

Beverly of Graustark

By
**GEORGE BARR
M'UTCHEON,**
Author of "Graustark"
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"There!" shrieked Marlanx. "He admits that he!"

"But I wish to add that Count Marlanx is in error when he says that Miss Calhoun was my accomplice. His eyes were not keen in the darkness of the sanctuary. Perhaps he is not accustomed to the light one finds in a chapel at the hour of 2. Will your highness kindly look in the direction of the southern gate? Your august gaze may fall upon the reclining figure of a boy asleep there in the shadow of the friendly cedar. If Count Marlanx had looked closely enough last night he might have seen that it was a boy who went with me and not!"

"Fool! Don't you suppose I know a woman's skirts?" cried the Iron Count. "Better than most men, I fancy," calmly responded Baldos. "My young friend wore the garments of a woman, let me add."

Lorry came down and grasped Baldos by the arm. His eyes were stern and accusing. Above, Yette and Beverly had clasped hands and were looking on dumbly. What did Baldos mean? "Then, you did go through the passage? And you were accompanied by this boy, a stranger? How comes this, sir?" demanded Lorry. Every eye was accusing the guard at this juncture. The men were descending the steps as if to surround him.

"It is not the first time that I have gone through the passage, sir," said Baldos, amused by the looks of consternation. "I advise you to close it. Its secret is known to more than one person. It is known, by the way, to Prince Gabriel of Dawsbergen. It is known to every member of the band with which Miss Calhoun found me when she was a princess. Count Marlanx is quite right when he says that I have gone in and out of the castle grounds from time to time. He is right when he says that I have communicated with men inside and outside of these grounds. But he is wrong when he accuses Miss Calhoun of being responsible for or even aware of my reprehensible conduct. She knew nothing of all this, as you may judge by taking a look at her face at this instant."

Beverly's face was a study in emotions. She was looking at him with dilated eyes. Pain and disappointment were concentrated in their expressive gray depths; indignation was struggling to master the love and pity that had looked on with a single glance to convince the most skeptical that she was ignorant of these astounding movements on the part of her protegee. Again every eye was turned upon the bold, smiling guard.

"I have been bitterly deceived in you," said Lorry, genuine pain in his voice. "We trusted you implicitly. I didn't think it of you, Baldos. After all, it is honorable of you to expose so thoroughly your own infamy in order to acquit an innocent person who believed in you. You did not have to come back to the castle. You might have escaped punishment by using Miss Calhoun as a shield from her highness' wrath. But none the less you compel me to give countenance to all that Count Marlanx has said."

"I insist that it was Miss Calhoun who went through the panel with him," said Marlanx eagerly. "If it was this boy who accompanied you, what was his excuse in returning to the castle after you had fled?"

"He came back to watch over Miss Calhoun while she slept. It was my sworn duty to guard her from the man who had accused her. This boy is a member of the band to which I belong, and he watched while I went forth on a pretty business of my own. It will be useless to ask what that business was. I will not tell. Nor will the boy. You may kill us, but our secrets die with us. This much I will say: We have done nothing disloyal to Graustark. You may believe me or not. It has been necessary for me to communicate with my friends, and I found the means soon after my arrival here. All the foxes that live in the hills have not four legs," he concluded significantly.

"You are a marvel!" exclaimed Lorry, and there was real admiration in his voice. "I'm sorry you were fool enough to come back and get caught like this. Don't look surprised, gentlemen, for I believe in your hearts you admire him quite as much as I do." The faint smile that went the rounds was confirmation enough. Nearly every man there had been trained in English speaking lands and not a word of the conversation had been missed.

"I expected to be arrested, Mr. Lorry," said Baldos calmly. "I knew that the warrant awaited me. I knew that my flight of last night was no secret. I came back willingly, gladly, your highness, and now I am ready to face my accuser. There is nothing for me to fear."

"And after you have confessed to all these actions? By George, I like your nerve!" exclaimed Lorry.

"I have been amply vindicated," cried Marlanx. "Put him in irons—and that boy too."

"We'll interview the boy," said Lorry, remembering the lad beneath the tree.

pose he'll have to be awakened, poor little beggar."

Colonel Quinnox and Haddon crossed the grounds to the big cedar. The boy sprang to his feet at their call and looked wildly about. Two big hands clasped his arms, and a moment later the slight figure came pathetically across the intervening space between the stalwart guards.

"Why has he remained here, certain of arrest?" demanded Lorry in surprise.

"He was safer with me than anywhere else, Mr. Lorry. You may shoot me a thousand times, but I implore you to deal gently with my unhappy friend. He has done no wrong. The clothes you see upon that trembling figure are torturing the poor heart more than you can know. The burning flush upon that cheek is the red of modesty. Your highness and gentlemen, I ask you to have pity on this gentle friend of mine." He threw his arm about the shoulder of the slight figure as it drooped against him.

