GRAUSTARK

...By...

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

Copyright, 1901, by Herbert S. Stone

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Grenfall 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 flier stops for repairs in West Virginia.

CHAPTER II.—Lorry wires ahead to hold the train. He and the unknown girl ride twenty miles at a tearing pace in a mountain coach. There is no lovemaking, but a near approach to it as the rolling stage tumbles the passengers about.

CHAUTER III.—Lorry dines with the foreign party, consisting of Miss Guggenslocker, Uncle Casper and Aunt Yvonne. They are natives of Graustark, a country Lorry had never heard of before.

CHAPTER IV.—Lorry shows the foreigners the sights of Washington. They leave for New York to sail on the Kaiser Wilhelm. Miss Guggenslocker naively calls Lorry her "ideal American" and invites him to come and see her at Edelweiss.

CHAPTER V.—Wildly infatuated, Lorry hurries to New York. The name Guggenslocker is not on the steamer list. He sees the steamer off. Miss G. waves him a kiss from the deck.

CHAPTER VI.—Lorry joins his old friend, Harry Anguish, an American artist, in Paris. Graustark and its capital Edelweiss, are located by a guidebook. The Americans get no trace of the Guggenslockers there.

CHAPTER VII—Lorry sees his charmer driving in a carriage with a beautiful companion of her own sex. He gets a glance of recognition, but the carriage rolls on, leaving his mystery unsolved. Later he receives a note at his hotel signed Sophia Guggenslocker, inviting him to visit her next day.

CHAPTER VIII.—In the evening Lorry and Anguish ramble about the grounds of the castle where dwells the court of the Princess of Graustark. They overhear a plot to abduct the princess and resolve to capture the plotters red handed.

CHAPTER IX.—Following the conspirators, Lorry finds himself in a room he heard them designate as that of the princess.

CHAPTER X.—Lorry tells the princess of the plot. Mutual recognition; she is Miss Guggenslocker. Dannox, the guard, is in the abduction plot. He fells Lorry with a terrible blow. Anguish to the rescue.

CHAPTER XI.—Lorry quartered in the castle. The princess vists him, but forbids all talk of love.

CHAPTER XII.—Graustark is bankrupt and owes the neighboring princedom of Axphain $30,000,000. The creditor demands cash or the cession of the richest districts of Graustark.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Prince of Axphain offers to extend the loan if the princess will marry his son Lorenz. Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen also bids for the princess' hand with offer of a loan. Yetive tells Lorry that she belongs to her people and will marry Lorenz.

CHAPTER XIV.—Lorry discovered kissing the princess while she is seated on the throne. He quits the castle by royal command.

CHAPTER XV.—Betrothal of the princess to Lorenz. The Americans recognize Gabriel as chief conspirator in the abduction plot.

CHAPTER XVI.—Lorenz toasts the princess lightly in a cafe. Lorry dashes the glass from his hand. Challenge to a duel. Lorenz assassinated. Lorry charged with the crime.

CHAPTER XVII.—Princess Yetive commits Lorry to prison. All Graustark rejoices at the death of Lorenz.

CHAPTER XVIII AND XIX.—The Princess helps Lorry to escape. Disguished as a soldier, she conducts him to a monastery.

CHAPTER XX.—Axphain offers Graustark grace on the loan if Lorry is executed before Nov. 20. Yetive offers a reward for the capture of Lorry.

"Stay, your highness. I submit to your proposition regarding the other stranger, although I doubt its wisdom. There is but one in whom I am really interested—the one who killed my son. There is to be no cessation in the effort to find him, I am to understand. I now have a proposition. With me are 300 of my bravest soldiers. I offer them to you in order that you may better prosecute the search. They will remain here, and you may use them in any way you see fit. The Duke of Mizrox will linger in Edelweiss, and with him you and yours may always confer. He also is at your command. This man must be retaken. I swear by all that is above and below me he shall be found if I hunt the world over to accomplish that end. He shall not escape my vengeance!

"And hark you to this: On the 20th of next month I shall demand payment of the debt due Axphain. So deeply is my heart set on the death of this Grenfall Lorry that I agree now, before all these friends of ours, that if he be captured and executed in my presence before the 20th of November Graustark shall be granted the extension of time that would have obtained in the event of your espousal with the man he killed. You hear this offer, all? It is bound by my sacred word of honor. His death before the 20th gives Graustark ten years of grace. If he is still at large, I shall claim my own. This offer, I believe, most gracious Yetive, will greatly encourage your people in the effort to capture the man we seek."

