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NO. 45.

Ain't They Cute.

Two of the Contestants in our Baby Show.



THESE ARE BRIGHT FACED YOUNG AMERICANS.

BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON.
Author of "Graustark"

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like. Yo' bat is ready, Miss Bev'ly."

Beverly splashed the water with unreasonable ferocity for a few minutes, trying to enjoy a diversion that had not failed her until this morning.

"Aunt Fanny," she announced after looking darkly through her window into the mountains above, "if you can't brush my hair—ouch!—any easier than this I'll have some one else do it, that's all. You're a regular old bear."

"To' 'll honey," was all the complacent bear said in reply, without altering her methods in the least.

"Well," said Beverly threateningly, with a shake of her head, "be careful, that's all. Have you heard the news?"

"Wha' news, Miss Bev'ly?"

"We're going back to Washin'ton."

"Thank de Lawd! When?"

"I don't know. I've just this instant made up my mind. I think we'll start—let's see, this is the 6th of August, isn't it? Well, look and see if you don't know, stupid! The 10th? My goodness! Where has the time gone, anyway? Well, we'll start some time between the 11th and the 12th."

"Of dis monf, Miss Bev'ly?"

"No, September. I want you to look up a time table for me today. We must see about the trains."

"Dey' on'y one leavin' heah dally, an' hit goes at 6 in de mornin'. One train a day! Ain' dat scan'loos?"

"I'm sure, Aunt Fanny, it is their business, not ours," said Beverly severely.

"T'raps dey mought be runnin' a excursion roun' 'bout September, Miss Bev'ly," speculated Aunt Fanny consolingly. "Dey gen'ly has 'em in September."

"You old goose," cried Beverly in spite of herself.

"Ain' yo' habin' er good time, honey?"

"No, I am not."

"Fo' de lan' sake. Ah wouldn't s'picioned hit fo' a minnit. Hit's de gayest place Ah mos' evah saw—'cept Washin'ton an' Lex'ton an' Vicksburg."

"Well, you don't know everything," said Beverly crossly. "I wish you'd take that red feather out of my hat right away."

"Shall Ah frow hit away, Miss Bev'ly?"

"Well, no. You needn't do that," said Beverly. "Put it on my dressing table. I'll attend to it."

"Wha' become o' de gemman 'at wo' hit in de fust place? Ah ain' seen him

fo' two—three days."

"I'm sure I don't know. He's probably asleep. That class of people never lose sleep over anything."

"E's er pow'ful good lookin' pusion," suggested Aunt Fanny. Beverly's eyes brightened.

"Oh, do you think so?" she said, quite indifferently. "What are you doing with that hat?"

"Takin' out de feath'—jes' as"—

"Well, leave it alone. Don't disturb my things, Aunt Fanny. How many times must I tell you!"

"Good Lawd!" was all that Aunt Fanny could say.

"Don't forget about the time tables," said Beverly as she sallied forth for her walk in the park.

In the afternoon she went driving with Princess Yotive and the young Duke of Mizrox, upon whose innocent and sufficiently troubled head she was heaping secret abuse because of the news he brought. Later Count Marlanx appeared at the castle for his first lesson in poker. He looked so sure of himself that Beverly hated him to the point of desperation. At the same time she was eager to learn how matters stood with Baldos. The count's threat still hung over her head, veiled by its ridiculous shadow of mercy. She knew him well enough by this time to feel convinced that Baldos would have to account for his temerity sooner or later. It was like the cat and the helpless mouse.

"It's too hot," she protested, when he announced himself ready for the game. "Nobody plays poker when it's 92 in the shade."

"But, your highness," complained the count, "war may break out any day. I cannot concede delay."

"I think there's a game called 'shooting craps,'" suggested she serenely. "It seems to me it would be particularly good for warriors. You could be shooting something all the time."

He went away in a decidedly irascible frame of mind. She did not know it, but Baldos was soon afterward set to work in the garrison stables, a most loathsome occupation, in addition to his duties as a guard by night.

After mature deliberation Beverly set herself to the task of writing home to her father. It was her supreme intention to convince him that she would be off for the States in an amazingly short time. The major upon receiving the letter three weeks later found nothing in it to warrant the belief that she was over coming home. He did observe, however, that she had but little use for the army of Graustark and was especially disappointed in the set of men Yotive retained as her private guard. For the life of her Beverly could not have told why she disapproved of the guard in general or in particular, but she was conscious of the fact after the letter was posted that she had said many things that might have been left unwritten. Besides, it was not Baldos' fault that she could not sleep. It was distinctly her own. He had nothing to do with

"I'll bet father will be glad to hear that I am coming home," she said to Yotive after the letter was gone.

"Oh, Beverly, dear, I hate to hear of your going," cried the princess. "When did you tell him you'd start?"

"Why—oh—er—let me see, when did I say? Dish me, as Mr. Angulsh would say, I don't believe I gave a date. It seems to me I said soon; that's all."

