

Beverly of Graustark

By
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CHAPTER I.

AR off in the mountain lands, somewhere to the east of the setting sun, lies the principality of Graustark, serene relic of old feudal days. The traveler the little domain after an arduous, sometimes perilous, journey from the great European capitals, whether they be north or south or west or east. He crosses great rivers and wide plains; he winds through fertile valleys and over barren plateaus; he twists and turns and climbs among steep gorges and rugged mountains; he touches the cold clouds in one day and the placid warmth of the valley in the next. One does not go to Graustark for a pleasure jaunt. It is too far from the rest of the world, and the ways are often dangerous because of the strife among the tribes of the intervening mountains. If one hungers for excitement and peril, he finds it in the journey from the north or the south into the land of the Graustarkians. From the gorges and other places almost direct west the way is not so full of thrills, for the railroad skirts the darkest of the danger lands.

Once in the heart of Graustark, however, the traveler is charmed into a dream of peace and happiness and—paradise. The peasants and the poets sing in one voice and accord, their hymn being of never ending love. Even in the lowlands and up in the hills the simple worker of the soil reposes that he lives in Graustark; in the towns and villages the humble merchant and his thrifty customer unite in the song of peace and contentment; in the palaces of the noble the time patriotism warms its heart with thoughts of Graustark, the ancient prince and pauper strike hands for the love of the land, while outside the great, heartless world goes rumbling without a thought of the rare little principality among the eastern mountains.

In point of area Graustark is but a speck in the great galaxy of nations, blanketing over the map of the world, the is almost sure to miss the infinitesimal patch of green that marks its location. One could not be blamed if he regarded the spot as a typographical or topographical illusion. Yet the people of this quaint little land hold in their hearts a love and a confidence that are not surpassed by any of the early monarchs who measure their patriotism by miles and millions. The Graustarkians are a sturdy, courageous race. From the faraway century when they fought themselves clear of the barbaric yoke to this very hour they have been warriors of might and valor. The boundaries of their tiny domain were kept inviolate for hundreds of years, and but one victorious foe had come down to lay siege to Edelweiss, the capital. Asphain, a powerful principality in the north, had conquered Graustark in the latter part of the thirteenth century, but only after a bitter war in which starvation and famine proved far more destructive than the arms of the victors. The treaty of peace and the indemnity that fell to the lot of vanquished Graustark have been discussed upon at length at least one history.

Those who have followed that history must know, of course, that the reigning princess, Yette, was married to a young American at the very turn of the nineteenth century. This admirable couple met in quite romantic fashion while the young sovereign was traveling incognito through the United States of America. The American, a splendid fellow named Lorry, was so persistent in the subsequent attack upon her heart that all ancestral prejudices were swept away, and she became his bride with the full consent of her entranced subjects. The manner in which he wooed and won this young and adorable ruler forms a very attractive chapter in romance, although mentioned in history. This being the tale of another day, it is not timely to dwell upon the interesting events which led up to the marriage of the Princess Yette to Grenfall Lorry. Suffice it to say that Lorry won his bride against all wishes and odds and at the same time won an endless love and esteem from the people of the little kingdom among the eastern hills. Two years have passed since that notable wedding in Edelweiss.

Lorry and his wife, the princess, made their home in Washington, but spent a few months of each year in Edelweiss. During the periods spent in Washington and in travel her affairs in Graustark were in the hands of a capable, austere old diplomat, her uncle, Count Caspar Halfont. Princess Volga reigned as regent over the principality of Asphain. To the south lay the principality of Dawsbergen, ruled by young Prince Danton, whose half brother, the deposed Prince Gabriel, had been for two years a prisoner in Graustark, the convicted assassin of Prince Lorenz of Asphain, one time emperor for the hand of Yette.

It was after the second visit of the Lorrys to Edelweiss that a serious turn of affairs presented itself. Gabriel had succeeded in escaping from his dungeon. His friends in Dawsbergen stirred up a revolution, and Danton was driven from the throne at Serrow. On

the arrival of Gabriel at the capital the army of Dawsbergen espoused the cause of the prince it had spurned, and, three days after his escape, he was on his throne, defying Yette and offering a price for the head of the unfortunate Danton, now a fugitive in the hills along the Graustark frontier.