The princess heard the remarkable proposition with face deathly pale, heart scarcely beating. Again was the duty to Graustark thrust cruelly upon her. She could save the one only by sacrificing the other.

"We will do all in our power to—to prove ourselves grateful for your magnanimous offer," she said. As she passed from the room, followed by her uncle, she heard the increasing buzz of excitement on all sides, the unrestrained expressions of amazement and relief from her own subjects, the patronizing comments of the visitors—all conspiring to sound her doom. Which way was she to turn in order to escape from herself?

"We must catch this man, Yetive," said Haifont on the stairway. "There is no alternative."

"Except our inability to do so," she murmured. In that moment she determined that Grenfall Lorry should never be taken if she could prevent it. He was innocent, and it was Graustark's penalty to pay.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM A WINDOW ABOVE.

THE longest month in Lorry's life was that which followed his romantic flight from the tower. To his impatient mind the days were irksome weeks. The cold monastery was worse than a prison. He looked from its windows as a convict looks through his bars, always hoping, always disappointed. With each of the infrequent visits of Captain Quinnox his heart leaped at the prospect of liberty, only to sink deeper in despair upon the receipt of emphatic though kindly assurances that the time had not yet come for him to leave the haven of safety into which he had been thrust by loving hands.

The prior was kind to him. Everything that could be done to provide comfort where comfort was a stranger was employed in his behalf. He lived well until his appetite deserted him. He had no questions to answer, for no one asked why he was there; he had no danger to fear, for no foe knew where he lived. From the city came the promise of ultimate escape, verbal messages from those who loved him, news of the world—all at long intervals, however. Quinnox's visits were like sunbeams to him. The dashing captain came only at night and in disguise. He bore verbal messages, a wise precaution against mishap. Not once did he bring a word of love from the princess, an omission which caused the fugitive deep misery until a ray of intelligence showed him that she could not give to Quinnox the speeches from her heart, proud woman that she was.

Anguish sent words of cheer, with commands to be patient. He never failed to tell him through Quinnox that he was doing all in his power to find the real murderer and that he had the secret co-operation of the old police captain. Of course the hidden man heard of the reward and the frenzied search prosecuted by both principalities. He laughed hyterically over the deception that was being practiced by the blue eyed, slender woman who held the key to the situation in her keeping.

It was not until the night of the 18th of November that Quinnox confirmed his fears by telling him of the conditions imposed by Prince Bolaroz. For some reason the young officer had deceived Lorry in regard to the all important matter. The American repeatedly had begged for information about the fatal 20th, but on all previous occasions his visitor doggedly maintained a show of ignorance, vowing that he knew nothing of the circumstances. Finally Lorry, completely out of patience and determined to know the true state of affairs, soundly upbraided him and sent word to the princess that if she did not acquaint him with the inside facts he would leave the monastery and find them out for himself. This authoritative message brought Quinnox back two nights later with the full story of the exciting conference. She implored him to remain where he was and asked his forgiveness for having kept the ugly truth from him. Quinnox added to his anguish by hastily informing him that there was a possibility of succor from another principality. Prince Gabriel, he said, not knowing that he was cutting his listener to the heart, was daily with the princess, and it was believed that he was ready to loan Graustark sufficient money to meet the demand of Bolaroz. The mere thought that Gabriel was with her aroused the fiercest resentment in Lorry's breast.

As he paced his narrow room distractedly a horrid thought struck him so violently that he cried aloud and staggered against the wall, his eyes fixed on the face of the startled soldier. Perhaps she might submit to Gabriel, for in submitting she could save not only Graustark, but the man she loved. The sacrifice—but no, he would not believe that such affliction could come to her! Marry Gabriel—the man who had planned to seize her and make her his wanton! He ground his teeth and glared at Quinnox as if he were the object of his hatred, his vicious jealousy. The captain stepped backward in sudden alarm.

