

# BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By George Barr McCutcheon.

Author of "Graustark"

Copyright, 1904, Dodd, Mead & Co.

Fully three-quarters of an hour passed before the coach was checked. Beverly, looking from the windows, had seen the lighted windows of cottages growing closer and closer together. The barking of roadside dogs was the only sound that could be heard above the rattle of the wheels. It was too dark inside the coach to see the face of the man beside her, but something told her that he was staring intently into the night, alert and anxious. The responsibility of her position swooped down upon her like an avalanche, as she thought of what the next few minutes were to bring forth. It was the sudden stopping of the coach and the sharp commands from the outside that told her probation was at an end. She could no longer speculate; it was high time to act.

"The outpost," came from Baldos, in strained tones.

"Perhaps they won't know us—yes, I mean," she whispered.

"Baron Dangloss knows everybody," he replied bitterly.

"What a horrid old busybody he—she started to say, but thought better of it."

A couple of lanterns flashed at the window, almost blinding her. Aunt Fanny groaned audibly, but the figure of Baldos seemed to stiffen with defiance. Uniformed men peered into the interior with more rudeness and curiosity than seemed respectful to a princess, to say the least. They saw a pretty, pleading face, with wide gray eyes and parted lips, but they did not bow in humble submission, as Baldos had expected. One of the men, evidently in command, addressed Beverly in rough but polite tones. It was a question that he asked, she knew, but she could not answer him, for she could not understand him.

"What do you want?" she put in English, with a creditable display of dignity.

"He does not speak English, your highness," volunteered Baldos, in a voice so well disguised that it startled her. The officer was staring blankly at her.

"Every officer in my army should and must learn to speak English," she said, at her wits' end. "I decline to be questioned by the fellow. Will you talk to him in my stead?"

"I, your highness?" he cried in dismay.

"Yes. Tell him who we are and ask where the hospital is," she murmured, sinking back with the air of a queen, but with the inward feeling that all was lost.

"But I don't speak your language well," he protested.

"You speak it beautifully," she said. Baldos leaned forward painfully and spoke to the officer in the Graustark tongue.

"Don't you know your princess?" he demanded a trifle harshly. The man's eyes flew wide open in an instant and his jaw dropped.

"The princess?" he gasped. "Don't stare like that, sir. Direct us to the main gate at once, or you will have cause to regret your slowness."

"But the princess was—is coming by the northern pass," mumbled the man. "The guard has gone out to meet her and"—Baldos cut him off shortly with the information that the princess, as he could see, had come by the lower pass and that she was eager to reach a resting place at once. The convincing tone of the speaker and the regal indifference of the lady had full effect upon the officer, who had never seen her highness. He fell back with a deep obeisance and gave a few bewildered commands to his men. The coach moved off, attended by a party of foot soldiers, and Beverly breathed her first sigh of relief.

"You did it beautifully," she whispered to Baldos, and he was considerably puzzled by the ardor of her praise. "Where are we going now?" she asked.

"Into the city, your highness," he answered. "It was beginning to dawn upon him that she was amazingly ignorant and inconsequential for one who enjoyed the right to command these common soldiers. Her old trepidation returned with this brief answer. Something told her that he was beginning to mistrust her at last. After all it meant everything to him and so little to her."

When the coach halted before the city gates she was in a dire state of unhappiness. In the darkness she could feel the reproachful eyes of old Aunt Fanny searching for her abandoned conscience.

"Ask if Baron Dangloss is in Ganlook, and, if he is, command them to take me to him immediately," she whispered to Baldos, a sudden inspiration seizing her. She would lay the whole matter before the great chief of police and trust to fortune. Her hand fell impulsively upon his hand, to her amazement, it was as cold as ice. "What is the matter?" she cried in alarm.

"I must see Baron Dangloss at once," she cried in English, utterly disdainful of her instructions to Baldos.

