

# BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By George Barr McCutcheon.

Author of "Graustark"

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"ASK HIM WHO HE THINKS HE IS," said the Iron Count sternly.

"We can expect but one answer to that question," said Lorry, "and that is the one which he chooses to give."

"My name is Baldos—Paul Baldos," said the guard, but he said it in such a way that no one could mistake his appreciation of the fact that he could give one name as well as another and still serve his own purposes.

"That is the number one," observed Marlax loudly. Every eye was turned upon Baldos, but his face did not lose its half mocking expression of serenity.

"Proceed with the examination, Mr. Lorry," said Count Halfont, interpreting a quick glance from Yette.

"Are you willing to answer any and all questions we may ask in connection with your observations since you became a member of the castle guard?" asked Lorry.

"I am."

"Did you take especial care to study the interior of the fortress when you were there several days ago?"

"I did."

"Have you discussed your observations with any one since that time?"

"I have."

"With whom?"

"With her highness the princess," said Baldos without a quiver. There was a moment's silence, and furtive looks were cast in the direction of Yette, whose face was a study. Almost instantaneously the entire body of listeners understood that he referred to Beverly Calhoun. Baldos felt that he had been summoned before the board at the instigation of his fair protectress.

"And your impressions have gone no farther?"

"They have not, sir. It was most confidential."

"Could you accurately reproduce the plans of the fortress?"

"I think so. It would be very simple."

"Have you studied engineering?"

"Yes."

"And you could scientifically enumerate the defects in the construction of the fort?"

"It would not be very difficult, sir."

"It has come to our ears that you consider the fortress weak in several particulars. Have you so stated at any time?"

"I told the princess that the fortress is deplorably weak. In fact, I think I mentioned that it could be taken with ease." He was not looking at Count Marlax, but he knew that the old man's eyes were flaming. Then he proceeded to tell the board how he could overcome the fortress, elaborating on his remarks to Beverly. The ministers listened in wonder to the words of this calm, sedate young man.

"Will you oblige us by making a rough draft of the fort's interior?" asked Lorry after a solemn pause. Baldos took the paper and in remarkably quick time drew the exact lay of the fortress. The sketch went the rounds and apprehensive looks were exchanged by the ministers.

"It is accurate, by Jove," exclaimed Lorry. "I doubt if a dweller in the fort could do better. You must have been very observing."

"And very much interested," snarled Marlax.

"Only so far as I imagined my observations might be of benefit to some one else," said Baldos coolly. Again silence was like death.

"Do you know what you are saying, Baldos?" asked Lorry after a moment.

"Certainly, Mr. Lorry. It is the duty of any servant of her highness to give her all that he has in him. If my observations can be of help to her I feel in duty bound to make the best of them for her sake, not for my own."

"Perhaps you can suggest modifications in the fort," snarled Marlax. "Why don't you do it, sir, and let us have the benefit of your superior intelligence? No, gentlemen, all this prating of loyalty need not deceive us," he cried, springing to his feet. "The fellow is nothing more nor less than an infernal spy, and the Tower is the place for him! He can do no harm there."

"If it were my intention to do harm, gentlemen, do you imagine that I should withhold my information for days?" asked Baldos. "If I am a spy you may rest assured that Count Marlax's kindnesses should not have been so long disregarded. A spy does not believe in delays."

"My—my kindnesses?" cried Marlax. "What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean this, Count Marlax," said Baldos, looking steadily into the eyes of the head of the army. "It was kind and considerate of you to admit me to the fortress, no matter in what capacity, especially at a critical time like this. You did not know me, you had no way of telling whether my intentions were honest or otherwise, and yet I was permitted to go through the fort from end to end. No spy could wish for greater generosity than that."

An almost imperceptible smile went around the table, and every listener but one breathed more freely. The candor and boldness of the guard won the respect and confidence of all except Marlax. The Iron Count was white with anger. He took the examination

stranger with insidious questions, each calm answer making him more furious than before. At last, in sheer impotence, he relapsed into silence, waving his hand to Lorry to indicate that he might resume.

"You will understand, Baldos, that we have some cause for apprehension," said Lorry, immensely gratified by the outcome of the tilt. "You are a stranger, and, whether you admit it or not, there is reason to believe that you are not what you represent yourself to be."