"Don't be afraid!" Lorry cried savagely. "I'm not crazy. It's your news—your news! Does she expect me to stay up here while that state of affairs exists down there? Let me see; this is the 18th, and day after tomorrow is the 20th. There is no time to be lost. Captain Quinnox. I shall accompany you when you leave St. Valentine's tonight."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Quinnox. "I cannot allow that, sir. My instructions are to"—

"Hang your instructions! All the instructions on earth can't compel me to sit up here and see this sacrifice made. I am determined to see her and put a stop to the whole affair. It is what I feared would come to pass. She is willing to sacrifice herself or half her kingdom, one or the other, in order that I may escape. It's not right, captain; it's not right, and I'm going to stop it. How soon can we leave this place?" He was pacing the floor, happy in the decision he had reached, notwithstanding the danger it promised.

"You are mad, sir, to talk like this," protested the other despairingly. "Edelweiss swarms with Axphain soldiers; our own men are on the alert to win the great reward. You cannot go to the city. When a safe time comes, you will be taken from this place, into the mountains instead of through the city, and given escort to Dassas, 100 miles east. That step will not be taken until the way is perfectly clear. I tell you, sir, you cannot hope to escape if you leave the monastery now. The mountains are full of soldiers every night."

"I didn't say anything about an escape, did I? On the contrary, I want to give myself up to her. Then she can have Gabriel thrown over the castle wall and say to Bolaroz: 'Here is your man. I've gained the ten years of grace.' That's the point, Quinnox. Can't you see it? And I want to say to you now I'm going whether you consent or refuse. I'd just as soon be in jail down there as up here anyhow. The only favor I have to ask of you is that you do the best you can to get me safely to her. I must talk with her before I go back to the tower."

"God help me, sir, I cannot take you to her!" groaned Quinnox, trying to control his nervous apprehension. "I have sworn to her that I will keep you from all harm, and it would be to break faith with her if I led you into that mob down there."

"I respect your oath, my friend, but I am going, just the same. I'll see her,

"I implore you to be considerate."

too, if I have to shoot every man who attempts to prevent me. I'm desperate, man, desperate! She's everything in the world to me, and I'll die before I'll see her suffer."

Quinnox calmly placed his hands on the other's shoulders, and, looking him in the eye, said quietly:

"Her suffering now is as nothing compared to what it will be if you go back to the tower. You forget how much pain she is enduring to avoid that very suffering. If you care for my mistress, sir, add no weight to the burden she already carries. Remain here, as she desires. You can be of no service down there. I implore you to be considerate."

It was an eloquent appeal, and it struck home. Lorry wavered, but his resolution would not weaken. He argued first with Quinnox, then with himself, finally returning to the reckless determination to brave all and save her from herself. The soldier begged him to listen to reason, implored him to reconsider, at last turning in anger upon the stubborn American with a torrent of maledictions. Lorry heard him through and quietly, unswervingly, announced that he was ready to leave the monastery at any time his guide cared to depart. Quinnox gave up in despair at this, gazing hopelessly at the man he had sworn to protect, who insisted on placing his head in the lion's jaw. He sat down at the window and murmured dejectedly:

"What will she say to me—what will she say to me?"

"I shall exonerate you, captain. She can have no fault to find with your action after I have told her how loyal you are and how—how—well, how unreasonable I am," said Lorry kindly.

"You may never live to tell her this, sir. Then what is to become of me? I could not look her in the face again. I could only die!"

"Don't be so faint hearted, Quinnox!" cried Lorry, stimulated by the desire to be with her, recognizing no obstacle that might thwart him in the effort. "We'll get through safe and sound, and we'll untangle a few complications before we reach the end of the book. Brace up, for heaven's sake, for mine, for hers, for your own. I must get to her before everything is lost. The fear that she may marry Gabriel will drive me mad if I am left here another night. Come! Let us prepare to start. We must notify the abbot that I am to go. I can be ready in five minutes. Ye gods, think of what she may be sacrificing for me!"

Lorry soon was attired in the guard's uniform he had worn from the tower a month before. His pistol was in his pocket, and the bunch of violets she had sent to him that very night was pinned defiantly above his heart. Quinnox smiled when he observed this bit of sentiment, and grimly informed him that he was committing an act prohibited in Dangloss' disciplinary rules. Officers on duty were not to wear nosegays.

"Dangloss will not see my violets. By the way, the moon shines brightly, doesn't it?"

"It is almost as light as day. Our trip is made extremely hazardous for that reason. I am sorely afraid, rash sir, that we cannot reach the castle unseen."

