GRAUSTARK

...By...

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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to them. Bolaroz allowed his gaze to leap instantly to that pallid face, and every eye in the room followed. Yetive was standing again, her face glowing.

"An accomplice has confessed all. I have the word of the man who saw the crime committed. I charge Prince Gabriel with the murder of his highness Prince Lorenz."

With a groan Gabriel threw his hands to his heart and tottered forward, glaring at the merciless face of the accuser.

"Confessed! Betrayed!" he faltered. Then he whirled like a maniac upon his little coterie of followers. "Vile traitor!" he shrieked. "I will drink your heart's blood!"

With a howl he leaped toward one of the men, a dark faced nobleman named Berrowag. The latter evaded him and rushed toward the door, crying:

"It is a lie, a lie! He has tricked you! I did not confess!"

The prince was seized by his friends, struggling and cursing. A peculiar smile lit up the face of Harry Anguish.

"I repeat, he is the assassin!"

Gabriel broke from the detaining hands and, drawing a revolver, rushed for the door.

"Out of the way! I will not be taken alive!"

Allode met him at the curtains and grasped him in his powerful arms, Baron Dangloss and others tearing the

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weapon from his hand. The utmost confusion reigned—women screaming, men shouting—and above all could be heard the howls of the accused prince.

"Let me go! Curse you! Curse you! I will not surrender! Let me kill that traitor! Let me at him!" Berrowag had been seized by willing hands, and the two men glared at each other, one crazy with rage, the other shrinking with fear.

Dangloss and Allode half carried, half dragged the prince forward. As he neared Bolaroz and the princess he collapsed and became a trembling, moaning suppliant for mercy. Anguish's accusation had struck home.

"Prince Bolaroz, I trust you will not object if the Princess Yetive substitutes the true assassin for the man named in your promise to Graustark," said Anguish dramatically. Bolaroz, as if coming from a dream, turned and knelt before the throne.

"Most adorable Yetive," he said, "I sue for pardon. I bow low and lay my open heart before the truest woman in the world." He kissed the black lace hem of her gown and arose. "I am your friend and ally. Axphain and Graustark will live no more with hatred in their hearts. From you I have learned a lesson in justice and constancy."

Prince Gabriel was raving like a madman as the officers hurried him and Berrowag from the room. A shout went up from those assembled. Its echo, reaching the halls, then the gardens, was finally taken up by the waiting masses beyond the gates. The news flew like wildfire. Rejoicing such as had never been known shook Edelweiss until the monks on the mountain looked down in wonder.

After the dazed and happy throng about the throne had heaped its expressions of love and devotion upon the radiant princess a single figure knelt in subjection just as she was preparing to depart. It was the Duke of Mizrox.

"Your royal highness, Mizrox is ready to pay his forfeit. My life is yours," he said calmly. She did not comprehend until her uncle reminded her of the oath Mizrox had taken the morning after the murder.

"He swore on Black's that you killed Lorenz," she said, turning to Lorry.

"I was wrong, but I am willing to pay the penalty. My love for Lorenz was greater than my discretion. That is my only excuse, but it is one you should not accept," said Mizrox, as coolly as if announcing the time of day. Lorry looked first at him and then at the princess, bewildered and uncertain.

"I have no ill will against you, my lord duke. Release him from his bond, your highness."

"Gladly, since you refuse to hold him to his oath," she said.

"I am under an eternal obligation to you, sir, for your leniency, and I shall ever revere the princess who pardons so graciously the gravest error."

Yetive begged Bolaroz to continue to make the court his home while in Graustark, and the old prince responded with the declaration that he would remain long enough to sign and approve the new covenant at least. Before stepping from the throne Yetive called in low tones to Lorry, a pretty flush mantling her cheek:

"Will you come to me in half an hour?"

"For my reward?" he asked eagerly.

"Ach!" she cried softly, reprovingly. Count Halfont's face took on a troubled expression as he caught the swift communication in their eyes. After all, she was a princess.

