

Beverly of Graustark

By GEORGE BARR M'GUTHCHEON, Author of "Graustark"

(Continued from last week.)

There came the natural impulse to make a dash for the outside world, fighting his way through if necessary.

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.

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.

"She is Miss Calhoun, an American, going to be a guest at the castle," not the princess, but Miss Calhoun.

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.

His subtle effort to draw Haddan into a discussion of the princess and her household resulted unsatisfactorily.

Both he and Beverly Calhoun were ignorant of the true conditions that attached themselves to the new recruit.

servants and ladies in waiting disappeared at a signal from her. She arose to greet him, and he knelt to kiss her hand.

"Have they told you that you are to act as my special guard and escort?" she asked, with a queer flutter in her voice.

"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.

"Very well, your highness," he respectfully said. He was thinking of Miss Calhoun, an American girl, although he called her "your highness."

"Certainly," she replied. His manner was more deferential than she had ever known it to be.

"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.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English."

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



"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," Beverly said, his eyes fixed on the princess.

Beverly, breathing easier, was properly impressed by this promise of fealty. She was looking with pride upon the brave of her stalwart protectors.

"It has gone to keep company with other devoted and devoted friends," he said, a glint of bitterness in his voice.

"It shames the rags in which you found me." "I shall never forget them, Baldos," she said, with a strange earnestness in her voice.

"May I presume to inquire after the health of your good Aunt Fanny and, although I did not see him, your Uncle Sam?" he asked, with a face as straight and sincere as that of a judge.

"This was the unexpected, but she met it with admirable composure. "It depends upon the time when Prince Dantan resumes the throne in Dawsbergen," she said.

"And that day may never come," said he, such mocking regret in his 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.

"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 were half a dozen people in the room when Beverly entered eagerly. She was panting with excitement.

"What are you going to do with us?" He comes here a vagabond, but he certainly does not act like one. He admits that he is being hunted, but takes no one into his confidence.

"I shall never be able to look that man in the face again," came dolefully from Yette's humbled lips.

"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?"

deadly levelness. "Oh, then I see no reason why I should not salute you, sir," said Baldos, with one of his rare smiles.

"Stop! Have I said you could go, sir? I have a bit of advice to—" "My command to go comes from your superior, sir," said Baldos, with irritating blandness.

"Be patient, general," cried Beverly, in deep distress. "He does not know any better. I will stand sponsor for him." And Baldos went away with a light step, his blood singing, his devil-may-care heart satisfied.

"Well, it seems that I am to be associated with the devil as well as with angels. Heavens! June is a glorious month."

"Now, you promised you'd be nice to him, General Marlanx," cried Beverly the instant Baldos was out of the room. "He's new at this sort of thing, you know, and, besides, you didn't address him very politely for an utter stranger."

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You are so keen about him." "He positively refuses to let me dig," explained Beverly. "I tried, you know, but he—he—well, he snatched 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."

"And he is sure to know us sooner or later," said the young countess, momentarily serious. "Oh, if it ever comes to that I shall be in a splendid position to explain it all to him," said Beverly. "Don't you see, I'll have to do a lot of explaining myself?"

"Baron Dangloss," announced the guard of the upper hall, throwing open the door for the doughty little chief of police.

"Your highness sent for me?" asked he, advancing after the formal salutation. The princess exhibited genuine amazement.

"I did, Baron Dangloss, but you must have come with the wings of an eagle. It is really not more than three minutes since I gave the order to Colonel Quinnox." The baron smiled mysteriously, but volunteered no solution.

"The truth is, he was entering the castle doors as the messenger left them, but he was much too fond of effect to spoil a good situation by explanations. It was a long two miles to his office in the Tower. "Something has just happened that impels me to ask a few questions concerning Baldos, the new guard."

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

"It is quite personal and of no consequence. What do you know of him? My curiosity is aroused. Now, be 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 puzzle to me."



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