



(Continued from last week.)

The ministers and the lords and ladies of the castle were assembled in the room when Baron Daughloss appeared with the courier from the prison. Count Marliani 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 Danton 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 Danton. 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 Rayone, who was seated near the princess. Candace 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 Danton in his stead?"

"The story! The story of his capture! Tell me the story," came eagerly from those assembled. Rayone 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 restored to them. The other will 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 Vaudos 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."

Rayone 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 disclaimed the offer from the crown," said Rayone. "She has married Lieutenant Absalom 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 Ganlock's gate. I thought you were a princess, and you did not know that I understood English. That was a sore hour for us. Baldos was our life, the heart of our enterprise. Gabriel hates him as he hates his own brother. steadfastly he has 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 surprised to find that he had to be left out of the Dawsbergen army."

"Please tell us how you succeeded in capturing that young hot-headed" 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 to 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, hawkish old man in the fortress a signed statement withdrawing his charges against Baldos, the guard. Marliani 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



Baldos walked forth a free man, the plaudits of the people in his ears. Baron Daughloss and Colonel Quinnox were beside the tall guard as he came forward to receive the commendations and apologies of Graustark's ruler and the warm promises of reward from the man he served.

He knelt before the two rulers who were holding court on the veranda. The cheers of nobles, the shouts of soldiery, the exclamations of the ladies, did not turn his confident head. He was the born knight. The look of triumph that he bestowed upon Beverly Calhoun, who lounged gracefully beside the stone balustrade, brought the red tinge to her cheeks. He took something from his breast and held it up faintly to his lips before all the assembled courtiers. Beverly knew that it was a faded rose!

Beverly knew that it was a faded rose! small, who attacked a woman in Graustark. His only hope was that the princess might make an exception in the case of one who had been the head of the army, but the hope was too small to cherish.

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CHAPTER XXX

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Dawsbergen. A proclamation was sent to the prime minister setting forth the new order of affairs and suggesting the instant suspension of hostile preparations and the restoration of Prince Danton. Accompanying this proclamation went a dignified message from Danton informing his people that he awaited their commands. He was ready to resume the throne that had been so desecrated. It would be his joy to restore Dawsbergen to its once peaceful and prosperous condition. In the meantime the Duke of Edelweiss dispatched the news to the Princess Volga of Aphana, who was forced to abandon—temporarily at least—her desperate designs upon Graustark. The capture of Gabriel put an end to her transparent plans.

"But she is bound to break out against me sooner or later and on the slightest provocation," said Yette.

"I dare say that a friendly alliance between Graustark and Dawsbergen will prove sufficient to check any ambitions she may have along that line," said Rayone significantly. "They are very near to each other now, your highness. Friends should stand together."

Beverly Calhoun was in suspense. Baldos had been sent off to the frontier by Prince Danton, carrying the message which could be trusted to no other. He accompanied the Graustark ambassadors of peace as Danton's special agent. He went in the nighttime, and Beverly did not see him. The week which followed his departure was the longest she ever spent. She was troubled in her heart for fear that he might not return, despite the declaration she had made to him in one hysterical moment. It was difficult for her to keep up the show of cheerfulness that was expected of her. Reticence became her strongest characteristic. She persistently refused to be drawn into a discussion of her relations with the absent one. Yette was piqued by her manner at first, but wisely saw through the mask as time went on. She and Prince Danton had many quiet and interesting chats concerning Beverly and the erstwhile guard. The prince took Lorry and the princess into his confidence. He told them all there was to tell about his dashing friend and companion.

Beverly and the young Princess Candace became fast and loving friends. The young girl's worship of her brother was beautiful to behold. She huddled close to him on every occasion, and her dark eyes bespoke adoration whenever his name was mentioned in her presence.

"If he doesn't come back pretty soon I'll pack up and start for home," Beverly said to herself resentfully one day. "Then if he wants to see me he'll have to come all the way to Washington, and I'm not sure that he can do it, either. He's too disgustingly poor."

"What's become of that Misth Baldos, Miss Beverly?" asked Aunt Fanny in the midst of these sorry cogitations. "Has he tuck hit int' his haid to desert us to good? Seems to me he'd oughteb'."

"Now, that will do, Aunt Fanny," reprimanded her mistress sternly. "You are not supposed to know anything about affairs of state, so don't ask."

At last she no longer could curb her impatience and anxiety. She deliberately sought information from Prince Danton. They were strolling in the park on the seventh day of her inquisition.

"Have you heard from Paul Baldos?" she asked, bravely plunging into deep water.

"He is expected here tomorrow or the next day, Miss Calhoun. I am almost as eager to see him as you are," he replied, with a very pointed smile.

"Almost? Well, yes, I'll confess that I am eager to see him. I never knew I could long for any one so much as I— Oh, well, there's no use hiding it from you. I couldn't if I tried. I care very much for him. You don't think it sounds silly for me to say such a thing, do you? I've thought a great deal of him ever since the night at the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. In my imagination I have tried to strip you of your princely robes to dress them upon him, but he is only a few miles from it all. He knows that I care for him, and I know that he cares for me. Perhaps he has told you."

"Yes, he has confessed that he loves you, Miss Calhoun, and he laments the fact that he is not a prince," Paul Baldos said in his usual way. "I would be right in his shoes, but I'm not all your own. I'm a poor fellow, and I'm not worth anything."

"I'm sure you are worth something," Beverly said, looking at him with a smile. "There is no wealth so great as that. But," said she, turning her mouth in pathetic despair, "don't you think that you can make a noble or something of him? And give him a station in life worthy of his ambitions? He has done so much for you, you know."