"Count Marlanx was right. It was a woman he saw with me in the chapel last night."

The sensation created by this simple statement was staggering. The flushed face was unmistakably that of a young girl, a tender, modest thing that shrank before the eyes of a grim audience. Womanly instinct impelled Yette to shield the timid masquerader. Her strange association with Baldos was not of enough consequence in the eyes of this tender ruler to check the impulse of gentleness that swept over her. That the girl was guiltless of any wrongdoing was plain to be seen. Her eyes, her face, her trembling figure furnished proof conclusive. The dark looks of the men were softened when the arm of the princess went about the stranger and drew her close.

"Bah! Some wanton or other!" sneered Marlanx. "But a pretty one, by the gods. Baldos has always shown his good taste."

Baldos glared at him like a tiger restrained.

"Before God, you will have those words to unsay," he hissed.

Yette felt the slight body of the girl quiver and then grow tense.

The eyes of Baldos now were fixed on the white, drawn face of Beverly Calhoun, who stood quite alone at the top of the steps. She was from the guards, he dashed up the steps to her side. His arm caught her as she swayed, and its touch restored strength to her—the strength of resentment and defiance.

"Don't!" she whispered hoarsely.

"Have courage," he murmured softly. "It will all be well. There is no danger."

"So this is the woman!" she cried bitterly.

"Yes, you alone are dearer to me than she," he uttered hurriedly.

"I can't believe a word you say."

"You will, Beverly. I love you. That is why I came back. I could not leave you to meet it alone. Was I not right? Let them put me into irons—let them kill me!"

"Come!" cried Colonel Quinnox, reaching his side at this instant. "The girl will be cared for. You are a prisoner."

"Wait!" implored Beverly, light suddenly breaking in upon her. "Please wait, Colonel Quinnox." He hesitated, his broad shoulders between her and the gaping crowd below. She saw with grateful heart that Yette and Lorry were holding the steps as if against a warlike foe. "Is she—is she your wife?"

"Good heavens, no!" gasped Baldos.

"Your sweetheart?" piteously.

"She is the sister of the man I serve so poorly," he whispered. Quinnox allowed them to walk a few paces down the flagging, away from the curious gaze of the persons below.

"Oh, Baldos!" she cried, her heart suddenly melting. "Is she Prince Danton's sister?" Her hand clasped his convulsively as he nodded assent.

"Now I do love you."

"Thank God!" he whispered joyously. "I knew it, but I was afraid you never would speak the words. I am happy—I am wild with joy."

"But they may shoot you," she shuddered. "You have condemned yourself. Oh, I cannot talk to you as I want to—out here before all these people. Don't move, Colonel Quinnox. They can't see through you. Please stand still!"

"They will not shoot me, Beverly, dear. I am not a spy," said Baldos, looking down into the eyes of the slender boyish figure who stood beside the princess. "It is better that I should die, however," he went on bitterly.

"Life will not be worth living without you. You would not give yourself to the lowly, humble hunter, so I!"

"I will marry you, Paul. I love you. Can't anything be done to?"

"It is bound to come out all right in the end," he cried, throwing up his head to drink in the new joy of living. "They will find that I have done nothing to injure Graustark. Wait, dearest, until the day gives up its news. It will not be long in coming. Ah, this promise of yours gives me new life, new joy. I could shout it from the

housetops!"

"But don't!" she cried nervously. "How does she happen to be here with you? Tell me, Paul. Oh, isn't she a dear?"

"You shall know everything in time. Watch over her, dearest. I have fled today for you, but it was a life I loved. Care for her if you love me. When I am free and in favor again you will—Ah!" He broke off suddenly, with an exclamation. His eyes were bent eagerly on the circle of trees just beyond the parade ground. Then his hand clasped hers in one spasmodic grip of relief. An instant later he was towering, with head bare, at the top of the steps, his hand pointing dramatically toward the trees.

Ravone, still in his ragged uniform, haggard, but eager, was standing like a gaunt specter in the sunlight that flooded the terrace. The vagabond, with the eyes of all upon him, raised and lowered his arms thrice, and the face of Baldos became radiant.

"Your highness," he cried to Yette, waving his hand toward the stranger, "I have the honor to announce the Prince of Dawsbergen."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS startling announcement threw the company into the greatest excitement. Baldos ran down the steps and to the side of the astonished princess.

"Prince Danton!" she cried, unbelievably.

He pushed the boyish figure aside and whispered earnestly into Yette's ear. She smiled warmly in response, and her eyes sparkled.