"I am a humble guard at present, sir, and a loyal one. My life is yours should I prove otherwise."

Yette whispered something in Lorry's ear at this juncture. She was visibly pleased and excited. He looked doubtful for an instant and then apparently followed her suggestion, regardless of consequences.

"Would you be willing to utilize your knowledge as an engineer by suggesting means to strengthen the fortress?" The others stared in fresh amazement. Marlax went as white as death.

"Never!" he blurted out hoarsely.

"I will do anything the princess commands me to do," said Baldos easily.

"You mean that you serve her only?"

"I serve her first, sir. If she were here she could command me to die, and there would be an end to Baldos," and he smiled as he said it. The real princess looked at him with a new, eager expression, as if something had just become clear to her. There was a chorus of coughs and a round of sly looks.

"She could hardly ask you to die," said Yette, addressing him for the first time.

"A princess is like April weather, madam," said Baldos, with rare humor, and the laugh was general. Yette resolved to talk privately with this excellent wit before the hour was over. She was confident that he knew her to be the princess.

"I would like to ask the fellow another question," said Marlax, frowning his sword hilt nervously. "You say you serve the princess. Do you mean by that that you imagine your duties as a soldier to comprise dancing polite attendance within the security of these walls?"

"I believe I enlisted as a member of the castle guard, sir. The duty of the guard is to protect the person of the ruler of Graustark and to do that to the death."

"It is my belief that you are a spy. You can show evidence of good faith by enlisting to fight against Dawsbergen and by shooting to kill," said the count, with a sinister gleam in his eye.

"And if I decline to serve in any other capacity than the one I now—" "Then I shall brand you as a spy and a coward."

"You have already called me a spy, your excellency. It will not make it true, let me add, if you call me a coward. I refuse to take up arms against either Dawsbergen or Axlhain."

The remark created a profound sensation.

"Then you are employed by both instead of one!" shouted the Iron Count gleefully.

"I am employed as a guard for her royal highness," said Baldos, with a square glance at Yette, "and not as a fighter in the ranks. I will fight till death for her, but not for Graustark."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"BY JOVE, I like that fellow's coolness," said Lorry to Harry Anguish, after the meeting. "He's after my own heart. Why, he treats us as though we were the supplicants, he the alms-giver. He is playing a game, I'll admit, but he does it with an assurance that delights me."

"He is right about that darned old fort," said Anguish. "His knowledge of such things proves conclusively that he is no ordinary person."

"Yette had a bit of a talk with him just now," said Lorry, with a reflective smile. "She asked him point blank if he knew who she was. He did not hesitate a second. 'I remember seeing you in the audience chamber recently,' that was a facer for Yette. 'I assure you that it was no fault of mine that you saw me,' she replied. 'Then it must have been your friend who rustled the curtains,' said the confounded bluffer. Yette couldn't keep a straight face. She laughed, and then he laughed. 'Some day you may learn more about me,' she said to him. 'I sincerely trust that I may, madam,' said he, and I'll bet my hat he was enjoying it better than either of us. Of course he knows Yette is the princess. It's his intention to serve Beverly Calhoun, and he couldn't do it if he were to confess that he knows the truth. He's no fool."

Baldos was not long in preparing plans for the changes in the fortress. They embodied a temporary readjustment of the armament and alterations in the ammunition house. The gate leading to the river was closed, and the refuse from the fort was taken to the barges by way of the main entrance. There were other changes suggested for immediate consideration, and then there was a general plan for the modernizing of the fortress at some more convenient time. Baldos lacon-

ically observed that the equipment was years behind the times. To the amazement of the officials, he was able to talk intelligently of forts in all parts of the world, revealing a wide and thorough knowledge and extensive inspection. He had seen American as well as European fortifications. The Graustark engineers went to work at once to perfect the simple changes he advised, leaving no stone unturned to strengthen the place before an attack could be made.

Two, three weeks went by, and the new guard was becoming an old story to the castle and army folk. He rode with Beverly every fair day, and he looked at her window by night from afar off in the somber barracks. She could not dissipate the feeling that he knew her to be other than the princess, although he betrayed himself by no word or sign. She was enjoying the fun of it too intensely to expose it to the risk of destruction by revealing her true identity to him. Logically that would mean the end of everything. No doubt he felt the same and kept his counsel, but the game could not last forever, that was certain. A month or two more and Beverly would have to think of her return to Washington.

