

# BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By George Barr McCutcheon.

Author of "Graustark"

Copyright, 1904, Dodd, Mead & Co.

Lying back in the seat, he pensively studied the face of the sleeping girl whose dark brown head was pillowed against the corner cushions of the coach. Her hat had been removed for the sake of comfort. The dark lashes fell like a soft curtain over her eyes, obscuring the merry gray that had overcome his apprehensions. Her breathing was deep and regular and peaceful. One little gloved hand rested carelessly in her lap, the other upon her breast near the delicate throat. The heart of Baldos was troubled. The picture he looked upon was entrancing, uplifting; he rose from the lowly state in which she had found him to the position of admirer in secret to a princess, real or assumed. He found himself again wondering if she were really Yette, and with that fear in his heart he was envying Grenfall Lorry, the lord and master of this exquisite creature, envying with all the helplessness of one whose hope is blasted at birth.

The note which had been surreptitiously passed to him in Ganlook lay crumpled and forgotten inside his coat pocket, where he had dropped it the moment it had come into his possession, supposing that the message contained information which had been forgotten by Franz and was by no means of a nature to demand immediate attention. Had he read it at once his suspicions would have been confirmed, and it is barely possible that he would have refused to enter the city.

Late in the afternoon the walls of Edelweiss were sighted. For the first time he looked upon the distant house-tops of the principal city of Graustark. Up in the clouds, on the summit of the mountain peak overlooking the city, stood the famed monastery of St. Valentine. Stretching up the gradual incline were the homes of citizens, accessible only by footpaths and donkey roads. Beverly was awake and impatient to reach the journey's end. He had proved a most disappointing companion, polite, but with a baffling indifference that irritated her considerably. There was a set expression of defiance in his strong, clean cut face, the look of a soldier advancing to meet a powerful foe.

"I do hope he'll not always act this way," she was complaining in her thoughts. "He was so charmingly impudent out in the hills, so deliciously human. Now he is like a clam. Yette will think I am such a fool if he doesn't live up to the reputation I've given him!"

"Here are the gates," he said, half to himself. "What is there in store for me beyond those walls?"

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't be so dismal!" she cried in despair. "It seems just like a funeral."

"A thousand apologies, your highness," he murmured, with a sudden lightness of speech and manner. "Henceforth I shall be a most amiable jester to please you."

Beverly and the faithful Aunt Fanny were driven to the castle, where the former bade farewell to her new knight until the following morning, when he was to appear before her for personal instructions. Colonel Quinnox escorted him to the barracks of the guard, where he was to share a room with young Haddan, a corporal in the service.

"The wild, untamed gentleman from the hills came without a word, I see," said Lorry, who had watched the approach. He and Yette stood in the window overlooking the grounds from the princess' boudoir. Beverly had just entered and thrown herself upon a divan.

"Yes; he's here," she said shortly. "How long do you, with all your cleverness, expect to hoodwink him into the belief that you are the princess?" asked Yette, amused, but anxious.

"He's a great fool for being hoodwinked at all," said Beverly, very much at odds with her protegee. "In an hour from now he will know the truth and will be howling like a madman for his freedom."

"Not so soon as that, Beverly," said Lorry consolingly. "The guards and officers have their instructions to keep him in the dark as long as possible."

"Well, I'm tired and mad and hungry and everything else that isn't compatible. Let's talk about the war," said Beverly, the sunshine in her face momentarily eclipsed by the dark cloud of disappointment.

Baldos was notified that duty would be assigned to him in the morning. He went through the formalities which bound him to the service for six months, listening indifferently to the words that foretold the fate of a traitor. It was not until his new uniform and equipment came into his possession that he remembered the note resting in his pocket. He drew it out and began to read it with the slight interest of one who has anticipated the effect. But not for long was he to remain apathetic. The first few lines brought a look of understanding to his eyes; then he laughed the easy laugh of one who has cast care and confidence to the winds. This is what he read:

She is not the princess. We have been duped. Last night I learned the truth. She is Miss Calhoun, an American, going

to do a good deed. I am to go with her into Edelweiss. It may be a trap and may mean death. Quietly, her boldness before committing yours.

There came the natural impulse to make a dash for the outside world, fighting his way through if necessary. Looking back over the ground, he wondered how he could have been deceived at all by the unconventional American. In the clear light of retrospection he now saw how impossible it was for her to have been the princess. Every act, every word, every look, should have told him the truth. Every flaw in her masquerading now presented itself to him, and he was compelled to laugh at his own simplicity. Caution, after all, was the largest component part of his makeup. The craftiness of the hunted was deeply rooted in his being. He saw a very serious side to the adventure. Stretching himself upon the cot in the corner of the room, he gave himself over to plotting, planning, thinking.