"We must go about it boldly; that's all."

"Has it occurred to you, sir, that you are placing me in a terrible position? What excuse can I have, a captain of the guard, for slinking about at night with a man whom I am supposed to be tracking to earth? Discovery will brand me as a traitor. I cannot deny the charge without exposing her royal highness."

Lorry turned cold. He had not thought of this alarming possibility. But his ready wit came again to his relief, and with bright, confident eyes he swept away the obstacle.

"If discovered, you are at once to proclaim me a prisoner, take the credit for having caught me and claim the reward."

"In that case you will not go to the castle, but to the tower."

"Not if you obey orders. The offer of reward says that I must be delivered to the undersigned. You will take me to her and not to the tower."

Quinnox smiled and threw up his hands as if unable to combat the quick logic of his companion. Together they made their way to the prior's cell, afterward to the abbot's apartment. It was barely 11 o'clock, and he had not retired. He questioned Quinnox closely, bade Lorry farewell and blessed him, sent his benediction to the princess and ordered them conducted to the gates.

Ten minutes later they stood outside the wall, the great gates having been closed sharply behind them. Above them hung the silvery moon, full and bright, throwing its refulgent splendor over the mountain top with all the brilliancy of day. Never before had Lorry seen the moon so accursedly bright.

"'Gad, it is like day," he exclaimed.

"As I told you, sir," agreed the other, reproof in his voice.

"We must wait until the moon goes down. It won't do to risk it now. Can we not go somewhere to keep warm for an hour or so?"

"There is a cave farther down the mountain. Shall we take the chance of reaching it?"

"By all means. I can't endure the cold after being cooped up for so long."

They followed the winding road for some distance down the mountain, coming at last to a point where a small path branched off. It was the path leading down the side of the steep overlooking the city, and upon that side no wagon road could be built. Seven thousand feet below stretched the sleeping, moonlit city. Standing out on the brow of the mountain, they seemed to be the only living objects in the world. There was no sign of life above, below or beside them.

"How long should we be in making the descent?" asked Lorry, a sort of terror possessing him as he looked from the dizzy height into the ghostlike dimness below.

"Three hours if you are strong."

"And how are we to get into the castle? I hadn't thought of that."

"There is a secret entrance," said Quinnox, maliciously enjoying the insistent one's acknowledgment of weakness. "If we reach it safely, I can take you under ground to the old dungeons beneath the castle. It may be some time before you can enter the halls above, for the secret passage is guarded jealously. There are but five people who know of its existence."

"Great confidence is placed in you, I see, and worthily, I am sure. How is it that you are trusted so implicitly?"

"I inherit the confidence. The captain of the guard is born to his position. My ancestors held the place before me, and not one betrayed the trust. The firstborn in the last ten generations has been the captain of the guard in the royal palace, possessing all its secrets. I shall be the first to betray the trust, and for a man who is nothing to me."

"I suppose you consider me selfish and vile for placing you in this position," said Lorry, somewhat contritely.

"No. I have begun the task, and I will complete it, come what may," answered the captain firmly. "You are the only being in the world for whom I would sacrifice my honor voluntarily save one."

"I have wondered why you were never tempted to turn traitor to the princess and claim the fortune that is represented in the reward."

"Not for 5,000,000 gavvos, sir!"

"By George, you are a faithful lot—Dangloss, Allode and Ogbot and yourself, four honest men to whom she trusts her life, her honor! You belong to a rare species, and I am proud to know you."

The stealthy couple found the cave and spent an hour or more within its walls, sallying forth after the tardy darkness had crept down over the mountain and into the peaceful valley. Then began the tortuous descent. Quinnox in the lead, they walked, crawled and ran down the narrow path, bruised, scratched and aching by the time they reached the topmost of the summer houses along the face of the mountain. After this walking was easier, but stealthiness made their progress slow. Frequently as they neared the base they were obliged to dodge behind houses or to drop into the ditches by the roadside in order to avoid patrolling police guards or Axphain sleuthhounds.

At last, stiff and sore, they stole into the narrow streets of Edelweiss. Lorry glanced back and shivered, although the air was warm and balmy. He had truly been out of the world. Not until this instant did he fully appreciate the dread that possesses a man who is being hunted down by tireless foes. Never did man's heart go out in gratitude and trustfulness as did his toward the strong defender whose sinewy arm he clasped as if in terror.

