in Edelweiss, Graustark?"

"They did, and I'll humbly confess I did not know much of the principality of Graustark."

"That is certainly complimentary, but, then, we are a little out of the beaten path; so it is pardonable. I was at first under the impression that you were American detectives with extradition papers for criminals bearing the name you mention."

"Oh!" gasped Anguish. "We couldn't find ourselves if we should be separated, captain."

The grizzled bearded captain laughed lightly with them and then asked Lorry if he would object to giving him the full story of his acquaintanceship with the alleged Graustarkians. The bewildered and disheartened American promptly told all he knew about them, omitting certain tender details, of course. As he proceeded the chief grew more and more interested, and when at last Lorry came to the description of the strange trio he gave a sudden start, exposed a queer little smile for a second or two and then was as sphinxlike as before. The over-vigilant Anguish observed the involuntary start and smile, quick as the chief had

been to recover himself, and felt a thrill of triumph. To his anger and impatience, however, the old officer calmly shook his head at the end of the narrative and announced that he was as much in the dark as ever.

"Well, we'll search awhile for ourselves," declared Anguish stubbornly, not at all satisfied.

"You will be wasting your time," said the chief meaningly.

"We've plenty to waste," retorted the other.

After a few moments they departed, Baron Dangloss accompanying them to the gate and assuring them that he and his men always would be at their command. His nation admired the American people, he warmly declared.

"That old codger knows our people, and I'll bet a thousand on it," said Lorry angrily when they had gone some little distance down the street. Then he told of the queer exposure Dangloss had unwittingly made. Lorry, more excited than he cared to show, agreed that there was something very suspicious about this new discovery.

They walked about the quiet town for an hour or two, examining the buildings, the people, and the soldiers with deep interest. From the head of the main street, Castle avenue, they could plainly see the royal palace, nearly a mile away. Its towers and turrets, gray and gaunt, ran up among the green treetops and were outlined plainly against the yellow hills. Countless houses studded the steep mountain slope, and many people were discerned walking and riding along the narrow, ledge-like streets which wound toward the summit, far up in the clouds. Clearly and distinctly could be seen the grim monastery, perched at the very pinnacle of the mountain, several miles away. Up there it looked bleak and cold and uninviting, in great contrast to the loveliness and warmth of the valley. Down below the grass was moist and soft, trees were approaching the stage where yellow and red tints mingle with the rich green, flowers were blooming, the land was redolent of the sweet fragrance of autumn, the atmosphere warm, clear and invigorating. It was paradise surrounded by desolation, drear and deadening.

Wherever the tall, distinguished Americans walked they formed the center of observation and were the cause of comment that bore unmistakable signs of admiration. They bowed pleasantly to many of those who passed them and received in return gracious and profound recognition. Military men saluted courteously, the women stared modestly and prettily, perhaps covetously; the merchants and citizens in general bowed and smiled a welcome that could not have been heartier. The strangers remarked the absence of vehicles on the main streets. There were pack mules and horses, human carriers, both male and female, but during the entire morning they saw not more than six or eight carriages. Vehicles were used solely by the quality and as a means of transportation for their persons only. Everybody, with the few exceptions mentioned, walked or rode horseback. The two friends were delighted with the place, and Anguish advocated a sojourn of several weeks, even though they did not find the Guggenlockers, his object being to secure photographs and sketches of the picturesque people and the strange scenery and to idle away some hours upon the glittering boulevards. Grenfall, since he was in the project so deeply, was so nearly reconciled as to be exhilarated by the plan. They decided to visit the royal grounds in the afternoon, reserving a ride up the hill for the next day. A gendarme who spoke German fairly well told them that they could enter the palace park if they obtained a signed order from the chief steward, who might be found at any time in his home near the gates.

They were strolling leisurely toward the hotel, for the moment forgetting their quest in this strange, sunny land, when they espied a carriage, the most conspicuous of any they had seen. The white horses were gayly caparisoned, the driver and the footman beside him wore rich uniforms, the vehicle itself gleamed and glistened with gold and silver trimmings. A short distance behind rode two young soldiers, swords to their shoulders, scabbards clanking against their stirrups. Each was attired in the tight red trousers, shiny boots, close fitting black coat with gilt trimmings and the red cap which the Americans had noted before because of its brilliancy. People along the street were bowing deeply to the occupants, two ladies.

"Harry! Look!" exclaimed Lorry, clutching his friend's arm like a vice.

"There in the carriage—on this side!" His voice was hoarse and trembling.