"You don't know how relieved I am," exclaimed Yotive rapturously, and Beverly was in high dudgeon because of the implied reflection. "I believe you are in a tiff with Baldos," went on Yotive airily.

"Goodness! How foolish you can be at times, Yotive!" was what Beverly gave back to her highness the Princess of Graustark.

Late in the evening couriers came in from the Dawsbergen frontier with reports which created considerable excitement in castle and army circles. Prince Gabriel himself had been seen in the northern part of his domain, accompanied by a large detachment of picked soldiers. Lorry set out that very night for the frontier, happy in the belief that something worth while was about to occur. General Marlanx issued orders for the Edelweiss army corps to mass beyond the southern gates of the city the next morning. Commands were also sent to the outlying garrisons. There was to be a general movement of troops before the end of the week. Graustark was not to be caught napping.

Long after the departure of Lorry and Angulsh the princess sat on the balcony with Beverly and the Countess Dagmar. They did not talk much. The mission of these venturesome young American husbands was full of danger. Something in the air had told their wives that the first blows of war were to be struck before they looked again upon the men they loved.

"I think we have been betrayed by some one," said Dagmar after an almost interminable silence. Her companion did not reply. "The couriers say that Gabriel knows where we are weakest at the front and that he knows our every movement. Yotive, there is a spy here after all."

"And that spy has access to the very heart of our deliberations," added Beverly pointedly. "I say this in behalf of the man whom you evidently suspect, countess. He could not know these things."

"I do not say that he does know, Miss Cathoun, but it is not beyond reason that he may be the go-between, the means of transferring information from the main traitor to the messengers who await outside our walls."

"Oh, I don't believe it!" cried Beverly hotly.

"I wonder if these things would have happened if Baldos had never come to Edelweiss," mused the princess. As though by common impulse, both of the Graustark women placed their arms about Beverly.

"It's because we have so much at stake, Beverly, dear," whispered Dagmar. "Forgive me if I have hurt you."

Of course Beverly sobbed a little in the effort to convince them that she did not care whom they accused if he proved to be the right man in the end. They left her alone on the balcony. For an hour after midnight she sat there and dreamed. Every one was ready to turn against Baldos. Even she had been harsh toward him, for had she not seen him relegated to the most obnoxious of duties after promising him a far different life? And now what was he thinking of her? His descent from favor had followed upon the disclosures which made plain to each the identity of the other. No doubt he was attributing his degradation in a sense to the fact that she no longer relished his services, having seen a romantic little ideal shattered by his firm assertions. Of course she knew that General Marlanx was alone instrumental in assigning him to the unpleasant duty he now observed, but how was Baldos to know that she was not the real power behind the Iron Count?

A light drizzle began to fall, cold and disagreeable. There were no stars, no moon. The ground below was black with shadows, but shimmering in spots touched by the feeble park lamps. She retreated through her window, determined to go to bed. Her rebellious brain, however, refused to banish him from her thoughts. She wondered if he were patrolling the castle grounds in the rain in all that lonely darkness. Seized by a sudden inspiration she threw a gossamer about her, grasped an umbrella and ventured out upon the balcony once more. Gullibly she searched the night through the blue, drizzling rain. Her ears listened eagerly for the tread which was so well known to her.

At last he strode beneath a lamp not far away. He looked up, but of course could not see her against the dark wall. For a long time he stood motionless beneath the light. She could not help seeing that he was dejected, tired, unhappy. His shoulders drooped, and there was a general air of listlessness about the figure which had once been so full of courage and of hope. The pest light fell directly upon his face. It was somber, despondent, strained. He wore the air of a prisoner. Her heart went out to him like a flash. The debonair knight of the black patch was no more. In his place there stood a sullen slave to discipline.

"Baldos!" she called softly, her voice penetrating the dripping air with the clearness of a bell. He must have been longing for the sound of it, for he started and looked eagerly in her direction. His tall form straightened as he passed his hand over his brow. It was but a voice from his dream, he thought.

"Aren't you afraid you'll get wet?" asked the same low, sweet voice, with the suggestion of a laugh behind it. With long strides he crossed the pavement and stood almost directly beneath her.

"Your highness!" he exclaimed gently, joyously. "What are you doing out there?"

"Wondering, Baldos. Wondering what you were thinking of as you stood under the lamp over there."

"I was thinking of your highness," he called up softly.

"No, no!" she protested.

"I, too, was wondering—wondering what you were dreaming of as you slept, for you should be asleep at this hour, your highness, instead of standing out there in the rain."

"Baldos," she called down tremulously, "you don't like this work, do you?"

"It has nothing but darkness in it for me. I never see the light of your eyes. I never feel the—"

"Sh! You must not talk like that. It's not proper, and besides some one may be listening. The night has a thousand ears—or is it eyes? But listen. Tomorrow you shall be restored to your old duties. You surely cannot believe that I had anything to do with the order which compels you to work at this unholy hour."