His courage, his cool impudence, his subtle wit, charmed her more than she could express. Now she was beginning to study him from a standpoint peculiarly and selfishly her own. Where recently she had sung his praise to Yette and others she now was strangely reticent. She was to understand another day why this change had come over her. Stories of his cleverness came to her ears from Lorry and Anguish and even from Dawsberg. She was proud, vastly proud, of him in these days.

The Iron Count alone discredited the ability and the conscientiousness of the "mountebank," as he named the man who had put his nose out of joint. Beverly, seeing much of Marlax, made the mistake of chiding him frankly and gayly about this aversion. She even argued the guard's case before the head of the army, impudently pointing out many of his superior qualities in advocating his cause. The count was learning forbearance in his old age. He saw the wisdom of procrastination. Baldos was in favor, but some day there would come a time for his undoing.

In the barracks he was acquiring fame. Reports went forth with unabated freedom. He established himself as the best swordsman in the service, as well as the most efficient marksman. With the foils and sabers he easily vanquished the foremost fencers in high and low circles. He could ride like a Cossack or like an American cowboy. Of them all, his warmest admirer was Haddan, the man set to watch him for the secret service. It may be timely to state that Haddan watched in vain.

The princess, humoring her own fancy, as well as Beverly's foibles, took to riding with her high spirited young guest on many a little jaunt to the hills. She usually rode with Lorry or Anguish, cheerfully assuming the subdued position befitting a lady-in-waiting apparently restored to favor on probation. She enjoyed Beverly's unique position. In order to maintain her attitude as princess the fair young deceiver was obliged to pose in the extremely delectable attitude of being Lorry's wife.

"How can you expect the paragon to make love to you, dear, if he thinks you are another man's wife?" Yette asked, her blue eyes beaming with the fun of it all.

"Pooh!" sniffed Beverly. "You have only to consult history to find the excuse. It's the dear old habit of men to make love to queens and get beheaded for it. Besides, he is not expected to make love to me. How in the world did you get that into your head?"

On a day soon after the return of Lorry and Anguish from a trip to the frontier Beverly expressed a desire to

visit the monastery of St. Valentine, high on the mountain top. It was a long ride over the circuitous route by which the steep incline was avoided, and it was necessary for the party to make an early start. Yette rode with Harry Anguish and his wife the countess, while Beverly's companion was the gallant Colonel Quinnox. Baldos, relegated to the background, brought up the rear with Haddan.

For a week or more Beverly had been behaving toward Baldos in the most cavalier fashion. Her friends had been teasing her, and, to her own intense amazement, she resented it. The fact that she felt the sting of their slanders was sufficient to arouse in her the distressing conviction that he had become important enough to prove embarrassing. While confessing to herself that it was a bit treacherous and weak she proceeded to ignore Baldos with astonishing persistency. Apart from the teasing, it seemed to her of late that he was growing a shade too confident.

He occasionally forgot his deferential air and relaxed into a very pleasing but highly reprehensible state of friendliness. A touch of the old jauntiness cropped out here and there, a tinge of the old irony warred his otherwise perfect mien as a soldier. His laugh was freer, his eyes less under subjugation, his entire personality more arrogant. It was time, thought she resentfully, that his temerity should meet some sort of check.

And, moreover, she had dreamed of him two nights in succession. How well her plan succeeded may best be illustrated by saying that she now was in a most uncomfortable frame of mind. Baldos refused to be properly depressed by his misfortune. He retired to the oblivion she provided and seemed disagreeably content. Apparently it made very little difference to him whether he was in or out of favor. Beverly was in high dudgeon and

## LOW SPIRITS.

The party rode forth at an early hour in the morning. It was hot in the city, but it looked cold and bleak on the heights. Comfortable wraps were taken along, and provision was made for luncheon at an inn halfway up the slope. Quinnox regaled Beverly with stories in which Grenfell Lorry was the hero and Yette the heroine. He told her of the days when Lorry, a fugitive with a price upon his head, charged with the assassination of Prince Lorenz, then betrothed to the princess, lay hidden in the monastery while Yette's own soldiers hunted high and low for him. The narrator dwelt glowingly upon the trip from the monastery to the city walls one dark night when Lorry came down to surrender himself in order to shield the woman he loved, and Quinnox himself piloted him through the underground passage into the very heart of the castle. Then came the exciting scene in which Lorry presented himself as a prisoner, with the denouement that saved the princess and won for the gallant American the desire of his heart.

