

Beverly of Graustark

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CHAPTER XII.

IT was a drowsy day, and, besides, Baldos was not in a communicative frame of mind. Beverly put forth her best efforts during the forenoon, but after the basket luncheon had been disposed of in the shade at the roadside she was content to give up the struggle and surrender to the soothing importunities of the coach as it bowed along. She dozed peacefully, conscious to the last that he was a most ungracious creature and more worthy of resentment than of benevolence. Baldos was not intentionally disagreeable; he was morose and unhappy because he could not help it. Was he not leaving his friends to wander alone in the wilderness where he drifted weakly into the comforts and pleasures of an enviable service? His heart was not in full sympathy with the present turn of affairs, and he could not deny that a selfish motive was responsible for his action. He had the all too human eagerness to serve beauty, the blood and fire of youth were strong in this wayward nobleman of the hills.

Lying back in the seat, he passively studied the face of the sleeping girl whose dark brown head was pillowed against the corner cushions of the coach. Her hat had been removed for the sake of comfort. The dark lashes fell like a soft curtain over her eyes, obscuring the merry gray that had overcome his apprehensions. Her breathing was deep and regular and peaceful. One little gloved hand rested carelessly in her lap, the other upon her breast near the delicate throat. The heart of Baldos was troubled. The picture he looked upon was entrancing, uplifting; he rose from the lowly state in which she had found him to the position of admirer in secret to a princess, real or assumed. He found himself again wondering if she were really Yvette, and with that fear in his heart he was envying Grenfall Lorry, the lord and master of this exquisite creature, envying with all the helplessness of one whose hope is blasted at birth.

The note which had been surreptitiously passed to him in Ganoluk lay crumpled and forgotten inside his coat pocket, where he had dropped it the moment it had come into his possession, supposing that the message contained information which had been forgotten by Franz and was by no means of a nature to demand immediate attention. Had he read it at once his suspicions would have been confirmed, and it is barely possible that he would have refused to enter the city.

Late in the afternoon the walls of Edelweiss were sighted. For the first time he looked upon the distant house-tops of the principal city of Graustark. Up in the clouds, on the summit of the mountain peak overlooking the city, stood the famed monastery of St. Valentine. Stretching up the gradual incline were the homes of citizens, accessible only by footpaths and donkey roads. Beverly was awake and impatient to reach the journey's end. He had proved a most disappointing companion, polite, but with a baffling indifference that irritated her considerably. There was a set expression of defiance in his strong, clean-cut face, the look of a soldier advancing to meet a powerful foe.

"I do hope he'll not always act this way," she was complaining in her thoughts. "He was so charmingly impudent out in the hills, so deliciously human. Now he is like a clam. Yvette will think I am such a fool if he doesn't live up to the reputation I've given him."

"Here are the gates," he said, half to himself. "What is there in store for me beyond those walls?"

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't be so dismal," she cried in despair. "It seems just like a funeral."

"A thousand apologies, your highness," he murmured, with a sudden lightness of speech and manner. "Henceforth I shall be a most amiable jester to please you."

Beverly and the faithful Aunt Fanny were driven to the castle, where the former bade farewell to her new knight until the following morning, when he was to appear before her for personal instructions. Colonel Quinnox escorted him to the barracks of the guard, where he was to share a room with young Haddan, a corporal in the service.

"The wild, untamed gentleman from the hills came without a word, I see," said Lorry, who had watched the approach. He and Yvette stood in the window overlooking the grounds from the princess' boudoir. Beverly had just entered and thrown herself upon a divan.

"Yes; he's here," she said shortly. "How long do you, with all your cleverness, expect to hoodwink him into the belief that you are the princess?" asked Yvette, amused, but anxious.

"He's a great fool for being hoodwinked at all," said Beverly, very much at odds with her protest. "In an hour from now he will know the truth and will be howling like a madman for his freedom."

"Not so soon as that, Beverly," said Lorry consolingly. "The guards and officers have their instructions to keep him in the dark as long as possible."