"You understand what this means to me," said Quinnox gravely as they paused to rest. "She will call me your murderer and curse me for my miserable treason. I am the first to dishonor the name of Quinnox."

CHAPTER XXII.

GRENFALL LORRY'S FOE.

THE Princess Yetive had not flinched a hair's breadth from the resolution formed on that stormy night when she sacrificed pride and duty on the altar of love and justice. Prince Bolaroz's ultimatum overwhelmed her, but she arose from the wreckage that was strewn about her conscience and remained loyal, steadfast and true to the man in the monastery. To save his life was all she could hope to accomplish, and this she was bound to do at any cost. She could be nothing to him, not even friend. So long as he lived he would be considered the murderer of Lorenz, and until the end a price would hang over his head. She, Princess of Graustark, had offered a reward for him. For that reason he was always to be a fugitive, and she least of all could hope to see him. There had been a brief, happy dream, but it was swept away by the unrelenting rush of reality. The mere fact that she, and she alone, was responsible for his flight placed between them an unsurmountable barrier.

Clinging tenaciously to her purpose, she was still cognizant of the debt she owed the trusting, loving people of Graustark. One word from her could avert the calamity that was to fall with the dawn of the fatal 20th. All Graustark blindly trusted and adored her. To undeceive them would be to administer a shock from which they could never recover.

Her highness' manner was at all times frank and untroubled. She was apparently light hearted. Her cheeks had lost none of their freshness. Her eyes were bright. Her smile was quick and merry, her wit unclouded. Receptions, drawing rooms and state functions found her always vivacious, so much so that her court wondered not a little. Daily reports brought no news of the fugitive, but while others were beginning to acquire the haggard air of worry and uncertainty she was calmly resigned. The 15th, the 16th, the 17th, the 18th and now the 19th of November came and still the princess revealed no marked sign of distress.

Heavy hearted and with bowed heads the people of Graustark saw the 19th fade in the night, the breaking of which would bring the crush of pride, the end of power. At court there was the silent dread and the dying hope that relief might come at the last hour. Men with pale faces and tearful eyes wandered through the ancient castle, speechless, nerveless, miserable. Brave soldiers crept about, shorn of pride and filled with woe. Citizens sat and stared aimlessly for hours, thinking of naught but the disaster so near at hand and so unavoidable. The whole nation surged as if in the last throes of death. Tomorrow the potency of Graustark was to die, its domain was to be cleft in twain, disgraced before the world.

And on the throne of this afflicted land sat the girl Yetive, proud, tender, courageous. Tomorrow would see the north torn from the south, the division of families, the rending of homes, the bursting of hearts. She sanctioned all this because she loved Lorry and because he had done no wrong.

Aware of her financial troubles and pursuing the advantage that his rival's death had opened to him, Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen renewed his ardent suit. Scarce had the body of the murdered prince left the domain before he made his presence marked. Knowing that he was in truth the mysterious Michael who had planned her abduction, she feared and despised him, yet dared make no public denunciation. As Dawsbergen was too powerful to be antagonized at this critical time, she was constantly forced to submit to the most trying and repulsive of ordeals. Tact and policy were required to control the violent, hot blooded young ruler from the south. Day after day he haunted the castle, persistent in his efforts to induce her to accept his proposition. So fierce was his passion, so implacable his desire, that he went among the people of Edelweiss, presenting to them his proposal, hoping thereby to add public feeling to his claims. He tried to organize a committee of citizens to go before the princess with the petition that his offer be accepted and the country saved. But Graustark was loyal to its princess. Not one of her citizens listened to the wily prince, and more than one told him or his emissaries that the loss of the whole kingdom was preferable to the marriage he desired. The city sickened at the thought.

His last and master stroke in the struggle to persuade came on the afternoon of the 19th, at an hour when all Edelweiss was in gloom and when the princess was taxed to the point where the mask of courage was so frail that she could scarce hide her bleeding soul behind it.

Bolaroz of Axphain, to quote from the news dispatch, was in Edelweiss, a guest, with a few of his lords, in the castle. North of the city were encamped 5,000 men. He had come prepared to cancel the little obligation of fifteen years' standing. With the hated creditor in the castle, his influence hovering above the town, the populace distracted by the thoughts of the day to come, Gabriel played what he considered his best card. He asked for and obtained a final interview with Yetive, not in her boudoir or her reception room, but in the thronercom, where she was to meet Bolaroz in the morning.

