

Beverly of Graustark

By **GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON,**
Author of "Graustark"
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(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER VIII.

BY this time they were passing the queer little huts that marked the outskirts of a habitable community. These were the homes of shepherds, hunters and others whose vocations related especially to the mountains. Farther on there were signs of farming interests; the homes became more numerous and more pretentious in appearance. The rock lined gorge broadened into a fertile valley; the road was smooth and level, a condition which afforded relief to the travelers. Ravone had once more dressed the wounds inflicted by the lion, but he was unable to provide anything to subdue the fever. Baldos was undeniably ill. Beverly, between her exclamations of joy and relief at being in sight of Ganlook, was profuse in her expressions of concern for the hero of the Hawk and Raven. The feverish gleam in his dark eyes and the pain that marked his face touched her deeply. Suffering softened his lean, sun browned features, oblitterating the mocking lines that had impressed her so unfavorably at the outset. She was saying to herself that he was handsome after a most unusual cast; it was an unforgettable face.

"Your highness," he said earnestly, after she had looked long and anxiously at his half closed eyes, "we are within an hour of Ganlook. It will be dark before we reach the gates. I know, but you have nothing to fear during the rest of the trip. Franz shall drive you to the sentry post and turn over the horses to your own men. My friends and I must leave you at the end of the mountain road. We are—
"Ridiculous!" she cried. "I'll not permit it! You must go to a hospital."
"If I enter the Ganlook gates it will be the same as entering the gates of death," he protested.

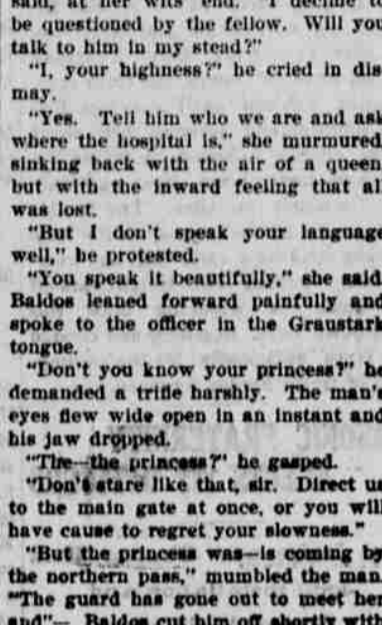
"Nonsense! You have a fever or you wouldn't talk like that. I can promise you absolute security."
"You do not understand, your highness."
"Nevertheless, you are going to a hospital," she firmly said. "You would die out here in the wilds, so what are the odds either way? Aunt Fanny, will you be careful? Don't you know that the least movement of those bags hurts him?"
"Please do not mind me, your highness. I am doing very well," he said, smiling.
The coach brought up in front of a roadside inn. While some of the men were watering the horses others gathered about its open window. A con-

versation in a tongue utterly incomprehensible to Beverly took place between Baldos and his followers. The latter seemed to be disturbed about something, and there was no mistaking the solicitous air with which they regarded their leader. The pseudo princess was patient as long as possible and then broke into the discussion.
"What do they want?" she demanded in English.
"They are asking for instructions," he answered.
"Instruct them to do as I bid," she said. "Tell them to hurry along and get you a doctor; that's all."
Evidently his friends were of the same opinion, for after a long harangue in which he was obdurate to the last they left the carriage, and he sank back with a groan of dejection.
"What is it?" she anxiously demanded.
"They also insist that I shall go to a surgeon," he said hopelessly. His eyes were moist, and he could not meet her gaze. She was full of exultation. "They have advised me to put myself under your protection, shameless as that may seem to a man. You and you alone have the power to protect me if I pass beyond the walls of Ganlook."
"It?" she cried, all a flutter.
"I could not thrust my head into the jaws of death unless the princess of Graustark were there to stay their fury. Your royal hand alone can turn

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—you, 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 and, to her amazement, it was as cold as ice. "What is the matter?" she cried in alarm.
"You trusted me in the wilds, your highness," he said tensely; "I am trusting you now." Before she could reply the officer in charge of the Ganlook gates appeared at the coach window. There were lights on all sides. Her heart sank like lead. It would be a miracle if she passed the gates unrecognized.
"I must see Baron Dangloss at once," she cried in English, utterly disdaining 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 Goaz, 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 Edelweis! 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 which 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 shrank 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

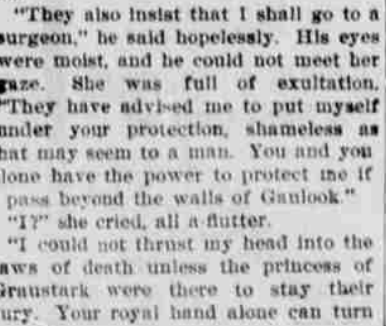


"You are Miss Beverly Calhoun of Washington."
The door that opened into the office of the commandant, Baldos glared after them in angry amazement.
"Young man, some day—and soon—you will be a much wiser soldier—and in the ranks," said Beverly hotly. The smile instantly receded from the insolent fellow's face, for there was a world of prophecy in the way she said it. Somehow he was in a much more respectful humor when he returned to the hall and stood in the presence of the tall, flushed stranger with the ragged uniform.
A short, fierce little man in the picturesque uniform of a Graustark officer arose as Beverly entered the office. His short beard bristled as though it were concealing a smile, but his manner was polite, even deferential. She advanced fearlessly toward him, a wayward smile struggling into her face.
"I dare say you know I am not the princess," she said composedly. Every vestige of fear was gone now that she had reached the line of battle. The doughty baron looked somewhat surprised at this frank way of opening an interview.
"I am quite well aware of it," he said politely.
"They say you know every one, Baron Dangloss," she boldly said. "Pray who am I?"
The powerful official looked at the smiling face for a moment, his bushy eyebrows contracting ever so slightly. There was a shameless streak of dust across her cheek, but there was also a dimple there that appealed to the grim old man. His eyes twinkled as he replied, with due obsequiousness:
"You are Miss Beverly Calhoun of Washington."

CHAPTER IX.
BEVERLY'S eyes showed her as astonished. 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 joyful!" 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 Rollowitz. 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. A plain 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 Yevie of Graustark."
"And, oh, that reminds me, Baron Dangloss, Baldos still believes me to be the princess. Is it necessary 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—"
A man in uniform entered after knocking at the door of the room. He saluted his superior and uttered a few words in his own language.
"Her royal highness is awaiting you at the home of the countess, Miss Calhoun. A detail of men will escort you and your servant to her place."
"Now, please, Baron Dangloss," pleaded Beverly at the door. "Be nice to him. You know it hurts him to walk. Can't you have him carried in?"
"If he will consent," said he quietly. Beverly hurried into the outer room after giving the baron a smile he never forgot. Baldos looked up eagerly, anxiously.
"It's all right," she said in low tones, pausing for a moment beside his chair. "Don't get up. Goodby. 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.
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?"



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