

TRUXTON KING

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A Story of Graustark
By GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON

SYNOPSIS OF TRUXTON KING By George Barr McCutcheon

CHAPTER I—Truxton King arrives in Edelweiss, capital of Graustark, and meets the beautiful niece of Spantz, a gunmaker.

II—King does a favor for Prince Robin, the young ruler of the country, whose guardian is John Tullis, an American.

III—Baron Dangloss, minister of police, interviews King and warns him against Olga, the gunmaker's niece.

IV—King invades the royal park, meets the prince and is presented to the king's fascinating Aunt Loraine.

V—The committee of ten, conspirators against the prince, meets in an underground chamber, where the girl Olga is disclosed as one who is to kill Prince Robin with a bomb.

VI—John Tullis calls on the beautiful Countess Ingomede, who warns him that her hated and notorious old husband, Count Marlaux, is conspiring against the prince.

VII, VIII, IX and X—King visits the house of the witch of Ganlook gap and meets the royal household there. He sees an eye gleaming through a crack in a door, and while searching for the person he is overpowered and dragged into a loft. He is confronted by Count Marlaux and then taken to the underground den of the committee of ten.

XI—Olga defends King before the committee of anarchists.

XII—Lorraine is brought to the den and thrown into the same room with King.

XIII—King feels a jailer, dons his clothing, and, disguised, carries Lorraine into a boat at night in which several of the anarchists are about to depart.

CHAPTER XIV—(Continued)
In a few minutes loud curses came from the river, proclaiming the fact that the pursuers had found the empty boat. Afterward they were to learn that Newport's shouts had brought a boat load of men from the opposite bank, headed by the luncheon, in whose place Lorraine was to have encountered Marlaux later on, if plans had not miscarried.

By this time King had located the open space which undoubtedly afforded room for the transfer of cargoes from the dock to the company's yards inside the walls. Without hesitation he drew her after him up this wide, sinister roadway.

The pursuers were trying for a landing, noisily, even boisterously. It struck Truxton as queer that these

men were not afraid of alarming the watchmen on the docks or the man at the gate above. Suddenly it came to him that there would be no one there to oppose the landing of the miscreants. No doubt hundreds of men already had stolen through these gates during the night, secreting themselves in the fastnesses of the city, ready for the morrow's fray.

They rushed up the narrow railway chutes and through one of the numerous gateways that opened out upon the barge docks. No one opposed them. No one was standing guard. From behind came the sound of rushing footsteps. Lightning flashed in the sky, and the rumble of thunder broke over the desolate night.

"They'll see us by the lightning," gasped Truxton, almost ready to drop from faintness and exhaustion.

Following a vivid flash of lightning, two shots were fired by the men who were now plunging up through the gates, a hundred yards or more away. The same flash of lightning showed to King the narrow, muddy street that stretched ahead of them. Instead of doing the obvious thing he turned sharply to the left, between the lines of freight cars. Their progress was slow.

At last they came to the end of their rope. They were literally up against the great city wall.

A car door stood open in front of them. He waited for a second flash of lightning to reveal to him the nature of its interior. It was quite empty. Without hesitation he clambered in and pulled her up after him. They fell over on the floor, completely fagged.

A few minutes later the storm broke. He managed to close the door against the driving torrents.

"We've fooled them," he managed to whisper close to her ear. "They won't look here. You're safe, Loraine. Gad, I'd like to see any one get you away from me now!"

She pressed his arm. Then she was fast asleep.

He sat with his back against the side of the car, a pistol in one hand, the other lying tenderly upon the drenched hair of the girl whose head rested upon his leg. She had slipped down from his shoulder. He did not have the desire or the energy to prevent it. Manfully as he had fought against the impelling desire to sleep, he could not beat it off. His last waking thought was of the effort he must make to reach Dangloss with the warning.

Something stirred in the far end of the car—a still small noise as of something alive that moved with the utmost wariness. A heavy, breathing body crept stealthily across the inter-

vening space, so quietly that a mouse could have made but little less noise. An instant later the bluish flame of a sulphur match struggled for life, growing stronger and brighter in the hand of a man who stood above the sleepers.

CHAPTER XV. THE GIRL IN THE RED CLOAK.

INSIDE of an hour after the return of the frightened, quivering groom who had escaped from the brigands in the hills Jack Tullis was granted permission by the war department to take a hundred picked men with him in the effort to overtake and capture the abductors of his sister. The dazed groom's story hardly had been told to the horrified brother before he was engaged in telephoning to General Braze and Baron Dangloss. A hurried consultation followed.

Baron Dangloss was sadly upset. Three prominent persons had been stolen from beneath his nose, so to speak. He was beside himself with rage and dismay. This last outrage was the climax. The old man adored the sister of Jack Tullis. He was heartbroken and crushed by the news of the catastrophe.

Captain Haas of the dragoons was put in charge of the relief party. The party was armed and equipped for a bitter chase. Word had been sent to Serros, the capital of Dawsbergen, asking the assistance of Prince Danttan in the effort to overtake the abductors. A detachment, it was announced in reply, was to start from Serros during the afternoon bound for the eastern passes.

Baron Dangloss rode to the southern gate with the white faced, suffering Tullis. "We will undoubtedly receive a communication from the rescuers this afternoon or tomorrow," he said gloomily. "They will not be slow to make a formal demand for ransom, knowing that you and your sister are possessed of unlimited wealth. Hello! Who's this?"

A man who had ridden up to the gates, his horse covered with foam, was demanding admission. The warders halted him unceremoniously as Dangloss rode forward. They found that he was one of the foremen in the employ of the railway construction company. He brought the disquieting news that another strike had been declared, that the men were ugly and determined to tear up the track already laid unless their demands were considered and, furthermore, that there had been severe fighting between the two factions engaged on the work.