The princess, seated on her throne, awaited the approach of the resourceful, tenacious suitor. He came, and behind him strode eight stalwart men bearing a long iron bound chest, the result of his effort with his bankers. Yetive and her nobles looked in surprise on this unusual performance. Dropping to his knee before the throne, Gabriel said, his voice trembling slightly with eagerness and fear:

"Your highness, tomorrow will see the turning point in the history of two, possibly three, nations—Graustark, Axphain and Dawsbergen. I have included my own land because its ruler is most vitally interested. He would serve and save Graustark, as you know, and he would satisfy Axphain. It is in my power to give you aid at this last, trying hour, and I implore you to listen to my words of sincerest friendship—yes, adoration. Tomorrow you are to pay to Prince Bolaroz over 25,000,000 gavvos or relinquish the entire north half of your domain. I understand the lamentable situation. You can raise no more than 15,000,000, and you are helpless. He will grant no extension of time. You know what I have proffered before. I come today to repeat my friendly offer and to give unquestioned bond as to my ability to

"Go! I will not hear you!"

carry it out. If you agree to accept the loan I extend—10,000,000 gavvos for fifteen years at the usual rate of interest—you can on tomorrow morning place in the hand of Axphain when he makes his formal demand the full amount of your indebtedness in gold. Ricardo, open the chest!"

An attendant threw open the lid of the chest. It was filled with gold coins.

"This box contains 100,000 gavvos. There are in your halls nine boxes holding nine times as much as you see here, and there are nine times as much all told on the way. This is an evidence of my good faith. Here is the gold. Pay Bolaroz and owe Gabriel, the greatest happiness that could come to him."

There was a dead silence after this theatrical action.

"The interest on this loan is not all you ask, I understand," said Halfont slowly, his black eyes glittering. "You ask something that Graustark cannot and will not barter—the hand of its sovereign. If you are willing to make this loan, naming a fair rate of interest, withdrawing your proposal of marriage, we can come to an agreement."

Gabriel's eyes deadened with disappointment, his breast heaved and his fingers twitched.

"I have the happiness of your sovereign at heart as much as my own," he said. "She shall never want for devotion; she shall never know a pain."

"You are determined, then, to adhere to your original proposition?" demanded the count.

"She would have married Lorenz to save her land, to protect her people. Am I not as good as Lorenz? Why not give"— began Gabriel viciously, but Yetive arose and, with gleaming eyes and flushing cheeks, interrupted him.

"Go! I will not hear you—not one word!"

He passed from the room without another word. Her court saw her standing straight and immovable, her white face transfigured.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VISITOR AT MIDNIGHT.

BELOW the castle and its distressed occupants, in a dark, damp little room, Grenfall Lorry lived a year in a day. On the night of the 18th, or, rather, near the break of dawn on the 19th, Captain Quinnox guided him from the dangerous streets of Edelweiss to the secret passage, and he was safe for the time being. The entrance to the passage was through a skillfully hidden opening in the wall that inclosed the park. A stone doorway so cleverly constructed that it defied detection led to a set of steps, which in turn took one to a long, narrow passage. This ended in a stairway fully a quarter of a mile from its beginning. Ascending this stairway one came to a secret panel through which, by pressing a spring, the interior of the castle was reached. The location of the panel was in one of the recesses in the wall of the chapel, near the altar. It was in this chapel that Yetive exchanged her male attire for a loose gown weeks before, and the servant who saw her come from the door at an unearthly hour in the morning believed she had gone there to seek surcease from the troubles which oppressed her.

Lorry was impatient to rush forth from his place of hiding and to end all suspense, but Quinnox demurred. He begged the eager American to remain in the passage until the night of the 19th, when, all things going well, he might be so fortunate as to reach the princess without being seen. It was the secret hope of the guilty captain that his charge could be induced by the princess to return to the monastery to avoid complications. He promised to inform her highness of his presence in the underground room and to arrange for a meeting. The miserable fellow could not find courage to confess his disobedience to his trusting mistress. Many times during the day she had seen him hovering near, approaching and then retreating, and had wondered not a little at his peculiar manner.