CHAPTER II.

MAJOR GEORGE CALHOUN was a member of congress from one of the southern states. His forefathers had represented the same commonwealth, and so, it was likely, would his descendants, if there is virtue in the fitness of things and the heredity of love. While intrepid frontiersmen were opening the trails through the fertile wilds west of the Alleghenies a strong branch of the Calhoun family followed close in their footsteps. The major's great-grandfather saw the glories and the possibilities of the new territory. He struck boldly forward from the old Revolutionary grounds, abandoning the luxuries and traditions of the Carolinas for a fresh, wild life of promise. His sons and daughters became solid stones in the foundation of a commonwealth, and his grandchildren are still at work on the structure. State and national legislatures had known the Calhouns from the beginning. Battlefields had tested their valor, and drawing rooms had proved their gentility.

Major Calhoun had fought with Stonewall Jackson and won his spurs, and at the same time the heart and hand of Betty Haswell, the staunchest Confederate who ever made flags, bandages and prayers for the boys in gray. When the reconstruction came he went to congress, and later on became prominent in the United States consular service, for years holding an important European post. Congress claimed him once more in the early nineties, and there he is at this very time.

Everybody in Washington's social and diplomatic circles admired the beautiful Beverly Calhoun. According to his own loving term of identification, she was the major's "youngest." The fair southerner had seen two seasons in the nation's capital. Cupid, standing directly in front of her, had shot his darts ruthlessly and resistlessly into the passing hosts, and masculine Washington looked humbly to her for the balm that might soothe its pains. The wily god of love was fair enough to protect the girl whom he forced to be his unwilling, perhaps unconscious, ally. He held his impenetrable shield between her heart and the assaults of a whole army of suitors, high and low, great and small. It was not idle rumor that said she had declined a coronet or two, that the millions of more than one American Midas had been offered to her and that she had dealt gently but firmly with a score of hearts which had nothing but love, ambition and poverty to support them in the conflict.

The Calhouns lived in a handsome home not far from the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Grenfall Lorry. It seemed but natural that the two beautiful young women should become constant and loyal friends. Women as lovely as they have no reason to be jealous. It is only the woman who does not feel secure of her personal charms that cultivates envy. At the home of Graustark's princess Beverly met the dukes and barons from the far east. It was in the warmth of the Calhoun hospitality that Yette formed her dearest love for the American people.

Miss Beverly was neither tall nor short. She was of that divine and indefinite height known as medium; slender, but perfectly molded; strong, but graceful—an absolutely healthy young person, whose beauty knew well how to take care of itself. Being quite heart whole and fancy free, she slept well, ate well and enjoyed every minute of life. In her blood ran the warm, eager impulses of the south; hereditary love of ease and luxury displayed itself in every emotion; the perfectly normal demand upon men's admiration was as characteristic in her as it is in any daughter of the land whose women are born to expect chivalry and homage.

A couple of years in a New York "finishing school" for young ladies had served greatly to modify Miss Calhoun's colloquial charms. Many of her delightful "way down south" phrases and mannerisms were blighted by the cold, unromantic atmosphere of a seminary conducted by two ladies from Boston who were too old to marry, too penurious to love and too prim to think that other women might care to do both. There were times, however—if Gabriel himself replied, "Graustark be hanged!"

"How rude of him, especially when your uncle was so courteous about it! He must be a very disagreeable person," announced Miss Calhoun.

"Alas," sighed the princess, "he hasn't an army, and besides he is finding it extremely difficult to keep from being annihilated himself. The army has gone over to Prince Gabriel."

"Pooh!" scoffed Miss Calhoun, who was thinking of the enormous armies the United States can produce at a day's notice. "What good is a ridiculous little army like his anyway? A battalion from Fort Thomas could beat it to"—

"Don't boast, dear," interrupted Yette, with a wan smile. "Dawsbergen has a standing army of 10,000 excellent soldiers. With the war reserves she has twice the available force I can produce."