He urgently implored Dangloss to send troops out to hold the rioters in check.

"What is your name?" demanded the harassed minister of police.

"Poison," replied the foreman. He lied, for he was no other than John Cromer, the unsavory husband of Anna Cromer of the committee of ten.

"Come with me," said Dangloss. "We will go to General Braze. Good-by and good luck, Tullis."

At that very moment Loraine Tullis was comparing notes with Truxton King in the room beneath the armorer's shop. Count Marlaux was hiding in the trader's inn outside the northern

gates. The abductors themselves were scattered about the city, laughing triumphantly over the success of the ruse that had drawn the well feared American away on a wild goose chase to the distant passes of Dawsbergen. More than that, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon a second detachment of soldiers left the city for the scene of the riots in the construction camps, twenty miles away.

Surely the well laid plans of the Iron Court were being skillfully carried out!

All afternoon and evening men struggled in from the hills and surrounding country, apparently loath to miss the early excitement attending the ceremonies on the following day. Sullen strikers from the camps came down, cursing the company, but drinking noisy toasts to the railroad and its future. The city by night swarmed with revelling thousands. The bands were playing, the crowds were singing and mobs were drinking and carousing in the lower end.

At 3 o'clock in the morning word flew from brothel to brothel, from lodging house to lodging house, in all parts of the slumbering city. A thousand men crept out into the streets after the storm, all animated by one impulse, all obeying a single fierce injunction.

They were to find and kill a tall American! They were to keep him or his companion from getting in touch with the police authorities or with the royal castle, no matter what the cost!

At 5 o'clock a stealthy whisper went the rounds, reaching the ear of every vagabond and cutthroat engaged in the untiring vigil. Like smoke they faded away. The silent watch was over.

The word had sped to every corner of the town that it was no longer necessary to maintain the watch for Truxton King. He was no longer in

a position to give them trouble or unrest.

The 20th dawned bright and cool after the savage storm from the north. "I don't like the looks of things," said Baron Dangloss time and again. His men were never so alert as today and never so deceived.

"There can't be trouble of any sort," mused Colonel Quinnox. "These fellows are ugly, 'tis true, but they are not prepared for a demonstration."

"Colonel, we'll yet see the day when Graustark regrets the economy that has cut our little army to almost nothing. What have we now all told? Three hundred men in the royal guard, fewer than 600 in the fortress. I have a hundred policemen. There you are. Today there are nearly 200 soldiers off in the mountains on nasty business of one sort or another. Gad, if these ruffians from the railroad possessed no more than pistols they could give us a merry fight. There must be a thousand of them. I don't like it. We'll have trouble before the day's over."

By 11 o'clock the streets in the neighborhood of the plaza were packed with people. At 12 the castle gates were to be thrown open for the brilliant cavalcade that was to pass between these cheering rows of people.

Shortly after half past 11 o'clock certain groups of men usurped the positions in front of certain buildings on the south side of the square, a score here, a half score there, others below them. They favored the shops operated by the friends of the committee of ten; they were the men who were to take possession of the rifles that lay hidden behind counters and walls.

From the distant castle came the sounds of shouts, crawling up the long line of spectators for the full length



THEY SLEPT. HOW TIRED THEY WERE!

of the avenue to the eager throng in Regeuzet circus, swelling and growing louder as the news came that the prince had ridden forth from the gates. Glad voices cried out tidings to those in the background. The prince was coming!

Bonny, adorable Prince Robin!

On came the splendid phalanx of guardsmen, followed by rigid infantrymen in measured tread. The great coach of gold, with its half score of horses, rolled somberly beneath nature's canopy of green, surrounded on all sides by proud members of the royal guard. Two carriages from the royal stables preceded the prince's coach. In the first were the Duke of Perse and three fellow members of the cabinet. The second contained Baron Dangloss and General Braze.

The curtains in a house at the corner of the square parted gently. A hawk faced old man peered out upon the joyous crowd. His black eyes swept the scene. A grim smile crept into his face. He dropped the curtains and walked away from the window, tossing a cigarette into a grate on the opposite side of the room. Then he looked at his watch.

The man who stood in the middle of the freight car looking down in wonder at the fugitives was a tall vagabond of the most picturesque type. No ragamuffin was ever so tattered and torn as this rakish individual. His clothes barely hung together on his lank frame.

Long, thin lips curled into a smile of delicious regard. His sides shook with the quiet chuckle of understanding. He was thinking of other days and nights and of many miles in faroff lands and of countless journeys in which he, too, had had fair and gentle company—short journeys, yes, but not to be forgotten.

He lighted the stub of a tallow candle. Ah, how envied this great, sleeping wayfarer! How beautiful his mistress! How fortunate the lover! They slept. How tired they were! Whence had they come?

Why should he stay here to spoil their waking hour? No. He would surrender his apartment to them.

Softly he tiptoed to his own corner of the car. He gathered up his belongings—an ancient violin case, a stout walking stick, a goodly sized pack done up in gaudy cloth, a well worn pair of sandals with long, frayed lacines. As gently he stole back to the door. He tossed a kiss to the sleeping girl, his dark gypsy face aglow with admiration and mischief, and was about to blow out the light of his candle. Then he changed his mind.

With a determined shake of his head and a new flash of the eye, he calmly seated himself and began to open his ragged pack.

(To Be continued)

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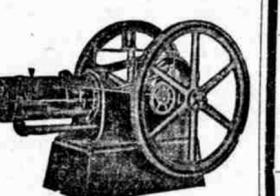
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