

BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK.

By George Barr McCutcheon.

Author of "Graustark"

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While the young princess was being cared for by Yette's own maids in one of the daintiest bedchambers of the castle Beverly was engaged in writing a brief but pointed letter to her Aunt Josephine, who was still in St. Petersburg. She had persistently refused to visit Edelweiss, but had written many imperative letters commanding her niece to return to the Russian capital. Beverly now was recalling her scattered wits in the effort to appease her aunt and her father at the same time. Major Calhoun emphatically had ordered her to rejoin her aunt and start for America at once. Yesterday Beverly would have begun packing for the trip home. Now she was eager to remain in Graustark indefinitely. She was so thrilled by joy and excitement that she scarcely could hold the pen.

"Father says the United States papers are full of awful war scares from the Balkans. Are we a part of the Balkans, Yette?" she asked. "He says I'm to come right off home. Says he'll not pay a nickel of ransom if the brigands catch me, as they did Miss Stone and that woman who had the baby. He says mother is worried half to death. I'm just going to cable him that it's all off, because he says if war breaks out here he's going to send my brother Dan over to get me. I'm having Aunt Josephine send him this cablegram from St. Petersburg. They never fight in the Balkans. Just scare each other. Skip headlines, father dear. Will be home soon, Beverly! How does that sound? It will cost a lot, but he brought it upon his own head. And we're not in the Balkans, anyway. Aunt Joe will have a fit. Please call an A. D. T. boy, princess. I want to send this message to St. Petersburg."

When Candace entered the princess' boudoir half an hour later she was far from being the timid youth who first came to the notice of the Graustark cabinet. She was now attired in one of Beverly's gowns, and it was most becoming to her. Her short, curly brown hair was done up properly; her pink and white complexion was as clear as cream, now that the dust of the road was gone; her dark eyes were glowing with the wonder and interest of nineteen years, and she was, in all, a most enticing bit of femininity.

"You are much more of a princess now than when I first saw you," smiled Yette, drawing her down upon the cushions of the window seat beside her.

"But she was such a pretty boy," protested Dagmar. "You don't know how attractive you were in those—"

Candace blushed. "Oh, they were awful, but they were comfortable. One has to wear trousers if one intends to be a vagabond. I wore them for more than a week."

"You shall tell us all about it," said Yette, holding the girl's hand in hers. "It must have been a most interesting week for you."

"Oh, there is not much to tell, your highness," said Candace, suddenly reticent and shy. "My stepbrother—oh, how I hate him!—had condemned me to die because he thought I was helping Dantane. And I was helping him, too, all that I could. Old Bappo, master of the stables, who has loved me for a hundred years, he says, helped me to escape from the palace at night. They were to have seized me the next morning. Bappo has been master of the stables for more than forty years. Dear old Bappo! He procured the boy's clothing for me, and his two sons accompanied me to the hills, where I soon found my brother and his men. We saw your scouts and talked to them a day or two after I became a member of the band. Bappo's boys are with the band now. But my brother Dantane shall tell you of that. I was so frightened I could not tell what was going on. I have lived in the open air for a week, but I love it. Dantane's friends are all heroes. You will love them. Yesterday old Franz brought a message into the castle grounds. It told Captain Baldos of the plan to seize Gabriel, who was in the hills near your city. Didn't you know of that? Oh, we knew it two days ago! Baldos knew it yesterday. He met us at 4 o'clock this morning—that is, part of us. I was sent on with Franz so that I should not see bloodshed if it came to the worst. We were near the city gates, and Baldos came straight to us. Isn't it funny that you never knew all these things? Then at daybreak Baldos insisted on bringing me here to await the news from the pass. It was safer, and, besides, he said he had another object in coming back at once."

Beverly flushed warmly. The three women were crowding about the narrator, eagerly drinking in her naive story.

"We came in through one of the big gates and not through the underground passage. That was a fib," said Candace, looking from one to the other with a perfectly delicious twinkle in her eye. The conspirators gulped and smiled guiltily. "Baldos says there is a very mean old man here who is tormenting the fairy princess—not the real princess, you know. He came back to protect her, which was very brave of him, I am sure. Where is my brother?" she asked, suddenly anxious.

"He is with friends. Don't be alarmed, dear," said Yette.

"He is changing clothes, too? He needs clothes worse than I needed these. Does he say positively that Gabriel has been captured?"

"Yes. Did you not know of it?"

"I was sure it would happen. You know I was not with them in the pass. Yette was reflecting, a soft smile in her eyes.

"I was thinking of the time when I wore men's clothes," she said. "Unlike yours, mine were most uncomfortable. It was when I aided Mr. Lorry in es-

caping from the pass. I wore a guard's uniform and rode in a dark carriage before he discovered the truth." She blushed at the remembrance of that trying hour.