"But your men are so brave!" cried Beverly, who had heard their praises sung.

"True—God bless them!—but you forget that we must attack Gabriel in his own territory. To recapture him means a perilous expedition into the mountains of Dawsbergen, and I am sorely afraid. Oh, dear, I hope he'll surrender peaceably!"

"And go back to jail for life?" cried Miss Calhoun. "It's a good deal to expect of him, dear. I fancy it's much better fun kicking up a rumpus on the outside than it is kicking one's toes off against an obdurate stone wall from the inside. You can't blame him for fighting a bit."

"No, I suppose not," agreed the princess miserably. "Gren is actually happy over the miserable affair, Beverly. He is full of enthusiasm and positively acting to be in Graustark—right in the thick of it all. To hear him talk one would think that Prince Gabriel has no show at all. He kept me up till 4 o'clock this morning telling me that Dawsbergen didn't know what kind of a snag it was going up against. I have a vague idea what he means by that. His manner did not leave much room for doubt. He also said that we would jolt Dawsbergen off the map. It sounds encouraging at least, doesn't it?"

"It sounds very funny for you to say those things," admitted Beverly, "even though they come secondhand. You were not cut out for slang."

"Why, I'm sure they are all good English words," remonstrated Yette.

Yette's maids were packing the trunks, and Lorry's servants were in a wild state of haste preparing for the departure on Saturday's ship. On Friday afternoon Beverly was naturally where she could do the most good and be of the least help—at the Lorrys'. Self confessedly she delayed the preparations. Respectful maidservants and respectful manservants came often to the princess' boudoir to ask questions, and Beverly just as frequently made tearful resolutions to leave the household in peace—if such a hulloaloo could be called peace.

Callers came by the dozen, but Yette would see no one. Letters, telegrams and telephone calls almost swamped her secretary; the footman and the butler fairly gasped under the strain of excitement. Through it all the two friends sat despondent and alone in the dear room that once had been the abode of pure delight. Grenfall Lorry was off in town closing up all matters of business that could be dispatched at once. The princess and her industrious retinue were to take the evening express for New York, and the next day would find them at sea.

"I know I shall cry all summer," vowed Miss Calhoun, with conviction in her eyes. "It's just too awful for anything." She was lying back among the cushions of the divan, and her hat was the picture of cruel neglect. For three solid hours she had stubbornly withstood Yette's appeals to remove her hat, insisting that she could not trust herself to stay more than a minute or two. "It seems to me, Yette, that your jammers must be very incompetent or they wouldn't have let loose all this trouble upon you," she complained.

"Prince Gabriel is the very essence of trouble," confessed Yette plaintively. "He was born to annoy people. Just like the evil prince in the fairy tales."

"I wish we had him over here," the American girl answered stoutly. "He wouldn't be such a trouble, I'm sure. We don't let small troubles worry us very long, you know."

"But he's dreadfully important over there, Beverly; that's the difficult part of it," said Yette solemnly. "You see, he is a condemned murderer."

"Then you ought to hang him or electrocute him or whatever it is that you do to murderers over there," spoke Beverly promptly.

"But, dear, you don't understand. He won't permit us either to hang or to electrocute him, my dear. The situation is precisely the reverse, if he is correctly quoted by my uncle. When Uncle Caspar sent an envoy to inform Dawsbergen respectfully that Graustark would hold it personally responsible if Gabriel were not surrendered, Gabriel himself replied, 'Graustark be hanged!'"

"How rude of him, especially when your uncle was so courteous about it! He must be a very disagreeable person," announced Miss Calhoun.

"I am sure you wouldn't like him," said the princess. "His brother, who has been driven from the throne—and from the capital, in fact—is quite different. I have not seen him, but my ministers regard him as a splendid young man."

"Oh, how I hope he may go back with his army and annihilate that old

princess could not refuse to see them. Beverly Calhoun reluctantly departed, but not until after giving a promise to accompany the Lorrys to the railway station.