"What a brave fellow he was!" cried Beverly, who never tired of hearing the romantic story.

"Ah, he was wonderful, Miss Calhoun. I fought him to keep him from surrendering. He beat me, and I was virtually his prisoner when we appeared before the tribunal."

"It's no wonder she loved him and married him."

"He deserved the best that life could give, Miss Calhoun."

"You had better not call me Miss Calhoun, Colonel Quinnox," said she, looking back apprehensively. "I am a highness once in awhile, don't you know?"

"I implore your highness' pardon," said he gayly.

The riders ahead had come to a standstill and were pointing off into the pass to their right. They were eight or ten miles from the city gates and more than halfway up the winding road that ended at the monastery gates. Beverly and Quinnox came up with them and found all eyes centered on a small company of men encamped in the rocky defile a hundred yards from the main road.

It needed but a glance to tell her who comprised the unusual company. The very raggedness of their garments, the forgettable disregard for consequences, the impudent ease with which they faced poverty and wealth alike, belonged to but one set of men—the vagabonds of the Hawk and Raven. Beverly went a shade whiter. Her interest in everything else flagged, and she was lost in bewilderment. What freak of fortune had sent these men out of the fastnesses into this dangerously open place?

She recognized the ascetic Ravone, with his student's face and beggar's garb. Old Franz was there, and so were others whose faces and heterogeneous garments had become so familiar to her in another day. The tall leader with the red feather, the rakish but and the black patch alone was missing from the picture.

"It's the strangest looking crew I've ever seen," said Anguish. "They look like pirates."

"Or gypsies," suggested Yette. "Who are they, Colonel Quinnox? What are they doing here?"

Quinnox was surveying the vagabonds with a critical, suspicious eye.

"They are not robbers or they would be off like rabbits," he said reflectively. "Your highness, there are many roving bands in the hills, but I confess that these men are unlike any I have heard about. With your permission, I will ride down and question them."

"Do, Quinnox, I am most curious."

Beverly sat very still and tense. She was afraid to look at Baldos, who rode up as Quinnox started into the narrow defile, calling to the escort to follow. The keen eyes of the guard caught the situation at once. Miss Calhoun shot

a quick glance at him as he rode up beside her. His face was impassive, but she could see his hand clench the bridle rein, and there was an air of restraint in his whole bearing.

"Remember your promise," he whispered hoarsely. "No harm must come to them." Then he was off into the defile. Anguish was not to be left behind. He followed, and then Beverly, more venturesome and vastly more interested than the others, rode recklessly after. Quinnox was questioning the laconic Ravone when she drew rein. The vagabonds seemed to evince but little interest in the proceedings. They stood away in disdainful aloofness. No sign of recognition passed between them and Baldos.

In broken, jerky sentences Ravone explained to the colonel that they were a party of actors on their way to Edel-

in a far corner of the grounds, now gray in the early dusk, Beverly bade the bearers to set down her chair and leave her in quiet for a few minutes. The two men withdrew to a respectful distance, whereupon she called Baldos to her side. Her face was flushed with anxiety.

"You must tell me the truth about that transaction with Ravone," she said, coming straight to the point.

"I was expecting this, your highness," said he quietly. The shadows of night were falling, but she could distinguish the look of anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Well," she insisted impatiently.

"You saw the notes exchanged?"

"Yes, yes, and I command you to tell me what they contained. It was the most daring thing I've—"

"Your highness, I cannot tell you what passed between us. It would be treacherous," he said firmly. Beverly gasped in sheer amazement.

"Treacherous? Good heaven, sir! To whom do you owe allegiance—to me or to Ravone and that band of tramps?" she cried, with eyes a-fire.

"To both, your highness," he an-

swered so fairly that she was for the moment abashed. "I am loyal to you—loyal to the heart's core—and yet I am loyal to that unhappy band of tramps, as you choose to call them. They are my friends. You are only my sovereign."

"And you won't tell me what passed between you?" she said, angered by this epigrammatic remark.