She passed from the room beside Halfont, proud and happy in the victory over despair, glorying in the exposure of her heart to the world, her blood tingling and dancing with the joys of anticipation. Lorry and Anguish, the wonder and admiration of all, were given a short but convincing race in the hallway. Lords and ladies praised and lauded them, overwhelming them with the homage that comes to the brave. But Gaspon uttered one wish that struck Lorry's warm, leaping heart like a piece of ice.

"Would to God that you were a prince of the realm," said the minister of finance, a look of regret and longing in his eyes. That wish of Gaspon's sent Lorry away with the sharp sting of desolation torturing intensely as it drove deeper and deeper the reawakened pangs of uncertainty. There still remained the fatal distance between him and the object of his heart's desire.

He accompanied Captain Quinnox to his quarters, where he made himself presentable before starting for the enchanted apartment in the far end of the castle. Love and fear combined to give him strength; from his eyes fled the hopeless look, from his brain the doubt, from his blood the chill.

"Quinnox, give me your hand; don't mind the blood! You have been my friend, and you have served her almost to the death. I injured and would have killed you in that cell, but it was not in anger. Will you be my friend in all that is to follow?"

"She has said that she loves you," said the captain, returning the hand clasp. "I am at your service as well as hers."

A few moments later Lorry was in her presence. What was said or done during the half hour that passed between his entrance and the moment that brought them side by side from the room need not be told. That the interview had had its serious side was plain. The troubled, anxious eyes of the girl and the rebellious, dogged air of the man told of a conflict now only in abeyance.

"I will never give you up," he said as they came from the door. A wistful gleam flickered in her eyes, but she did not respond in words.

Near the head of the stairway an animated group of persons lingered. Harry Anguish was in the center, and the Countess Dagmar was directly in front of him, looking up with sparkling eyes and parted lips. The Count and Countess Halfont, Gaspon, the Baron Dangloss, the Duke of Mizrox, with other ladies and gentlemen, were being entertained by the gay spirited stranger.

"Here he comes," cried the latter as he caught sight of the approaching couple.

"I am delighted to see you, Harry. You were the friend in need, old man," said Lorry, wringing the other's hand. Yetive gave him her hand, her blue eyes overflowing.

"Mr. Anguish had just begun to tell us how he—how he"— began Dagmar, but paused helplessly, looking to him for relief.

"Go ahead, countess. It isn't very elegant, but it's the way I said it. How I 'got next' to Gabriel is what she wants to say. Perhaps your highness would like to know all about the affair that ended so tragically. It's very quickly told," said Anguish.

"I am deeply interested," said the princess eagerly.

"Well, in the first place, it was all a bluff," said he coolly.

"A what?" demanded Dagmar.

"Bluff," responded Harry briefly. "American patois, dear countess."

"In what respect?" asked Lorry, beginning to understand.

"In all respects. I didn't have the slightest sign of proof against the festive prince."

"Do I understand you to say that you have no evidence against Gabriel?" asked Halfont, dumfounded.

"Not a particle."

"But you said his confederate had confessed," protested Dangloss.

"I didn't know that he had a confederate, and I wasn't sure that he was guilty of the crime," boasted Anguish, complacently enjoying the stupefaction.

"Then why did you say so?" demanded Dangloss, excited beyond measure.

"Oh, I just guessed at it!"

"God save us!" gasped Baron Dangloss, chief of police.

"Guessed at it?" cried Mizrox.

"That's it. It was a bold stroke, but it won. Now, I'll tell you this much: I was morally certain that Gabriel killed the prince. There was no way on earth to prove it, however, and I'll admit it was intuition or something of that sort which convinced me. He had tried to abduct the princess, and he was madly jealous of Lorenz. Although he knew there was to be a duel, he was not certain that Lorenz would lose, so he adopted a clever plan to get rid of two rivals by killing one and casting suspicion on the other. These deductions I made soon after the murder, but, of course, could secure no proof."