"Well, I'm tired and mad and hungry and everything else that isn't compatible. Let's talk about the war," said Beverly, the sunshine in her face momentarily eclipsed by the dark cloud of disappointment.

form and equipment came into his possession that he remembered the note resting in his pocket. He drew it out and began to read it with the slight interest of one who has anticipated the effect. But not for long was he to remain apathetic. The first few lines brought a look of understanding to his eyes; then he laughed the easy laugh of one who has cast care and confidence to the winds. This is what he read:

"She is not the princess. We have been duped. Last night I learned the truth. She is Miss Calhoun, an American, going to be a guest at the castle. Refuse to go with her into Edelweiss. It may be a trap and may mean death. Question her boldly before committing yourself."

There came the natural impulse to make a dash for the outside world, fighting his way through if necessary. Looking back over the ground, he wondered how he could have been deceived at all by the unconventional American. 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. Every day in her masquerading now presented itself to him, and he was compelled to laugh at his own simplicity. Caution, after all, was the largest component part of his makeup. The craftiness of the hunted was deeply rooted in his being. He saw a very serious side to the adventure. Stretching himself upon the cot in the corner of the room, he gave himself over to plotting, planning, thinking.

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, his blood ran warm again. Leaping to his feet, he ran to the window to reread the note from old Franz. Then he settled back and laughed with a fervor that cleared the brain of a thousand vague misgivings.

"She is Miss Calhoun, an American, going to be a guest at the castle," read the princess, but Miss Calhoun. Once more the memory of the clear gray eyes leaped into life. Again he saw her asleep in the coach on the road from Ganoluk. Again he recalled the fervent throbs his guilty heart had felt as he looked upon this fair creature, at one time the supposed treasure of another man. Now she was Miss Calhoun, and her gray eyes, her entrancing smile, her wondrous vivacity, were not for one man alone. It was marvelous what a change this sudden realization wrought in the view ahead of him. The whole situation seemed to be transformed into something more desirable than ever before. His face cleared, his spirits leaped higher and higher with the buoyancy of fresh relief, his confidence in himself crept back into existence. And all because the fair deceiver, the slim girl with the brave gray eyes who had drawn him into a net was not a princess!

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. To her it had been a merry jest, a pleasant comedy. Underneath all he saw the goodness of her motive in taking him from the old life and putting him into his present position of trust. He had helped her, and she was ready to help him to the limit of her power. His position in Edelweiss was clearly enough defined. The more he thought of it the more justifiable it seemed as viewed from her point of observation. How long she hoped to keep him in the dark he could not tell. The outcome would be entertaining. Her efforts to deceive, if she kept them up, would be amusing. Altogether he was ready, with the leisure and joy of youth, to await developments and to enjoy the comedy from a point of view which she could not at once suspect.

His subtle effort to draw Haddan into a discussion of the princess and her household resulted unsatisfactorily. The young guard was annoyingly unresponsive. He had his secret instructions and could not be inveigled into betraying himself. Baldos went to sleep that night with his mind confused by doubts. His talk with Haddan had left him quite undecided as to the value of old Franz's warning. Either Franz was mistaken or Haddan was a most skillful dissembler. It struck him as utterly beyond the pale of reason that the entire castle guard should have been enlisted in the scheme to deceive him. When sleep came he was contenting himself with the thought that morning doubtless would give him clearer insight to the situation.

Both he and Beverly Calhoun were ignorant of the true conditions that attached themselves to the new recruit. Baron Dangloss alone knew that Haddan was a trusted agent of the secret service, with instructions to shadow the newcomer day and night. That there was a mystery surrounding the character of Baldos, the goat hunter, Dangloss did not question for an instant, and in spite of the instructions received at the outset he was using all his skill to unravel it.

Baldos was not summoned to the castle till noon. His serene indifference to the outcome of the visit was calculated to deceive the friendly but watchful Haddan. Dressed carefully in the close fitting uniform of the royal guard, taller than most of his fellows, handsomer by far than any, he was the most noticeable figure in and about the barracks. Haddan coached him in the way he was to approach the princess, Baldos listening with exaggerated interest and with deep regard for detail.

Beverly was in the small audience room off the main reception hall when he was ushered into her presence. The servants and ladies in waiting disappeared at a signal from her. She arose to greet him, and he knelt to kiss her

hand. For a moment her tongue was bound. The keen eyes of the new guard had looked into hers with a directness that seemed to penetrate her brain. That this scene was to be one of the most interesting in the little comedy was proved by the fact that two eager young women were hidden behind a heavy curtain in a corner of the room. The Princess Yvette and the Countess Dagmar were there to enjoy Beverly's first hour of authority, and she was aware of their presence.