"Miss Guggenlocker?" cried Anguish.

"Yes, yes!" They had stopped, and Lorry was grasping a garden wall with one hand.

"Then it's funny nobody knows the name here. She seems to be some one of consequence. Good heaven! I don't blame you! She's the most beautiful!"

By this time the carriage was almost opposite and within forty feet of where they stood. The ladies—Miss Guggenlocker's companion was wearing



"Harry! Look!" exclaimed Lorry.

and almost as beautiful as herself—had not observed the agitated two, but Lorry's face was beaming, his hat was off, and he was ready to spring to the carriage side at a moment's warning. Then the young girl at the side of the woman whose beauty had drawn a man half around the world saw the tall strangers and called her companion's attention to them. Once more Grenfall Lorry and Miss Guggenlocker were looking into each other's eyes.

The lady started violently. Her eyes grew wide, her lips parted, and her body was bent forward eagerly, a little gloved hand grasping the side of the open carriage. Her "ideal American" was bowing low, as was the tall fellow at his side. When he looked up again, his eyes were glowing, his handsome face was flushed, and he saw her smile, blush furiously and incline her head gravely. The carriage had swept past, but she turned her head, and he detected an appealing glance in her eyes, a perplexed wrinkle across her brow, both of which were swept away an instant later by the most bewitching of smiles. Again her head was inclined, this time a trifle more energetically, and then the maddening face was turned from him. The equipage rolled onward, and there was no effort on her part to check its progress. The men were left standing alone and disappointed on the streets of Edelweiss, the object of their search slipping away as soon as she had been found.

Her companion was amazed by the little scene. It was evident, judging by the eager look on her face as she turned with a question in her eyes.

"Turned down!" exclaimed the irrepressible Anguish dolefully. "That's pretty shabby treatment, old man. But she's quite worth the journey."

"I'll not go back to America without her. Do you hear that, Harry Anguish?" He was excited and trembling. "But why didn't she stop?" he went on dismally.

"Oh, you dear old fool!" said Anguish.

The two stood looking after the carriage until it turned into a side street half way down the shady stretch toward the castle. They saw her companion glance back, but could not tell whether she did or not. Lorry looked uneasily at Anguish, and the latter read his thought.

"You are wondering about the Guggenlocker name, eh? I'll tell you what I've worked out during the past two minutes. Her name is no more Guggenlocker than mine is. She and the uncle used that name as a blind. Mark my words, she's quality over here; that's all there is about it. Now, we must find out just who she really is. Here comes a smart looking soldier chap. Let's ask him, provided we can make him understand."

A young soldier approached, leisurely twirling a cane, for he was without his side arms. Anguish accosted him in French and then in German. He understood the latter and was very polite.

"Who was the young lady in the carriage that just passed?" asked Lorry eagerly.

The face of the soldier flushed and then grew pale with anger.

"Hold on! I beg pardon, but we are strangers and don't quite understand your ways. I can't see anything improper in asking such a question," said Anguish, attempting to detain him. The young man struck his hand from his arm, and his eyes fairly blazed.

"You must learn our ways. We never pass comment on a lady. If you do so in your land, I am sorry for your ladies. I refuse to be questioned by you. Stand aside, fellow!"

Anguish stood aside in astonishment, and they watched the wrathful gallant strut down the street, his back as stiff as a board.

"Blamed touchy!" growled Anguish.

"You remember what Sitzy said about their respect for the weaker sex. I guess we'd better keep off that tack or we'll hatch up a duel or two. They seem to be fire eaters. We must content ourselves with searching out her home, and without assistance too. I've cooked off a bit, Harry, and now that I've seen her, I'm willing to go slowly and deliberately. Let's take our time and be perfectly cool. I am beginning to agree with your incog. proposition. It's all clearing up in my mind now. We'll go back to the hotel and get ready for the visit to the palace grounds."

"Don't you intend to hunt her up? Gad, I wouldn't miss a minute if I had a chance to be with a girl like that! And the other was no scarecrow. She is rather a beauty too. Greatest town for pretty women I ever struck. Vienna is out of it entirely."

They strolled on to the hotel, discussing the encounter in all its exhilarating details. Scarcely had they seated themselves on the piazza after partaking of a light luncheon when a man came gal-

loping up to the walk in front of the hotel. Throwing his bridle rein to a guard, he hastened to the piazza. His attire was that of a groom, and something about him reminded them of the footman who sat beside the driver of the carriage they had seen a short time before. He came straight to where the Americans sat smoking and, bowing low, held before them an envelope. The address was "Grenfall Lorry, Esq.," but the man was in doubt as to which was he.