"The baron is engaged at present and can see no one," responded the good looking young officer in broken English.

"Where is he?" she demanded nervously.

"He is at the house of Colonel Gonz, the commandant. What is your business with him?"

"It is with him and not with you, sir," she said, imperious once more. "Conduct me to him immediately."

"You cannot enter the gates unless you—"

"Insolence!" exclaimed Baldos. "Is this the way, sir, in which you address the princess? Make way for her."

"The princess!" gasped the officer. Then a peculiar smile overspread his face. He had served three years in the castle guard at Edelweiss! There was a long pause, fraught with disaster for Beverly. "Yes, perhaps it is just as well that we conduct her to Baron Dangloss," he said at last. The deep meaning in his voice appealed only to the unhappy girl. "There shall be no further delay, your highness!" he added mockingly. A moment later the gates swung open and they passed through. Beverly alone knew that they were going to Baron Dangloss under heavy guard, virtually as prisoners. The man knew her to be an impostor and was doing only his duty.

There were smiles of derision on the faces of the soldiers when Beverly swept proudly between the files and up the steps leading to the commandant's door, but there were no audible remarks. Baldos followed, walking painfully, but defiantly, and Aunt Fanny came last, with the hand bag. The guards grinned broadly as the corpulent negress waddled up the steps. The young officer and two men entered the door with the wayfarers, who were ordered to halt in the hallway.

"Will your highness come with me?" said the officer, returning to the hall after a short absence. There was unmistakable derision in his voice and palpable insolence in his manner. Beverly flushed angrily. "Baron Dangloss is very curious to see you," he added, with a smile. Nevertheless he shrunk a bit beneath the cold gleam in the eyes of the impostor.

"You will remain here," she said, turning to Baldos and the negress. "And you will have nothing whatever to say to this very important young man." The "important young man" actually chuckled.

"Follow me, your most royal highness," he said, preceding her through the door that opened into the office of the commandant. Baldos glared after them in angry amazement.

grim old man. His eyes twinkled as he replied, with fine obsequiousness: "You are Miss Beverly Calhoun of Washington."

## CHAPTER IX.

**B**EVERLY'S eyes showed her astonishment. Baron Dangloss courteously placed a chair for her and asked her to be seated. "We were expecting you, Miss Calhoun," he explained. "Her royal highness left St. Petersburg but a few hours after your departure, having unfortunately missed you."

"You don't mean to say that the princess tried to find me in St. Petersburg?" cried Beverly in wonder and delight.

"That was one of the purposes of her visit," said he brusquely.

"Oh, how jolly!" cried she, her gray eyes sparkling. The grim old captain was startled for the smallest fraction of a minute, but at once fell to admiring the fresh, eager face of the visitor.

"The public at large is under the impression that she visited the czar on matters of importance," he said, with a condescending smile.

"And it really was of no importance at all, that's what you mean?" She smiled back securely.

"Your message informing her highness of your presence in St. Petersburg had no sooner arrived than she set forth to meet you in that city, much against the advice of her counselors. I will admit that she had other business there, but it could have waited. You see, Miss Calhoun, it was a great risk at this particular time. Misfortune means disaster now. But Providence was her friend. She arrived safely in Ganlook not an hour since."

"Really? Oh, Baron Dangloss, where is she?" excitedly cried the American girl.

"For the night she is stopping with the Countess Rallowitz. A force of men, but not those whom you met at the gates, has just been dispatched at her command to search for you in the lower pass. You took the most dangerous road, Miss Calhoun, and I am amazed that you came through in safety."

"The Russians chose the lower pass, I know not why. Of course, I was quite ignorant. However, we met neither brigands nor soldiers, Axtaphin or Graustark. I encountered nothing more alarming than a mountain lion. And that, Baron Dangloss, recalls me to the sense of a duty I have been neglecting. A poor wanderer in the hills defended me against the beast and was badly wounded. He must be taken to a hospital at once, sir, where he may have the proper care."