"The trunks had gone to be checked, and the household was quieter than it had been in many days. There was an air of depression about the place that had its inception in the room upstairs where sober faced Halkins served dinner for a not overtalkative young couple.

"It will be all right, dearest," said Lorry, divining his wife's thoughts as she sat staring rather soberly straight ahead of her. "Just as soon as we get to Edelweiss the whole affair will look so simple that we can laugh at the fears of today. You see, we are a long way off just now."

"I am only afraid of what may happen before we get there, Gren," she said simply. He leaned over and kissed her hand, smiling at the emphasis she unconsciously placed on the pronoun.

Beverly Calhoun was announced just before coffee was served and a moment later was in the room. She stopped just inside the door, clicked her little heels together and gravely brought her hand to "salute." Her eyes were sparkling and her lips trembled with suppressed excitement.

"I think I can report to you in Edelweiss next month, general," she announced, with soldierly dignity. Her hearers stared at the picturesque recruit, and Halkins so far forgot himself as to drop Mr. Lorry's lump of sugar upon the table instead of into the cup.

"Explain yourself, sergeant!" finally fell from Lorry's lips. The eyes of the princess were beginning to take on a rapturous glow.

"May I have a cup of coffee, please, sir? I've been so excited I couldn't eat a mouthful at home." She gracefully slid into the chair Halkins offered and broke into an ecstatic giggle that would have resulted in a court martial had she been serving any commander but Love.

With a plentiful supply of southern idioms she succeeded in making them understand that the major had promised to let her visit friends in the legation at St. Petersburg in April, a month or so after the departure of the Lorrys.

"He wanted to know where I'd rather spend the spring—Washington or Lexington—and I told him St. Petersburg. We had a terrific discussion, and neither of us ate a speck at dinner. Mamma said it would be all right for me to go to St. Petersburg if Aunt Josephine was still of a mind to go too. You see, auntie was scared almost out of her boots when she heard there was prospect of war in Graustark, just as though a tiny little war like that could make any difference away up in Russia, hundreds of thousands of miles away—with a scornful wave of the hand—and then I just made auntie say she'd go to St. Petersburg in April, a whole month sooner than she expected to go in the first place, and—"

"You dear, dear Beverly!" cried Yette, rushing joyously around the table to clasp her in her arms.

"And St. Petersburg really isn't a hundred thousand miles from Edelweiss!" cried Beverly gayly.

"It's much less than that," said Lorry, smiling. "But you surely don't expect to come to Edelweiss if we are fighting. We couldn't think of letting you do that, you know. Your mother would never!"

"My mother wasn't afraid of a much bigger war than yours can ever hope to be!" cried Beverly resentfully. "You can't stop me if I choose to visit Graustark."

"Does your father know that you contemplate such a trip?" asked Lorry, returning her hand clasp and looking doubtfully into the swimming blue eyes of his wife.

"No, he doesn't," admitted Beverly a trifle aggressively.

"He could stop you, you know," he suggested. Yette was discreetly silent.

"But he won't know anything about it," cried Beverly triumphantly.

"I could tell him, you know," said Lorry.

"No, you couldn't do anything as mean as that," announced Beverly. "You're not that sort."

"How much farther have we to go, lieutenant?" asked the girl on the rear seat plaintively, even humbly. The man was very deliberate with his English. He had been recommended to her as the best linguist in the service at Radovitch, and he had a reputation to sustain.

"It another hour is but yet," he managed to inform her, with a confident smile.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "a whole hour of this!"

"We soon be dar, Miss Beverly. Jes' yo' mak' up yo' min' to res' easy-like, an' we"— But the faithful old colored woman's advice was lost in the wrathful exclamation that accompanied another dislodgment of bags and boxes. The wheels of the coach had dropped suddenly into a deep rut. Aunt Fanny's growls were scarcely more potent than poor Miss Beverly's moans.

