

Beverly of Graustark

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

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CHAPTER XXI.

The next morning Aunt Fanny had a hard time of it. Her mistress was petulant; there was no sunshine in the bright August day as it appeared to her.

"What—what time is it?" demanded the newcomer from the land of Nod, stretching her fine young body with a splendid but discontented yawn.

"Who's a-lecturin' anybody, Ah'd lak to know? Ah'm jes' tellin' yo' what yo' was a-doin' when Ah came into de room. Yo' was a-sleepin' p'tty doggone tight, lemme tell yo'."

"Po' lil' 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?'"

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

"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.

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.

"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.

"I should die if any one saw you here," whispered. She could feel his eyes burning into her heart. With trembling, hurried fingers she tore loose a rose.

"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 whispered helplessly.

"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."

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.

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

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

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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?

"I thought the troops were massing this morning," she said coldly. "Don't you miss too?"

"There is time enough for that, my dear. I came to have a talk with you—in private," he said meaningly.

"I want to talk about last night. You were very reckless to do what you did."

"Oh, you were playing the spy, then?" she asked scornfully.

"An involuntary observer, believe me—and a jealous one. I had hoped to win the affections of an innocent girl. What I saw last night shocked me beyond expression."

"Well, you shouldn't have looked," she retorted, tossing her chin, and the red feather in her hat bobbed angrily.

"I am surprised that one as clever as you are could have carried on an amour so incautiously," he said blandly.

"What do you mean?"