"I cannot and be true to myself."

"Oh, you are a glorious soldier!" she exclaimed, with fierce sarcasm in her voice. "You speak of being true! I surprise you in the very act of—"

"Stay, your highness!" he said coldly. "You are about to call me a spy and a traitor. Spare me, I implore you that humiliation. I have sworn to serve you faithfully and loyally. I have not deceived you, and I shall not. For Baldos has wronged no man, no woman. What passed between Ravone and myself concerns us only. It had nothing to do with the affairs of Graustark."

"Of course you would say that. You wouldn't be fool enough to tell the truth," cried she hotly. "I am the fool! I have trusted you, and if anything goes wrong I alone am to blame for exposing poor Graustark to danger. Oh, why didn't I cry out this afternoon!"

"I knew you would not," he said, with cool unconcern.

"Insolence! What do you mean by that?" she cried in confusion.

"In your heart you knew I was doing no wrong. You shielded me then, as you have shielded me from the beginning."

"I don't see why I sit here and let you talk to me like that," she said, feeling the symptoms of collapse. "You have not been fair with me, Baldos. You are laughing at me now and calling me a witless little fool. You— you did something today that shakes my faith to the very bottom. I never can trust you again. Good heaven, I hate to confess to—to every one that you are not honest."

"Your highness!" he implored, coming close to the chair and bending over her. "Before God I am honest with you. Believe me when I say that I have done nothing to injure Graustark. I cannot tell you what it was that passed between Ravone and me, but I swear on my soul that I have not been disloyal to my oath. Won't you trust me? Won't you believe? His breath was fanning her ear, his voice was eager. She could feel the intensity of his eyes.

"Oh, I don't—don't know what to say to you," she murmured. "I have been so wrought up with fear and disappointment. You'll admit that it was very suspicious, won't you?" she cried, almost pleadingly.

"Yes, yes," he answered. His hand touched her arm, perhaps unconsciously. She threw back her head to give him a look of rebuke. Their eyes met, and after a moment both were full of pleading. Her lips parted, but the words would not come. She was afterward more than thankful for this, because his eyes impelled her to give voice to amazing things that suddenly rushed to her head.

"I want to believe you," she whispered softly.

"You must—you do! I would give you my life. You have it now. It is in your keeping and with it my honor. Trust me, I beseech you. I have trusted you."

"I brought you here"—she began, defending him involuntarily. "But, Baldos, you forget that I am the princess!" She drew away in sudden shyness, her cheeks rosy once more, her eyes filling with the most distressingly unreasonable tears. He did not move for what seemed hours to her. She heard the sharp catch of his breath and felt the repression that was mastering some unwelcome emotion in him.

Lights were springing into existence in all parts of the park. Beverly saw the solitary window in the monastery far away, and her eyes fastened on it as if for sustenance in this crisis of her life—this moment of surprise, this moment when she felt him laying hands upon the heart she had not suspected of treason. Twilight was upon them; the sun had set, and night was rushing up to lend unfair advantage to the forces against which they were struggling. The orchestra in the castle was playing something soft and tender—oh, so far away!

"I forget that I am a slave, your highness," he said at last, and his voice thrilled her through and through. She turned quickly and to her utter dismay found his face and eyes still close to hers, glowing in the darkness.

"Those men over there," she whispered helplessly—"they are looking at you!"

"Now I thank God eternally," he cried softly. "You do not punish me; you do not rebuke me. God, there is no night!"

"You—you must not talk like that," she cried, pulling herself together suddenly. "I cannot permit it, Baldos. You forget who you are, sir."

"Ah, yes, your highness," he said before he stood erect. "I forget that I was a suspected traitor. Now I am guilty of low majesty." Beverly felt herself grow hot with confusion.

"What am I to do with you?" she cried in perplexity, her heart beating shamefully. "You swear you are honest, and yet you won't tell me the truth. Now, don't stand like that! You are as straight as a ramrod, and I know your dignity is terribly offended. I may be foolish, but I do believe you intend no harm to Graustark. You cannot be a traitor."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Together they partially subdued the darkness.

THE ORIGINAL LAXATIVE COUGH SYRUP

KENNEDY'S LAXATIVE HONEY-TAR

Red Clover Blossom and Honey Base on Every Bottle