Whereupon, at his request, she hurriedly related the story of that trying journey through the mountains, not forgetting to paint the courage of Baldos in most glowing colors. The chief was deeply interested in the story of the goat hunter and his party. There was an odd gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, but she did not observe it.

"You will see that he has immediate attention, won't you?" she implored in the end.

"He shall have our deepest consideration," promised he.

"You know I am rather interested because I shot him, just as if it were not enough that his legs were being torn by the brute at the time. He ought not to walk, Baron Dangloss. If you don't mind, I'd suggest an ambulance," she hurried on glibly. He could not conceal the smile that her eagerness inspired. "Really, he is in a serious condition. I think he needs some quinine and whisky, too, and—"

"He shall have the best of care," interrupted the captain. "Leave him to me, Miss Calhoun."

"Now, let me tell you something," said she, after due reflection. "You must not pay any attention to what he says. He is liable to be delirious and talk in a terrible sort of way. You know, delirious people never talk rationally." She was loyally trying to protect Baldos, the hunted, against any incriminating statements he might make.

"Quite right, Miss Calhoun," said the baron very gravely.

"And now, I'd like to go to the princess," said Beverly, absolutely sure of herself. "You know we are great friends, she and I."

"I have sent a messenger to announce your arrival. She will expect you," Beverly looked about the room in perplexity.

"But there has been no messenger here," she said.

"He left here some minutes before you came. I knew who it was that came knocking at our gates, even though she traveled as Princess Yette of Graustark."

"And, oh, that reminds me, Baron Dangloss, Baldos still believes me to be the princess. Is it necessary to—"

to tell him the truth about me? Just at present, I mean? I'm sure he'll rest much easier if he doesn't know differently."

"So far as I am concerned, Miss Calhoun, he shall always regard you as a queen," said Dangloss gallantly.

"Thank you. It's very nice of you to—"

see you tomorrow. Don't be in the least disturbed. Baron Dangloss has his instructions." Impulsively giving him her hand, which he respectfully raised to his lips, she followed Aunt Fanny and was gone.

Almost immediately Baldos was requested to present himself before Baron Dangloss in the adjoining room. Refusing to be carried in, he resolutely strode through the door and stood before the grim old captain of police, an easy, confident smile on his face. The black patch once more covered his eye with defiant assertiveness.

"They tell me you are Baldos, a goat hunter," said Baron Dangloss, eying him keenly.

"Yes."

"And you were hurt in defending one who is of much consequence in Graustark. Sit down, my good fellow." Baldos' eye gleamed coldly for an instant; then he sank into a chair. "While admitting that you have done Graustark a great service, I am obliged to tell you that I at least know you to be other than what you say. You are not a goat hunter, and Baldos is not your name. Am I not right?"

"You have had instructions from your sovereign, Baron Dangloss. Did they include a command to cross question me?" asked Baldos laughingly. Dangloss hesitated for a full minute.

"They did not. I take the liberty of inquiring on my own responsibility."

"Very well, sir. Until you have a right to question me, I am Baldos and a goat hunter. I think I am here to receive surgical treatment."

"You decline to tell me anything concerning yourself?"

"Only that I am injured and need relief."

"Perhaps I know more about you than you suspect, sir."

"I am not in the least interested, Baron Dangloss, in what you know. The princess brought me into Ganlook, and I have her promise of help and protection while here. That is all I have to say, except that I have implicit faith in her word."

Dangloss sat watching him in silence for some time. No one but himself knew what was going on in that shrewd, speculative mind. At length he arose and approached the proud fellow in rags.

"You have earned every consideration at our hands. My men will take you to the hospital, and you shall have the best of care. You have served our princess well. Tomorrow you may feel inclined to talk more freely with me, for I am your friend, Baldos."