And so it was that Lorry chafed and writhed through a long day of suspense and agony. Quinnox had brought to the little room some candles, food and bedding, but he utilized only the former. The hours went by and no summons called him to her side. What was to become of him? What was to be the end of this drama? What would the night, the morrow, bring about?

It was 9 o'clock in the evening when Quinnox returned to the little room. The waiting one had looked at his watch a hundred times, had run insanely up and down the passage in quest of the secret exit, had shouted aloud in the frenzy of desperation.

"Have you seen her?" he cried, grasping the newcomer's hand.

"I have; but, before God, I could not tell her what I had done! Your visit will be a surprise, I fear a shock."

"Then how am I to see her? Fool! Am I to wait here forever"—

"Have patience! I will take you to her tonight—aye, within an hour. Tomorrow morning she signs away the northern provinces, and her instructions are that she is not to be disturbed tonight. Not even will she see the Countess Dagmar after 9 o'clock. It breaks my heart to see the sorrow that abounds in the castle tonight. Her highness insists on being alone, and Bassot, the new guard, has orders to admit no one to her apartments. He is ill, and I have promised that a substitute shall relieve him at 11 o'clock. You are to be the substitute. Here is a part of an old uniform of mine, and here is a coat that belonged to Dannox, who was about your size. Please exchange the clothes you now have on for these. I apprehend no trouble in reaching her door, for the household is in gloom and the halls seem barren of life."

He threw the bundle on a chair, and Lorry at once proceeded to don the contents. In a very short time he wore instead of the cellkeeper's garments a neat fitting uniform of the royal guard. He was trembling violently, chilled to the bone with nervousness, as they began the ascent of the stairs leading to the chapel. The crisis in his life, he felt, was near at hand.

Under the stealthy hand of Quinnox the panel opened, and they listened intently for some moments. There was no one in the dimly lighted chapel, so they made their way to the door at the opposite end. Before unlocking the door the captain pointed to a lance which stood against the wall near by.

"You are to carry that lance," he said briefly. Then he cautiously peered forth. A moment later they were in the broad hall, boldly striding toward the distant stairway. Lorry had been instructed to proceed without the least sign of timidity. They passed several attendants in the hall and heard Count Halfont's voice in conversation with some one in an anteroom. As they neared the broad steps who should come tripping down but Harry Anguish. He saluted Quinnox and walked rapidly down the corridor, evidently taking his departure after a call on the countess.

"There goes your hostage," said the captain grimly. It had required all of Lorry's self possession to restrain the cry of joyful recognition. Up the stairs case they went, meeting several ladies and gentlemen coming down, and were soon before the apartments of the princess. A tall guard stood in front of the boudoir door.

"This is your relief, Bassot. You may go," said Quinnox, and with a careless glance at the strange soldier the sick man trudged off down the hall, glad to seek his bed.

"Is she there?" whispered Lorry, dizzy and faint with expectancy.

"Yes. This may mean your death and mine, sir, but you would do it. Will you explain to her how I came to play her false?"

"She shall know the truth, good friend."

"After I have gone twenty paces down the hall do you rap on the door. She may not admit you at first, but do not give up. If she bid you enter or asks your mission, enter quickly and close the door. It is unlocked. She may swoon or scream, and you must prevent either if possible. In an hour I shall return and you must go back to the passage."

"Never! I have come to save her and her country, and I intend to do so by surrendering myself this very night."

"I had hoped to dissuade you. But, sir, you cannot do so tonight. You forget that this visit compromises her."

"True. I had forgotten. Well, I'll go back with you, but tomorrow I am your prisoner, not your friend."

"Be careful," cautioned the captain as he moved away. Lorry feverishly tapped his knuckles on the panel of the door and waited with motionless heart for the response. It came not, and he rapped harder, a strange fear darting into his mind.

"Well?" came from within, the voice he adored.

Impetuous haste marked his next movement. He dashed open the door, sprang inside and closed it quickly. She was sitting before her escritoire writing, and looked up, surprised and annoyed.

"I was not to be disturbed—oh"—

She staggered to her feet and was in his arms before the breath of her exclamation had died away. Had he not supported her she would have dropped to the floor. Her hands, her face, were like ice, her breast was pulseless, and there was the wildest terror in her eyes.

(To Be Continued.)

Colo—G. W. Dean or LeGrand, will erect a hotel building here.