"Early this morning at the hotel I made up my mind to denounce him suddenly if I had the chance, risking failure, but hoping for such an exhibition as that which you saw. It was clear to me that he had an accomplice to stand guard while he did the stabbing, but I did not dream it was Berrowag. Lorry's sensational appearance, when I believed him to be far away from here, disturbed me greatly, but it made it all the more necessary that I should take the risk with Gabriel. As I watched him I became absolutely convinced of his guilt. The only way to accuse him was to do it boldly and thoroughly; so I rang in the accomplice and the witness features. You all know how the 'bluff' worked."

"And you had no more proof than this?" asked Dangloss weakly.

"That's all," laughed the delighted strategist.

Dangloss stared at him for a moment, then threw up his hands and walked away, shaking his head, whether in stupefied admiration or utter disbelief no one knew. The others covered Anguish with compliments, and he was more than ever the hero of the day. Such confidence paralyzed the people. The only one who was not overcome with astonishment was his countryman.

"You did it well," he said in an undertone to Anguish—"devilish well!"

"You might at least say I did it to the queen's taste," growled Anguish meaningly.

"Well, then, you did," laughed Lorry.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE BALCONY AGAIN.

THREE persons in the royal castle of Graustark, worn by the dread and anxiety of weeks, fatigued by the sleepless nights just past, slumbered through the long afternoon with the motionless, death-like sleep of the utterly fagged. Yetive in her darkened bedchamber dreamed with smiling lips of a tall soldier and a throne on which cobwebs multiplied. Grenfall Lorry saw in his dreams a slim soldier with troubled face and averted, timid eyes, standing guard over him with a brave, straight back and chin painfully uplifted. Captain Quinnox dreamed not, for his mind was tranquil in the assurance that he had been forgiven by the princess.

While Lorry slept in the room set apart for him Anguish roamed the park with a happy faced, slender young lady into whose ears he poured the history of a certain affection, from the tender beginning to the distracting end, and she smiled and trembled with delight, closing not her ears against the sound of his voice nor her heart to the love that craved admission. They were not dreaming.

After dinner that evening Lorry led the princess out into the moonlit night. The November breezes were soft and balmy and the shadows deep.

"Let us leave the park to Dagmar and her hero, to the soldiers and the musicians," said Yetive. "There is a broad portico here, with the tenderest of memories. Do you remember a night like this a month or more ago—the moon, the sentinel and some sorrows? I would again stand where we stood on that night and again look up to the moon and the solemn sentinel, but not as we saw them then, with heartache and evasion."

"The balcony, then, without the old restrictions," Lorry agreed. "I want to see that dark old monastery again and to tell you how I looked from its lofty windows through the chill of wind and the chill of life into the fairest Eden that was ever denied man."

"In an hour, then, I will meet you there."

"I must correct you. In an hour you will find me there."

She left him, retiring with her aunt and the Countess Dagmar. Lorry remained in the hall with Halfont, Prince Bolaroz, Mizrox and Anguish. The conversation ran once more into the ever recurring topic of the day, Gabriel's confession. The Prince of Dawsbergen was confined in the tower with his confederate, Berrowag. Reports from Dangloss late in the afternoon conveyed the intelligence that the prisoner had fallen into melancholia.

Twelve Mile.

Health in this community is very good except that Thorna Cantrill has the mumps, but he will soon be out again.

Crops in this vicinity very good. Cotton thinning is taking the day.

Miss Lizzie Hopkins and Messrs. Oscar Lollis, Rufus Holder and Johnnie Yates visited Mr. and Mrs. A. Cannon, Sunday night They report a good time.

Clayton Alexander has returned to his sister, Mr S. E. Cannon. He is out on a rest, not being very well at this writing.

It must be a good year for snakes, as J. H. Lollis has killed about 40 of the reptiles since he moved to his new home.

Mrs. Minnie Tate has returned to her home at Spartanburg, where her husband awaited her arrival.

I will close, wishing the SENTINEL JOURNAL a prosperous year.

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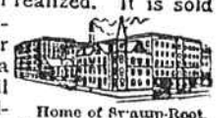

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deceased, that they be and appear before me, in the Court of Probate to be held at Pickens on the 13th day of June next, after publication hereof, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, to show cause, if any they have, why the said Administration should not be granted.

Given under my hand this, the 27th day of May, Anno Domini 1907.

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