"I am grateful for that, Baron Dangloss," said the other simply. Then he was led away, and a comfortable cot in the Ganlook hospital soon held his long, feverish frame, while capable hands took care of his wounds. He did not know it, but two fully armed soldiers maintained a careful guard outside his door under instructions from the head of the police. Moreover, a picked detail of men sallied forth into the lower pass in search of the goat hunter's followers.

In the meantime Beverly was conducted to the home of the Countess Rallowitz. Her meeting with the princess was most affectionate. There were tears, laughter and kisses. The whole atmosphere of the place suggested romance to the eager American girl. Downstairs were the royal guards. In the halls were attendants. All about were maidservants and obsequious lackeys, crowding the home of the kindly countess. At last, comfortable and free from the dust of travel, the two friends sat down to a dainty meal.

"Oh, I am so delighted," murmured Beverly for the hundredth time.

"I'm appalled when I think of the dangers you incurred in coming to me. No one but a very foolish American girl could have undertaken such a trip as this. Dear me, Beverly, I should have died if anything dreadful had happened to you. Why did you do it?" questioned the princess. And then they laughed joyously.

"And you went all the way to St. Petersburg to meet me, you dear, dear Yette!" cried Beverly so warmly that the attentive servant forgot his mask of reverence.

"Wasn't it ridiculous of me? I know Gren would have forbidden it if he had been in Edelweiss when I started. And, more shame to me, the poor fellow is doubtless at the conference with Dawsbergen, utterly ignorant of my escapade. You should have heard the ministry—er—ah— And the princess paused for an English word.

"Kick?" Beverly supplied.

"Yes. They objected violently. And, do you know, I was finally compelled to issue a private edict to restrain them from sending an appeal to Grenfall away off there on the frontier. Whether or no, my uncle insisted that he should be brought home, a three days' journey, in order that he might keep me from going to St. Petersburg. Of course they could not disobey my edict, and so poor Gren is none the wiser, unless he has returned from the conference. If he has, I am sure he is on the way to Ganlook at this very minute."

"What a whimsical ruler you are!" cried Beverly. "Upsetting everything sensible just to rush off hundreds of miles to meet me! And Axtaphin is trying to capture you too! Goodness, you must love me!"

"Oh, but I did have a trifling affair of state to lay before the czar, my dear! Tomorrow we shall be safe and sound in the castle, and it will all be very much worth while. You see, Beverly, dear, even princesses enjoy a diversion now and then. One wouldn't think anything of this adventure in the United States; it is the environment that makes it noticeable. Besides, you traveled as a princess. How did you like it?"

"It's all right," she said in low tones, pausing for a moment beside his chair. "Don't get up! Goodbye. I'll come to see you tomorrow. Don't be in the least disturbed. Baron Dangloss has his instructions." Impulsively giving him her hand, which he respectfully raised to his lips, she followed Aunt Fanny and was gone.

disadvantages as regarded from another. For a long time Beverly had been wondering how she should proceed in the effort to secure absolute clemency for Baldos. As yet she had said nothing to Yette of her promise to him, made while she was a princess.

"At any rate, I'm sure the goat hunters would not have been so faithful and true if they had not believed me to be a princess," said Beverly, paying the way. "You haven't a man in your kingdom who could be more chivalrous than Baldos."

"If he is that kind of a man, he would treat any woman as gently."

"You should have heard him call me 'your highness,'" cried Beverly. "He will loathe me if he ever learns that I deceived him."

"Oh, I think he deceived himself," spoke Yette easily. "Besides, you look as much like a princess as I."

"There is something I want to speak very seriously about to you, Yette," said Beverly, making ready for the worst. "You see, he did not want to enter Ganlook with me, but I insisted. He had been so brave and gallant, and he was suffering so intensely. It would have been criminal in me to leave him out there in the wilderness, wouldn't it?"

"It would have been heartless."