"And I wore my brother Dan's girl's party once—my brother Dan's," said Beverly. "The hostess' brothers came home unexpectedly, and I had to sit behind a bookcase for an hour. I didn't see much fun in my brother's clothes."

"You ought to wear them for a week," said Candace, wise in experience. "They are not so bad when you become accustomed to them—that is, if they're strong and not so tight that they—"

"You all love Baldos, don't you?" interrupted Yette. It was with difficulty that the listeners suppressed their smiles.

"Better than any one else. He is our idol. Oh, your highness, if what he says is true that old man must be a fiend. Baldos a spy? Why, he has not slept day or night for fear that he would not capture Gabriel so that he might be cleared of the charge without appealing to—to my brother. He has always been loyal to you," the girl said with eager eloquence.

"I know, dear, and I have known all along. He will be honorably acquitted. Count Marlaux was overzealous. He has not been wholly wrong, I must say in justice to him."

"How can you uphold him, Yette, after what he has said about me?" cried Beverly with blazing eyes.

"Beverly, Beverly, you know I don't mean that. He has been a cowardly villain so far as you are concerned, and he shall be punished, never fear. I cannot condone that one amazing piece of wickedness on his part."

"You, then, are the girl Baldos talks so much about?" cried Candace eagerly.

"You are Miss Calhoun, the fairy princess? I am so glad to know you." The young princess clasped Beverly's hand and looked into her eyes with admiration and approval. Beverly could have crushed her in her arms.

The sounds of shouting came up to the windows from below. Outside, men were rushing to and fro, and there were signs of mighty demonstrations at the gates.

"The people have heard of the capture," said Candace, as calmly as though she were asking one to have a cup of tea.

There was a pounding at the boudoir door. It flew open unceremoniously and in rushed Lorry, followed by Anguish. In the hallway beyond a group of noblemen conversed excitedly with the women of the castle.

"The report from the dungeons, Yette," cried Lorry joyously. "The warden says that Gabriel is in his cell again! Here's to Prince Dantane!"

Ravone was standing in the door. Candace ran over and leaped into his arms.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RAVONE was handsome in his borrowed clothes. He was now the clean, immaculate gentleman instead of the wretched vagabond of the hills. Even Beverly was surprised at the change in him. His erstwhile sad and melancholy face was flushed and bright with happiness. The kiss he bestowed upon the delighted Candace was tender in the extreme. Then, putting her aside, he strode over and gallantly kissed the hand of Graustark's princess, beaming an ecstatic smile upon the merry Beverly in an instant later.

"Welcome, Prince Dantane," said Yette. "A thousand times welcome."

"All Graustark is your throne, most glorious Yette. That is why I have asked to be presented here and not in the royal hall below," said Ravone.

"You will wait here with us, then, to hear the good news from our warden," said the princess. "Send the courier to me," she commanded. "Such sweet news should be received in the place which is dearest to me in all Graustark."

The ministers and the lords and ladies of the castle were assembled in the room when Baron Dangloss appeared with the courier from the prison. Count Marlaux was missing. He was on his way to the fortress, a crushed, furious, impotent old man. In his quarters he was to sit and wait for the blow that he knew could not be averted. In fear and despair, hiding his pain and his shame, he was racking his brain for means to lessen the force of that blow. He could withdraw the charges against Baldos, but he could not soften the words he had said and written of Beverly Calhoun. He was not troubling himself with fear because of the adventures in the chapel and passage. He knew too well how Yette could punish when her heart was bitter against an evildoer. Graustark honored and protected its women.

The warden of the dungeons from which Gabriel had escaped months before reported to the princess that the prisoner was again in custody. Briefly he related that a party of men led by Prince Dantane had appeared early that day, bringing the fugitive prince unharmed, but crazed by rage and disappointment. They had tricked him into following them through the hills, intent upon slaying his brother Dantane. There could be no mistake as to Gabriel's identity. In conclusion the warden implored her highness to send troops up to guard the prison in the mountain side. He feared an attack in force by Gabriel's army.

"Your highness," said Lorry, "I have sent instructions to Colonel Braze, requiring him to take a large force of men into the pass to guard the prison. Gabriel shall not escape again, though all Dawsbergen comes after him."

"You have but little to fear from Dawsbergen," said Ravone, who was

seated near the princess. Candace sat at his side. "Messages have been brought to me from the leading nobles of Dawsbergen assuring me that the populace is secretly eager for the old reign to be resumed. Only the desperate fear of Gabriel and a few of his bloody but loyal advisers holds them in check. Believe me, Dawsbergen's efforts to release Gabriel will be perfunctory and half hearted in the extreme. He ruled like a madman. It was his intense, implacable desire to kill his brother that led to his undoing. Will it be strange, your highness, if Dawsbergen welcomes the return of Dantane in his stead?"