In the midst of his thoughts a sudden light burst in upon him. His eyes gleamed with a new fire, his heart leaped with new animation, his blood ran warm again. Leaping to his feet, he ran to the window to reread the note from old Franz. Then he settled back and laughed with a fervor that cleared the brain of a thousand vague misgivings.

"She is Miss Calhoun, an American, going to be a guest at the castle," not the princess, but Miss Calhoun. Once more the memory of the clear gray eyes leaped into life. Again he saw her asleep in the coach on the road from Ganlook. Again he recalled the fervent throbs his guilty heart had felt as he looked upon this fair creature, at one time the supposed treasure of another man. Now she was Miss Calhoun, and her gray eyes, her entrancing smile, her wondrous vivacity, were not for one man alone. It was marvelous what a change this sudden realization wrought in the view ahead of him. The whole situation seemed to be transformed into something more desirable than ever before. His face cleared, his spirits leaped higher and higher with the buoyancy of fresh relief, his confidence in himself crept back into existence. And all because the fair deceiver, the slim girl with the brave gray eyes who had drawn him into a net was not a princess!

Something told him that she had not drawn him into his present position with any desire to injure him or with the slightest sense of malice. To her it had been a merry jest, a pleasant comedy. Underneath all he saw the goodness of her motive in taking him from the old life and putting him into his present position of trust. He had helped her, and she was ready to help him to the limit of her power. His position in Edelweiss was clearly enough defined. The more he thought of it the more justifiable it seemed as viewed from her point of observation. How long she hoped to keep him in the dark he could not tell. "The outcome would be entertaining. Her efforts to deceive, if she kept them up, would be amusing. Altogether he was ready, with the leisure and joy of youth, to await developments and to enjoy the comedy from a point of view which she could not at face suspect."

His subtle effort to draw Haddan into a discussion of the princess and her household resulted unsatisfactorily. The young guard was annoyingly unresponsive. He had his secret instructions and could not be inveigled into betraying himself. Baldos went to sleep that night with his mind confused by doubts. His talk with Haddan had left him quite undecided as to the value of old Franz's warning. Either Franz was mistaken or Haddan was a most skillful dissembler. It struck him as utterly beyond the pale of reason that the entire castle guard should have been enlisted in the scheme to deceive him. When sleep came he was contenting himself with the thought that morning doubtless would give him clearer insight to the situation.

Both he and Beverly Calhoun were ignorant of the true conditions that attached themselves to the new recruit. Baron Dangloss alone knew that Haddan was a trusted agent of the secret service, with instructions to shadow the newcomer day and night. That there was a mystery surrounding the character of Baldos, the goat hunter, Dangloss did not question for an instant, and in spite of the instructions received at the outset he was using all his skill to unravel it.

Baldos was not summoned to the castle till noon. His serene indifference to the outcome of the visit was calculated to deceive the friendly but watchful Haddan. Dressed carefully in the close fitting uniform of the royal guard, taller than most of his fellows, handsomer by far than any, he was the most noticeable figure in and about the barracks. Haddan coached him in the way he was to approach the princess, Baldos listening with exaggerated instantness and with deep regard for detail.

Beverly was in the small audience room off the main reception hall when he was ushered into her presence. The servants and ladies in waiting disappeared at a signal from her. She arose to greet him and he knelt to kiss her

hand. For a moment her tongue was bound. The keen eyes of the new guard had looked into hers with a directness that seemed to penetrate her brain. That this scene was to be one of the most interesting in the little comedy was proved by the fact that two eager young women were hidden behind a heavy curtain in a corner of the room. The Princess Yette and the Countess Dagmar were there to enjoy Beverly's first hour of authority, and she was aware of their presence.

"Have they told you that you are to act as my especial guard and escort?" she asked, with a queer flutter in her voice. Somehow this tall fellow with the broad shoulders was not the same as the ragged goat hunter she had known at first.

"No, your highness," he said easily. "I have come for instructions. It pleases me to know that I am to have a place of honor and trust such as this."

"General Marlanx has told me that a vacancy exists, and I have selected you to fill it. The compensation will be attended to by the proper persons, and your duties will be explained to you by one of the officers. This afternoon, I believe, you are to accompany me on my visit to the fortress, which I am to inspect."

"Very well, your highness," he respectfully said. He was thinking of Miss Calhoun, an American girl, although he called her "your highness." "May I be permitted to ask for instructions that can come only from your highness?"

"Certainly," she replied. His manner was more deferential than she had ever known it to be, but he threw a bomb into her fine composure with his next remark. He addressed her in the Graustark language:

"Is it your desire that I shall continue to address you in English?" Beverly's face turned a bit red, and her eyes wavered. By a wonderful effort she retained her self control, stammering ever so faintly when she said in English:

"I wish you would speak English," unwittingly giving answer to his question. "I shall insist upon that. Your English is too good to be spoiled."