"I have meditated that I can give you nothing," Paul Baldos said only that he was a poor fellow, and he was not worth anything. "I'm sure you are worth something," Beverly said, looking at him with a smile. "There is no wealth so great as that. But," said she, turning her mouth in pathetic despair, "don't you think that you can make a noble or something of him? And give him a station in life worthy of his ambitions? He has done so much for you, you know."

news from the frontier. The Duke of Matz and the leading dignitaries had heard of Gabriel's capture, both through the Bappo boys and through a few of his henchmen who had staggered into camp after the disaster. The news threw the Dawsbergen diplomats into a deplorable state of uncertainty. Even the men high in authority, while not especially depressed over the fall of their sovereign, were in doubt as to what would be the next move in their series of tragedies. Almost to a man they regretted the folly which had drawn them into the net with Gabriel. Baldos reported that the Duke of Matz and a dozen of the most distinguished men in Dawsbergen were on their way to Edelweiss to complete arrangements for peace and to lay their renunciation of Gabriel before Danton in a neutral court.

The people of Dawsbergen had been clamoring long for Danton's restoration, and Baldos was commissioned to say that his return would be the signal for great rejoicing. He was closeted until after midnight with Danton and his sister, Lorry and Princess Yette being called in at the end to hear and approve of the manifesto prepared by the Prince of Dawsbergen. The next morning the word went forth that a great banquet was to be given in the castle that night for Prince Danton and the approaching noblemen. The prince expected to depart almost immediately thereafter to resume the throne in Serros.

Baldos was wandering through the park early in the morning. His duties rested lightly upon his shoulders, but he was restless and dissatisfied. The longing in his heart urged him to turn his eyes ever and anon toward the balcony and then to the obstinate looking castle doors. The uniform of a Graustark guard still graced his splendid figure. At last a graceful form was seen coming from the castle toward the cedars. She walked bravely, but aimlessly. That was plain to be seen. It was evident that she was and was not looking for some one. Baldos observed with a thrill of delight that a certain red feather stood up defiantly from the band of her sailor hat. He liked the way her dark blue walking skirt swished in harmony with her lithe, firm strides.

She was quite near before he advanced from his place among the trees. He did not expect her to exhibit surprise or confusion, and he was not disappointed. She was as cool as a brisk spring morning. He did not offer his hand, but with a fine smile of contentment, bowed low and with mock servility.

"I report for duty, your highness," he said. She caught the ring of gladness in his voice.

"Then I command you to shake hands with me," she said brightly. "You have been away, I believe?" with a delicious inflection.

"Yes, for a century or more, I'm sure." Constraint fell upon them suddenly. The hour had come for a definite understanding, and both were conquered by its importance. For the first time in his life he knew the meaning of diffidence. It came over him as he looked helplessly into the clear, gray, earnest eyes. "I love you for wearing that red feather," he said simply.

"And I loved you for wearing it," she answered, her voice soft and thrilling. He caught his breath joyously.

"Beverly," as he bent over her, "you are my very life, my—"

"Don't, Paul!" she whispered, drawing away with an embarrassed glance about the park. There were people to be seen on all sides, but he had forgotten them. He thought only of the girl who ruled his heart. Seeing the pain in his face, she hastily, even blushing, said: "It is so public, dear."

He straightened himself with soldierly precision, but his voice trembled as he tried to speak calmly in defiance to his eyes. "There is the motto—see! It is sealion itself. Will you come with me? I must tell you all that is in my heart. It will burst if I do not."

Slowly they made their way to the fairy grotto deep in the thicket of trees. It was Yette's favorite dreaming place. Dark and cool and musical by the rippling of waters, it was an ideal retreat. She dropped upon the rustic bench that stood against the moss-covered wall of boulders. With the gentle reserve of a man who reveres as well as loves, Baldos stood above her. He waited, and she understood. How unlike most impatient lovers he was!

"You may all beside me!" she said, with a wistful smile of acknowledgment. As he flung himself into the seat his hand eagerly sought hers, his country reserve gone to the winds.

"Beverly, dearest one, you never can know how much I love you," he whispered into her ear. "It is a deathless love, unreasonably, unalterable. It is in my blood to love forever. Listen to me, dear one. I come of a race whose love is hot and enduring. My people from time immemorial have loved as do other people have loved. They have killed and slaughtered for the sake of the glorious passion. Love is the religion of my people. You must, you shall believe me when I say that I will love you better than my soul so long as that soul exists. I loved you the day I met you. It has been worship since that time."

His fervor carried her resistlessly away as the great waves sweep the deck of a ship across. She was out in the sea, and far from all else that could hinder her, far from all help, here she was in his arms as she had been in his arms, and he was holding her through a storm of words.

"I have kissed you to hold you in my arms, Beverly. Kiss me when you were a princess and I lay in the hospital at Ganlock. My fevered arms hungered

for you. There never has been a moment that my heart has not been reaching out in search of yours. You have glorified me, dearest, by the promise you made a week ago. I know that you will not renounce that precious pledge. It is in your eyes now—the eyes I shall worship to the end of eternity. Tell me, though, with your own lips, your own voice, that you will be my wife, mine to hold forever."

For answer she placed her arms about his neck and buried her face against his shoulder. There were tears in her gray eyes and there was a sob in her throat. He held her close to his breast for an eternity. It seemed to both, neither giving voice to the song their hearts were singing. There was no other world than the fairy grotto.

"Sweetheart, I am asking you to make a great sacrifice," he said at last, his voice hoarse but tender. She looked up into his face serenely. "Can you give up the joys, the wealth, the comforts of that home across the sea to share a lowly cottage with me and my love? Wait, dear—do not speak until I am through. You must think of what your friends will say. The love and life I offer you now will not be like that which you always have known. It will be poverty and the

(To be continued.)

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