"And this, your highness, is his sister, the Princess Candace," he announced aloud, bowing low before the girl. At that instant she ceased to be the timid, clinging boy. Her chin went up in truly regal state as she calmly, even haughtily, responded to the dazed, half earnest salutes of the men. With a rare smile—a knowing one, in which mischief was paramount—she spoke to Baldos, giving him her hand to kiss.

"Ah, dear Baldos, you have achieved your sweetest triumph—the theatrical climax to all this time of plotting. My brother's sister loves you for all this. Your highness—and she turned to Yette with a captivating smile—"Is the luckless sister of Danton welcome in your castle? May I rest here in peace? It has been a bitterly long year, this past week," she sighed. Fatigue shot back into her sweet face, and Yette's love went out to her unreservedly. As she drew the slight figure up the steps she turned and said to her ministers: "I shall be glad to receive Prince Danton in the throne room without delay. I am going to put the princess to bed."

"Your highness," said Baldos from below, "may I be the first to announce to you that there will be no war with Dawsbergen?"

This was too much. Even Marlanx looked at his enemy with something like collapse in his eyes.

"I mean that," he said, "to announce the recapture of Gabriel, his half brother. Before the hour is past your own men from the dungeon in the mountains will come to report the return of the fugitive. This announcement may explain in a measure the conduct that has earned for me the accusation which confronts me. The men who have retained Gabriel are the members of that little band you have heard so much about. Once I was its captain, Prince Danton's chief of staff—the commander of his ragged army of twelve. Miss Calhoun and fate brought me into Edgewood, but my loyalty to the object espoused by our glorious little army has never wavered. Without me they have succeeded in tricking and trapping Gabriel. It is more than the great army of Graustark could do. Your highness will pardon the boast under the circumstances?"

"If this is true, you have accomplished a miracle," exclaimed Lorry, profoundly agitated. "But can it be true? I can't believe it. It is too good. It is too utterly improbable. Is that really Prince Danton?"

"Assuming that it is Danton, Grenfall," said Yette, "I fancy it is not courteous in us to let him stand over there all alone and ignored. Go to him, please." With that she passed through the doors, accompanied by Beverly and the young princess. Lorry and others went to greet the emaciated visitor in rags and tags. Colonel Quinnox and Baron Dangloss looked at one another in doubt and uncertainty. What were they to do with Baldos, the prisoner?

[CONTINUED.]

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Probate Judge's Sale.

State of South Carolina, } In the Probate
County of Union, } Court.
M. J. Hardy as administrator of the
estate of Jackson Hardy, deceased, Ptf.
against James Hardy et al, Dft.

To sell land in aid of assets.

By decree of the Probate Court for the county of Union and state aforesaid, I will sell to the highest bidder before the courthouse door during the legal hours of sale on the first Monday in November, 1906, (it being salesday) the following described real estate situate and being in the town of Union, county and state aforesaid. All that certain lot or parcel of land situate in said town containing one-fourth of an acre, more or less, bounded on north by Archie street, north-east by lot no. 9, south-east by the Willard land and south-west by lot no. 9. This being the same lot purchased by Jackson Hardy from Pink Wallace, deed recorded in office of R. M. C., book of deed P. no. 34, Page 89.

Terms of sale, Cash. Purchaser to pay for papers. JASON M. GREER, Judge of Probate.

Final Discharge.

Notice is hereby given that P. E. Pant, Administrator of the Estate of Martha W. Pant, deceased, has applied to Jason M. Greer, Judge of Probate, in and for the county of Union, for a final discharge as such Administrator.

It is Ordered, That the 13th day of November, A. D. 1906, be fixed for hearing of Petition, and a final settlement of said Estate.

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Published in Union Times Oct. 12, 1906.

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Probate Judge Sale.

State of South Carolina, } In the Court
County of Union, } of Probate.
John R. Blake, as Executor Estate
Larkin M. Rice, Deceased, Plaintiff,
against Rosa Kearns, et al.

By a decree of the court in the above stated action, I will sell upon the lands at public outcry to the highest bidder on Tuesday, Nov. 6th, 1906, at 11 a. m., all that certain tract or parcel of land, located near Carlisle, in the County and State aforesaid, containing eighty six acres, more or less, bounded by Mrs. James Rice's Ison land, G. W. Hill, Henry Miller, and S. U. & C. R. R. Also that certain house and lot in the Town of Carlisle, County and State aforesaid, containing two acres more or less. These properties will be sold in lots and tracts, plats of which will be exhibited on day of sale and may be seen in Probate office.

Terms: One half cash, balance on a credit of one year with interest from day of sale, secured by bond of purchaser and mortgage of the premises. Purchaser to have privilege of paying all cash. Purchaser to pay for papers.

JASON M. GREER, Probate Judge.

Oct. 9th, 1906. 41-4t

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