"So I just made him come along. That was right, wasn't it? That's what you would have done, no matter who he was or what his objections might have been. Well, you see, it's this way, Yette: He is some sort of a fugitive—not a criminal, you know, but just some one they are hunting for, I don't know why. He wouldn't tell me. That was perfectly right if he felt that way, wasn't it?"

"And he had fought a lion in your defense," supplemented Yette, with a schoolgirl's ardor.

"And I had shot him in the arm, too," added Beverly. "So of course I just had to be reasonable. In order to induce him to come with me to a hospital I was obliged to guarantee perfect safety to him. His men went

back to the hills, all except old Franz, the driver. Now, the trouble is this, Yette: I am not the princess, and I cannot redeem a single promise I made to him. He is helpless, and if anything goes wrong with him he will hate me forever."

"No; he will hate me, for I am the princess, and he is none the wiser."

"But he will be told that his princess was Beverly Calhoun, a supposed-nice American girl. Don't you see how awkward it will be for me? Now, Yette, darling, what I wish you to do is to write a note, order or edict or whatever it is to Baron Dangloss, commanding him to treat Baldos as a patient and not as a prisoner, and that when he is fully recovered he is to have the privilege of leaving Ganlook without reservation."

"But he may be a desperate offender against the state, Beverly," plaintively protested Yette. "If we only knew what he is charged with!"

"I'm afraid it's something dreadfully serious," admitted Beverly gloomily. "He doesn't look like the sort of man who would engage in a petty undertaking. I'll tell you his story, just as he told it to me," and she repeated the meager confessions of Baldos.

"I see no reason why we should hesitate," said the princess. "By his own statement he is not a desperate criminal. You did quite right in promising him protection, dear, and I shall sustain you. Do you want to play the princess to Baldos a little longer?"

"I should love it," cried Beverly, her eyes sparkling.

"Then I shall write the order to Dangloss at once. Oh, dear, I have forgotten. I have no official seal here."

"Couldn't you seal it with your ring?" suggested Beverly. "Oh, I have it! Send for Baron Dangloss and have him witness your signature. He can't get away from that, you see, and after we reach Edelweiss you can fix up a regular edict, seal and all," cried the resourceful American girl.

Ink and paper were sent for, and the two conspirators lent their wisdom to the task of preparing an order for the salvation of Baldos, the fugitive. The order read:

To Baron Jasto Dangloss, Commanding the Civic and Military Police of Graustark:

You are hereby informed that Baldos, the man who entered the city with Miss Calhoun, is not to be regarded as a prisoner now or hereafter. He is to be given capable medical and surgical attention until fully recovered, when he is to be allowed to go his way in peace unquestioned.

Also he is to be provided with suitable wearing apparel and made comfortable in every way.

Also the members of his party, now in the hills (whose names are unknown to me), are to be accorded every protection. Franz, the driver, is to have his freedom if he desires it.

And from this edict there is no recourse until its abatement by royal decree.

YETTE.

"There," said the princess, affixing her signature. "I think that will be sufficient." Then she rang for a servant. "Send to Baron Dangloss, and ask him to come here at once."

Fifteen minutes later the chief of police stood in the presence of the eager young interpreters of justice.

"I want you to witness my signature, Baron Dangloss," said the princess after the greetings.

"Gladly," said the officer.

"Well, here is where I signed," said Yette, handing him the paper. "I don't have to write my name over again, do I?"

"Not at all," said the baron gallantly. And he boldly signed his name as a witness.

"They wouldn't do that in the United States," murmured Beverly, who knew something about red tape at Washington.

"What is the matter, Baron?" asked Yette, still smiling.

"A transitory emotion, your highness, that is all," said he, but his head bowed as he folded the paper.

## CHAPTER X.

**B**RIGHT and early the next morning the party was ready to start on the last of the journey in this weird, weird, and wonderful land.