"The story! The story of his capture! Tell me the story," came eagerly from those assembled. Ravone leaned back languidly, his face tired and drawn once more, as if the mere recalling of the hardships past was hard to bear.

"First, your highness, may I advise you and your cabinet to send another ultimatum to the people of Dawsbergen?" he asked. "This time say to them that you hold two Dawsbergen princes in your hand. One cannot and will not be released on demand. Let the embassy be directed to meet the Duke of Matz, the premier. He is now with the army, not far from your frontier. May it please your highness, I have myself taken the liberty of dispatching three trusted followers with the news of Gabriel's capture. The two Bappos and Carl Vandos are speeding to the frontier. Your embassy will find the Duke of Matz in possession of all the facts."

"The Duke of Matz, I am reliably informed, some day is to be father-in-law to Dawsbergen," smilingly said Yette. "I shall not wonder if he responds most favorably to an ultimatum."

Ravone and Candace exchanged glances of amusement, the latter breaking into a deplorable little gurgle of laughter.

"I beg to inform you that the duke's daughter has disdained the offer from the crown," said Ravone. "She has married Lieutenant Alanson of the royal artillery and is as happy as a butterfly. Captain Baldos could have told you how the wayward young woman defied her father and laughed at the beggar prince."

"Captain Baldos is an exceedingly discreet person," Beverly volunteered. "He has told no tales out of school."

"I am reminded of the fact that you gave your purse into my keeping one memorable day—the day when we parted from our best friends at Ganolok's gates. I thought you were a princess, and you did not know that I understood English. That was a sore hour for me. Baldos was our life, the heart of our enterprise. Gabriel hates him as he hates his own brother. Steadfastly has Baldos refused to join us in the plot to seize Prince Gabriel. He once took an oath to kill him on sight, and I was so opposed to this that he had to be left out of the final adventures."

"Please tell us how you succeeded in capturing that—your half brother," cried Beverly, forgetting that it was another's place to make the request. The audience drew near, eagerly attentive.

"At another time I shall rejoice in telling the story in detail. For the present let me ask you to be satisfied with the statement that we tricked him by means of letters into the insane hope that he could capture and slay his half brother. Captain Baldos suggested the plan. Had he been arrested yesterday I feel it would have failed. Gabriel was and is insane. We led him a chase through the Graustark hills until the time was ripe for the final act. His small band of followers fled at our sudden attack, and he was taken almost without a struggle not ten miles from the city of Edelweiss. In his mad ravings we learned that his chief desire was to kill his brother and sister and after that to carry out the plan that has long been in his mind. He was coming to Edelweiss for the sole purpose of entering the castle by the underground passage, with murder in his heart. Gabriel was coming to kill the Princess Yette and Mr. Lorry. He has never forgotten the love he bore for the princess nor the hatred he owes his rival. It was the duty of Captain Baldos to see that he did not enter the passage in the event that he eluded us in the hills."

Later in the day the Princess Yette received from the gaunt, hawklike old man in the fortress a signed statement withdrawing his charges against Baldos, the guard. Marlaux did not ask for leniency. It was not in him to plead. If the humble withdrawal of charges against Baldos could mitigate the punishment he knew Yette would impose, all well and good. If it went for naught, he was prepared for the worst. Down there in his quarters, with wine before him, he sat and waited for the end. He knew that there was but one fate for the man, great or

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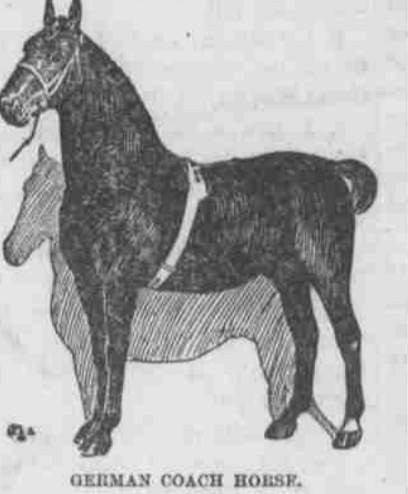
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			7:15	11:10	3:20	Lv. DALLAS	Ar. FALLS CITY	Ar. DALLAS	Ar. FALLS CITY	Ar. DALLAS	Ar. FALLS CITY	Ar. DALLAS
			7:30	No Stop	3:30	Ar. "TEATS"	No Stop	No Stop	No Stop	No Stop	No Stop	No Stop
			7:38	No Stop	3:43	Ar. "GILLIAMS"	9:02	No Stop	4:47			
Lv.	Lv.	Lv.	7:43	No Stop	3:48	Ar. "BRIDGEPORT"	9:57	No Stop	4:42	Ar.	Ar.	Ar.
6:00	9:00	1:30	7:55	11:50	4:00	Ar. FALLS CITY	9:45	1:00	4:30	8:30	11:45	4:10
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