Lorry grasped the envelope, tore it open and drew forth a daintily written note. It read:

My Dear Mr. Lorry—I was very much surprised to see you this morning. I may add that I was delighted. If you will accompany this messenger when he calls for you at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, he will conduct you to my home, where I shall truly be charmed to see you again. Will you bring your friend—
SOPHIA GUGGENLOCKER.

Lorry could have embraced the messenger. There was a suspicion of breathlessness in his voice when he tried to say calmly to Harry:

"An invitation for tomorrow."

"I knew it would come that way."

"Also wants you to come."

"Shan't I be in the way?"

"Not at all, my boy. I'll accept for you. After this fellow goes I'll let you read the note. Wait until I write an answer."

Motioning for the man to remain, he hastened to his room, pulled out some stationery and feverishly wrote:

My Dear Miss Guggenlocker—I shall be delighted to accompany your messenger tomorrow, and my friend, Mr. Harry Anguish, will be with me. I have come half way across the continent to see you, and I shall be repaid if I am with you but for a moment. You will pardon me if I say that your name has caused me to depart. No one seems to have heard it here, and I was beginning to lose hope. You may expect me at 3, and I thank you for the pleasure you bestow. Yours sincerely,
GRENFALL LORRY.

This note, part of which had been written with misgiving, he gave to the messenger, who rode away quickly.

"She didn't wait long to write to you, I notice. Is it possible she is suffering from the effects of those three days' on the other side of the Atlantic? Come to think of it, she blushed when she saw you this morning," said Anguish. Lorry handed him her note, which he read and then solemnly shook hands with its recipient. "Congratulations. I am a very far sighted young man, having lived in Paris."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABDUCTION OF A PRINCESS.

THAT afternoon they went to the palace grounds and inquired for the chief steward.

After a few moments they were shown to his office in a small dwelling house just inside the gates. The steward was a red faced little man, pleasant and accommodating. He could speak German—in fact, he was a German by birth—and they had no difficulty in presenting their request. Mr. Fransch—Jacob Fransch—was at first dubious, but their frank, eager faces soon gained for them his consent to see that part of the great park open to the public. Beyond certain lines they were not to trespass. Anguish asked how they could be expected to distinguish these lines, being unacquainted with the grounds. The steward informed them that the members of the royal guard would establish the lines so plainly that it would be quite clear.

He then wrote for them a pass to the grounds of the royal palace of Graustark, affixing his seal. In giving this pass to them he found occasion to say that the princess had instructed him to extend every courtesy possible to an American citizen. It was then that Anguish asked if he might be permitted to use his camera. There was an instant and emphatic refusal, and they were told that the pass would be rescinded if they did not leave the camera outside the gates. Reluctantly Anguish deposited his luckless box in the steward's office, and they passed into the broad avenue which led toward the palace.

A guard, who served also as a guide, stepped to their side before they had taken ten paces. Where he came from they never knew, so instantaneous was his appearance. He remained with them during the two hours spent in the wonderful park.

The palace stood in the northwestern part of the grounds, possibly a half mile from the base of the mountain. Its front faced the mountain side. The visitors were not permitted to go closer than a quarter of a mile from the structure, but attained a position from which it could be seen in all its massive, ancient splendor. Anguish, who had studied churches and old structures, painted the castles on the Rhine and was something of a connoisseur in architecture, was of the opinion that it had been standing for more than 500 years. It was a vast, mediæval mass of stone, covered with moss and ivy, with towers, turrets and battlements.

The park was probably a mile square and was surrounded by a high wall, on the top of which were little guard-houses and several masked cannon. When they had completed their tour of inspection, their guide rapidly led the way to the wall that encircled the

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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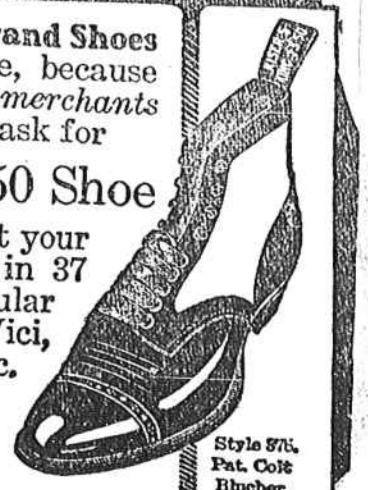
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