"I was afraid you were punishing me for my boldness. My heart has been sore—you never can know how sore. I was disgraced, dismissed, forgotten!"

"No, no; you were not! You must not say that. Go away now, Baldos. You will ride with me tomorrow," she cried nervously. "Please go to some place where you won't get dripping wet."

"You forget that I am on guard," he said, with a laugh. "But you are a wise counselor. Is the rain so pleasant to you?"

"I have an umbrella," she protested. "What are you doing?" she cried indignantly. He was coming hand over hand up the trellis work that inclosed the lower veranda.

"I am coming to a place where it won't get dripping wet," he called softly. There was a dangerous ring in his voice, and she drew back in a panic.

"You must not!" she cried desperately. "This is madness! Go down, sir!"

"I am happy enough to fly, but cannot. So I do the next best thing—I climb to you." His arm was across the stone railing by this time, and he was panting from the exertion, not two feet from where she crouched. "Just one minute of heaven before I go back to the shadows of earth. I am, happy again. Marlanx told me you had dismissed me. I wonder what he holds in reserve for me. I knew he lied, but it is not until now that I rejoice. Come, you are to shield me from the rain."

"Oh, oh!" she gasped, overwhelmed by his daring passion. "I should die if any one saw you here." Yet she spasmodically extended the umbrella so that it covered him and left her out in the drizzle.

"And so should I," responded he softly. "Listen to me. For hours and hours I have been longing for the dear old hills in which you found me. I wanted to crawl out of Edelweiss and lose myself forever in the rocks and crags. Tonight when you saw me I was trying to say goodby to you forever. I was trying to make up my mind to desert. I could not endure the new order of things. You had cast me off. My friends out there were eager to have me with them. In the city every one is ready to call me a spy—even you, I thought. Life was black and drear. Now, my princess, it is as bright as heaven itself."

"You must not talk like this," she whispered helplessly. "You are making me sorry I called to you."

"I should have heard you if you had only whispered, my rain princess. I have no right to talk of love—I am a vagabond, but I have a heart, and it is a bold one. Perhaps I dream that I am here beside you—so near that I can

touch your face—but it is the sweetest of dreams. But for it I should have left Edelweiss weeks ago. I shall never awaken from this dream. You cannot rob me of the joys of dreaming."

Under the spell of his passion she drew nearer to him as he clung strongly to the rail. The roses at her throat came so close that he could bury his face in them. Her hand touched his cheek, and he kissed its palm again and again, his wet lips stinging her blood to the tips of her toes.

"Go away, please," she implored faintly. "Don't you see that you must not stay here—now?"

"A rose, my princess—one rose to kiss all through the long night," he



"I should die if any one saw you here," she whispered. She could feel his eyes burning into her heart. With trembling, hurried fingers she tore loose a rose. He could not seize it with his hands because of the position he held, and she laughed tantalizingly. Then she kissed it first and pressed it against his mouth. His lips and teeth closed over the stem, and the rose was his.

"There are thorns," she whispered ever so softly.

"They are the riches of the poor," he murmured, with difficulty, but she understood.

"Now, go," she said, drawing resolutely away. An instant later his head disappeared below the rail. Peering over the side, she saw his figure spring easily to the ground, and then came the rapid, steady tramp as he went away on his dreary patrol.

"I couldn't help it," she was whispering to herself between joy and shame.

Glimping instinctively out toward the solitary lamp, she saw two men standing in its light. One of them was General Marlanx; the other she knew to be the spy that watched Baldos. Her heart sank like lead when she saw that the two were peering intently toward the balcony where she stood and where Baldos had clung but a moment before.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHE shrank back with a great dread in her heart. Marlanx, of all men! Why was he in the park at this hour of the night? There could be but one answer, and the very thought of it almost suffocated her. He was drawing the net with his own hands, he was spying with his own eyes. For a full minute it seemed to her that her heart would stop beating. How long had he been standing there? What had he seen or heard? Involuntarily she peered over the rail for a glimpse of Baldos. He had gone out into the darkness, missing the men at the lamp post either by choice or through pure good fortune. A throbbing thankfulness assailed her heart. She was not thinking of her position, but of his.

Again she drew stealthily away from the rail, possessed of a ridiculous feeling that her form was as plain to the vision as if it were broad daylight. The tread of a man impelled her to glance below once more before fleeing to her room. Marlanx was coming toward the veranda. She fled swiftly, pausing at the window to lower the friendly but forgotten umbrella. From below came the sibilant hiss of a man seeking to attract her attention. Once more she stopped to listen. The "Hiss!" was repeated, and then her own name was called softly, but imperatively. It was beyond the power of woman to keep from laughing. It struck her as irresistibly funny that the Iron Count should be standing out there in the rain, signaling to her like a lovesick boy. Once she was inside, however, it did not seem so amusing. Still, it gave her an immense amount of satisfaction to slam the windows loudly, as if in pure defiance. Then she closed the blinds, shutting out the night completely.