"It is getting worse and worse," exclaimed Aunt Fanny's mistress petulantly. "I'm black and blue from head to foot, aren't you, Aunt Fanny?"

"Ah, can't say as to de blue, Miss Beverly. Hit's a mos' monstrous bad road, sho' nough. Stay up dar, will yo'?" she concluded, jamming a bag into an upper corner.

Miss Calhoun, tourist extraordinary, again consulted the linguist in the saddle. She knew at the outset that the quest would be hopeless, but she could think of no better way to pass the next hour than to extract a mite of information from the officer.

"Now for a good old chat," she said, beaming a smile upon the grizzled Russian. "Is there a decent hotel in the village?" she asked.

They were on the edge of the village before she succeeded in finding out all that she could, and it was not a great deal, either. She learned that the town of Balak was in Asphain, scarcely a mile from the Graustark line. There was an eating and sleeping house on the main street, and the population of the place did not exceed 300.

When Miss Beverly awoke the next morning, sore and distressed, she looked back upon the night with a horror that sleep had been kind enough to interrupt only at intervals. The wretched hostelry lived long in her secret catalogue of terrors. Her bed was not a bed; it was a torture. The room, the table, the—but it was all too odious for description. Fatigue was her only friend in that miserable hole. Aunt Fanny had slept on the floor near her mistress' cot, and it was the good old colored woman's grumbling that awoke Beverly. The sun was climbing up the mountains in the east, and there was an air of general activity about the place. Beverly's watch told her that it was past 8 o'clock.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "It's nearly noon, Aunt Fanny. Hurry along here and get me up. We must leave this abominable place in ten minutes." She was up and racing about excitedly.

"Befo' breakfast?" demanded Aunt Fanny weakly.

"Goodness, Aunt Fanny, is that all you think about?"

"Well, honey, yo'll be thinkin' moughty serious 'bout breakfast' long to 'ahds 'leben o'clock. Dat if I tummy o' yourn'll be powful mad 'cause yo' didn't!"

"Very well, Aunt Fanny, you can run along and have the woman put up a breakfast for us, and we'll eat it on the road. I positively refuse to eat another mouthful in that awful dining room. I'll be down in ten minutes."

She was down in less. Sleep, no matter how hard earned, had revived her spirits materially. She pronounced herself ready for anything. There was a wholesome disdain for the rigors of the coming ride through the mountains in the way she gave orders for the start. The Russian officer met her just outside the entrance to the inn. He was less English than ever, but he eventually gave her to understand that he had secured permission to escort her as far as Ganlook, a town in Graustark not more than fifteen miles from Edelweiss and at least two days from Balak. Two competent Asphain guides had been retained, and the party was quite ready to start. He had been warned of the presence of brigands in the wild mountainous passes north of Ganlook. The Russians could go no farther than Ganlook because of a royal edict from Edelweiss forbidding the nearer approach of armed forces. At that town, however, he was sure she easily could obtain an escort of Graustarkian soldiers.

As the big coach crawled up the mountain road and further into the oppressive altitudes Beverly Calhoun drew from the difficult lieutenant considerable information concerning the state of affairs in Graustark. She had been eagerly awaiting the time when something definite could be learned. Before leaving St. Petersburg early in the week she was assured that a state of war did not exist. The Princess Yette had been in Edelweiss for six weeks. A formal demand was framed soon after her return from America requiring Dawsbergen to surrender the person of Prince Gabriel to the authorities of Graustark. To this demand there was no definite response, Dawsbergen insolently requesting time in which to consider the proposition.

Asphain immediately sent an envoy to Edelweiss to say that all friendly relations between the two governments would cease unless Graustark took vigorous steps to recapture the royal assassin. On one side of the unhappy principality a strong, overbearing princess was egging Graustark on to fight, while on the other side an equally aggressive people defied Yette to come and take the fugitive if she could. The poor princess was between two ugly alternatives, and a struggle seemed inevitable. At Balak it was learned that Asphain had recently sent a final appeal to the government of Graustark, and it was no

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Her hearers stared at the picturesque recruit.