Separated Ganlook from the capital, Beverly Calhoun, tired and contented, had slept soundly until summoned by the princess herself. Their eyes

adjoined each other, and when Yette, shortly after daylight, stole into the American girl's chamber Beverly would have retreated had it not been for the boisterous shouts of school boys in the courtyard below the windows. She hurried to a window and looked out upon the gray clouded morning. Postilions and stable boys congregated near the gates, forming a ragged old man who stood with his back against one of the huge walls.

In some curiosity, she called Beverly from her slumbers, urging the driver one to hasten to the window.

"Is this one of your friends from the wilderness?" she asked.

"It's Franz!" cried Beverly, rubbing her pretty eyes. Then she became roughly awake. "What are they doing to him? Who are those ruffians?" she demanded indignantly.

"They are my servants and—"

"Shame on them! The wretched creatures! What has old Franz done that they should— Call to them; tell me what cut their heads off if they don't go. He's a dear old fellow in spite of his rags, and he—"

The window sash flew open, and the tormentors in the court below were astonished by the sound of a woman's voice coming, as it were, from the clouds. A dozen pairs of eyes were turned upward; the commotion ended suddenly. In the window above the two graceful, white robed figures, the sun, still far below the ridge of mountains, had not yet robbed the morning of the gray, dewy shadows that belong to 5 o'clock.

"What are you doing to that poor man?" cried Yette, and it was the first time any of them had seen anger in the princess' face. They shrank in dismay. "Let him alone! Franz Gartz, see that he has food and drink, and without delay. Report to me on, sir, and explain, if you can, why you have conducted yourselves in an unbecoming manner." Then the window was closed, and the princess found herself in the warm arms of a friend.

"I couldn't understand a word you said, Yette, but I knew you were giving it to them hot and heavy. You see how nicely old Franz looked at you? Goodness, his head almost touched the ground!"

"He was bowing to you, Beverly. You forgot that you are the princess' friend."

"Isn't that funny? I had quite forgotten it. The poor old goose!"

Later, when the coaches and men were drawn up in front of the Rallowitz palace ready for the start, the princess called the chief postilion, Gartz, to the step of her coach.

"What was the meaning of the disturbance I witnessed this morning?" she demanded.

Gartz hung his head. "The man was crazy, your highness. He had been telling us such monstrous lies," he mumbled.

"Are you sure they were lies?"

"Oh, quite sure, your highness. They were laughable. He said, for example, that it was he who drove your highness' coach into Ganlook last evening, when everybody knows that I had full charge of the coach and horses."

"You are very much mistaken, Gartz," she said distinctly. He blushed.

"Your highness," he gasped, "I surely remember—"

"Enough, sir. Franz drove the princess into Ganlook last night. He says so himself, does he not?"

"Yes, your highness," murmured poor Gartz.

"What more did he say to you?"

"He said he had come from his master, who is in the hospital, to inquire after your health and to bear his thanks for the kindnesses you have shown for him. He says his master is feeling well and is satisfied to remain where he is. Also, he said that his master was sending him back into the mountains to assure his friends that he was safe and to bear a certain message to cheer to them, sent forth by the princess. It was all so foolish and untrue, your highness, that we could but laugh at the poor creature."

"Is it you who have been foolish, and laugh at the poor creature?"

"Send the old man to me."

"He has gone, your highness," cried the frightened tones.

"So much the better," said the princess, dismissing him with a wave of the hand. Gartz went away in a daze, and for days he took every opportunity to look for other signs of mental disorder in the conduct of his mistress, in order in the conduct of his mistress, in the same time indulging in speculation as to his own soundness of mind.

Ganlook's population fled the city thoroughfare, awaiting the departure of the princess, although the hour was early. Beverly peered forth curiously as the coach moved off. The queen's half oriental costumes of the lower people, the odd little children, and bright colors, the perfect love and reverence that shone in the faces of the multitude impressed her deeply. She was never to forget that picturesque morning.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Yette are Miss Beverly Calhoun of Washington.