Then he made a bold test, his first having failed. He spoke once more in the native tongue, this time softly and earnestly.

"As you wish, your highness, but I think it is a most ridiculous practice," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

voice that she looked upon him with newer interest.

"Why, I really believe you want to go to America!" she cried.

The eyes of Baldos had been furtively drawn to the curtain more than once during the last few minutes. An occasional movement of the long oriental hangings attracted his attention. It dawned upon him that the little play was being overheard, whether by spies or conspirators he knew not. Resentment sprang up in his breast and gave birth to a daring that was as spectacular as it was confounding.

With long, noiseless strides he reached the door before Beverly could interpose. She half started from her chair, her eyes wide with dismay, her lips parted, but his hand was already clutching the curtain. He drew it aside relentlessly.

Two startled women stood exposed to view, smiles dying on their amazed faces. Their backs were against the closed door, and two hands clutching handkerchiefs dropped from a most significant attitude. One of them flashed an imperious glance at the bold dissembler, and he knew he was looking upon the real princess of Graustark. He did not lose his composure. Without a tremor he turned to the American girl.

"Your highness," he said clearly, coolly. "I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here. Is your court made up of—I should say, they are doubtless a pair of curious ladies in waiting. Shall I begin my service, your highness, by escorting them to yonder door?"

"Certainly," she replied. His manner was more deferential than she had ever known it to be, but he threw a bomb into her fine composure with his next remark. He addressed her in the Graustark language:

"Is it your desire that I shall continue to address you in English?" Beverly's face turned a bit red, and her eyes wavered. By a wonderful effort she retained her self control, stammering ever so faintly when she said in English:

"I wish you would speak English," unwittingly giving answer to his question. "I shall insist upon that. Your English is too good to be spoiled."

Then he made a bold test, his first having failed. He spoke once more in the native tongue, this time softly and earnestly.

"As you wish, your highness, but I think it is a most ridiculous practice," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

"I have entered the service for six months, your highness," he said in English.

"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said, and his heart lost none of its courage. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfort. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on his remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

dress him very politely for an utter stranger."

"The insolent dog!" snarled Marlanx, his self control returning slowly. "He shall be taught well and thoroughly, never fear, Miss Calhoun. There is a way to train such recruits as he, and they never forget what they have learned."

"Oh, please don't be harsh with him," she pleaded. The smile of the Iron Count was not at all reassuring. "I know he will be sorry for what he has done, and you?"

"I am quite sure he will be sorry," said he, with a most agreeable bow in submission to her appeal.

"Do you want to see Mr. Lorry?" she asked quickly. "I will send for him, general." She was at the door, impatient to be with the banished culprit.

"My business with Mr. Lorry can wait," he began, with a smile meant to be inviting, but which did not impress her at all pleasantly.

"Well, anyway, I'll tell him you're here," she said, her hand on the door knob. "Will you wait here? Goodby." And then she was racing off through the long halls and up broad staircases toward the boudoir of the princess. There is no telling how long the ruffled count remained in the anteroom, for the excited Beverly forgot to tell Lorry that he was there.

There were half a dozen people in the room when Beverly entered eagerly. She was panting with excitement. Of all the rooms in the grim old castle the boudoir of the princess was the most famously attractive. It was really her home, the exquisite abiding place of an exquisite creature. To lounge on her divans, to loll in the chairs, to glide through her priceless rugs, was the acme of indolent pleasure. Few were they who enjoyed the privileges of "little heaven," as Harry Anguish had christened it on one memorable night long before the princess was Mrs. Grenfall Lorry.

"Now, how do you feel?" cried the flushed American girl, pausing in the door to point an impressive finger at the princess, who was lying back in a huge chair, the picture of distress and annoyance.

"I shall never be able to look that man in the face again," came dolefully from Yette's hunched lips. Dagmar was all smiles and in the fittest of humors. She was the kind of culprit who loves the punishment because of the crime.

"Wasn't it ridiculous, and wasn't it just too lovely?" she cried.

"It was extremely theatrical," agreed Beverly, seating herself on the arm of Yette's chair and throwing a warm arm around her neck. "Have you all heard about it?" she demanded naively, turning to the others, who unquestionably had had a jumbled account of the performance.

"You got just what you deserved," said Lorry, who was immensely amused.

"I wonder what your august vagabond thinks of his princess and her ladies in hiding?" mused Harry Anguish. The Count and Countess Halfont were smiling in spite of the assault upon the dignity of the court.

"I'd give anything to know what he really thinks," said the real princess. "Oh, Beverly, wasn't it awful? And how he marched us out of that room!"

"I thought it was great," said Beverly, her eyes glowing. "Wasn't it splendid? And isn't he good looking?"

"He is good looking, I imagine. But I am no judge, dear. It was utterly impossible for me to look at his face," lamented the princess.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Dagmar penitently.

"You are to spend the remainder of your life in a dungeon, with Baldos as guard," decided Miss Calhoun.

"Beverly, dear, that man is no ordinary person," said the princess quite positively.

"Of course he isn't. He's a tall, dark mystery."

"I observed him as he crossed the terrace this morning," said Lorry. "He's a striking sort of chap, and I'll bet my head he's not what he claims to be."

"He claims to be a fugitive, you must remember," said Beverly in his defense.

"I mean that he is no common malefactor, or whatever it may be. Who and what do you suppose he is? I confess that I'm interested in the fellow, and he looks as though one might like him without half trying. Why haven't you dug up his past history, Beverly? You are so keen about him."

"He positively refuses to let me dig," explained Beverly. "I tried, you know, but he—he—well, he squelched me."

"Well, after all is said and done, he caught us peeping today, and I am filled with shame," said the princess.

"It doesn't matter who he is, he must certainly have a most unflattering opinion as to what we are."

"The Tower. 'Something has just happened that impels me to ask a question concerning Baldos, the new guard.'"

"May I first ask what has happened?" Dangloss was at a loss for a meaning of the general smile that went around.

"It is quite personal and of no consequence. What do you know of Beverly's curiosity is aroused. Now, I am quiet, Beverly. You are as eager to know as the rest of us."

"Well, your highness, I may as well confess that the man is a pirate to the Tower."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"He comes here a vagabond, but he certainly does not act like one. He admits that he is being hunted, but takes one into his confidence. For that he cannot be blamed."

"Have you any reason to suppose who he is?" asked Lorry.

"My instructions were to refrain from questioning him," complained Dangloss, with a pathetic look at the original plotters. "Still, I have made investigations along other lines."

"And who is he?" cried Beverly eagerly.

"I don't know," was the disappointing answer. "We are confronted by a queer set of circumstances. Doubtless you all know that young Prince Danton is flying from the wrath of his father, our lamented friend Dagmar. He is supposed to be in our hills with a half starved body of followers, seems impossible that he could have reached our northern boundaries without our outposts catching a glimpse of him at some time. The trouble is that his face is unknown to most of us, among the others. I have been going on the presumption that Baldos is really Prince Danton, but last night the belief received a severe shock."

"Yes?" came from several eager lips.

"My men who were watching the Dawsbergen frontier came in last night and reported that Danton had been seen by mountaineers no later than Sunday, three days ago. These mountaineers were in sympathy with him and refused to tell whether he went. We only know that he was in the southern part of Graustark three days ago. Our new guard speaks many languages, but he has never been known to use that of Dawsbergen. That fact in itself is not surprising, for, of all things, he would avoid his mother tongue. Danton is part English by birth and wholly so by cultivation, that he evidently finds a mate in Baldos."

"Then he really isn't Prince Danton?" cried Beverly, as though a dashed ideal had been shattered.

"Not if we are to believe the tales from the south. Here is another complication, however. There is, as you know, Count Halfont, and perhaps all of you, for that matter, a pretender to the throne of Axphain, the fugitive Prince Frederic. He is described as young, good looking, a scholar and the next thing to a pauper."

"Baldos a mere pretender?" cried Beverly in distress. "Never!"

"At any rate, he is not what he pretends to be," said the baron, with a wise smile.

"Then you think he may be Prince Frederic?" asked Lorry, deeply interested.

"I am inclined to think so, although another complication has arisen. May I please your highness, I am in an amazingly tangled state of mind, admitted the baron, passing his hand over his brow.

"Do you mean that another mysterious prince has come to life?" asked Yette, her eyes sparkling with interest in the revelations.

"Early this morning a dispatch came to me from the Grand Duke Michael Rapp-Thorberg, a duchy in western Europe, informing me that the eldest son had fled from home and is known to have come to the far east, possibly to Graustark."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Anguish. "It never rains but it hails, so Beverly hall to the prince's three."

"We are the Mecca for runaway royalty, it seems," said Count Halfont. "Go on with the story, Baron Dangloss," cried the princess. "It is like a book."

"A description of the young man who accompanies the offer of a large reward for information that may lead to his return home for reconciliation, and here the baron paused dramatically."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

\$2.00 Pays for the OBSERVER and the Weekly Organizational one year. In order to take advantage of this liberal offer, your subscription to the OBSERVER must be paid up to date. Subscribe now.

J. C. Dallas, The warm, his J. M. ting t The their reddy Ch has ben Sev here arda; E. of prod yond Ro his g week hous Ro Rig work Al tion the he be ran tory the bee to I N. E. ho In ple K t h o v

of Beverly's curiosity is aroused. Now, I am quiet, Beverly. You are as eager to know as the rest of us."