"Have they told you that you are to act as my especial guard and escort?" she asked, with a queer flutter in her voice. Somehow this tall fellow with the broad shoulders was not the same as the ragged goat hunter she had known at first.

"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 Marlaux 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. This afternoon, I believe, you are to accompany me on my visit to the fortress, which I am to inspect."

"Very well, your highness," he respectfully said. He was thinking of Miss Calhoun, an American girl, although he called her "your highness." "May I be permitted to ask for instructions that can come only from your highness?"

"Certainly," she replied. His manner was more deferential than she had ever known it to be, but he threw a bomb into her fine composure with his next remark. He addressed her in the Graustark language.

"Is it your desire that I shall continue to address you in English?" Beverly's face turned a bit red, and her eyes wandered. By a wonderful effort she retained her self control, stammering over so faintly when she said in English:

"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 step, 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. Beverly looked at him almost pathetically. She knew that behind the curtain two young women were enjoying her discomfiture. Something told her that they were stifling their mirth with dainty lace bordered handkerchiefs.

"That will do, sir," she managed to say firmly. "It's very nice of you, but after this pay your homage in English," she went on, taking a long chance on her remark. It must have been complimentary, she reasoned. As for Baldos, the faintest sign of a smile touched his lips, and his eyes were twinkling as he bent his head quickly. Franz was right; she did not know a word of the Graustark language.

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



"Your highness, I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here," he said. "You have honored me, and I give my heart as well as my arm to your cause."

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

"I hope you have destroyed that horrible black patch," she said.

"It has gone to keep company with other devoted and deserted friends," he said, a tinge of bitterness in his voice. "The uniform is vastly becoming."

He went on, realizing helplessly that she was providing intense amusement for the unseen auditors.

"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. Beverly swallowed suddenly and checked a laugh with some difficulty.

"Aunt Fanny is never ill. Some day I shall tell you more of Uncle Sam. It will interest you."

"Another question, if it please your highness. Do you expect to return to America soon?"

This was the unexpected, but she met it with admirable composure.

"It depends upon the time when Prince Dantun resumes the throne in Dawbergen," 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.

door before Beverly could interpose. She half started from her chair, her eyes wide with dismay, her lips parted, but his hand was already clutching the curtain. He drew it aside relentlessly. Two startled women stood exposed to view, smiling down at their amazed faces. Their backs were against the closed door, and two hands clutching handkerchiefs dropped from a most significant attitude. One of them flashed an imperious glance at the bold discoverer, and he knew he was looking upon the real princess of Graustark. He did not lose his composure. With a tremor he turned to the American girl.

"Your highness," he said clearly, coolly, "I fear we have spies and eavesdroppers here. Is your court made up of I should say, they are doubtless a pair of curious ladies in waiting. Shall I begin my service, your highness, by escorting them to yonder door?"

CHAPTER XIII.

BEVERLY gasped. The countess stared blankly at the new guard. Yvette flushed deeply, but her lip in hopeless chagrin and dropped her eyes. A pretty turn, indeed, the play had taken! Not a word was uttered for a full minute; nor did the guilty witnesses venture forth from their retreat. Baldos stood tall and impassive, holding the curtain aside. At last the shadow of a smile crept into the face of the princess, but her tones were full of deep humility when she spoke.

"We crave permission to retire, your highness," she said, and there was virtuous appeal in her eyes. "I pray forgiveness for this indiscretion and implore you to be lenient with two miserable creatures who love you so well that they forget their dignity."

"I am amazed and shocked," was all that Beverly could say. "You may go, but return to me within an hour. I will then hear what you have to say."

Slowly, even humbly, the ruler of Graustark and her cousin passed beneath the upraised arm of the new guard. He opened a door on the opposite side of the room, and they went out to all appearance thoroughly crestfallen. The steady features of the guard did not relax for the fraction of a second, but his heart was thumping disquietingly.

"Come here, Baldos," commanded Beverly, a bit pale, but recovering her wits with admirable promptness. "This is a matter which I shall dispose of privately. It is to go no further, you are to understand."

"Yes, your highness."

"You may go now, Colonel Quinnox will explain everything," she said hurriedly. She was eager to be rid of him. As he turned away she observed a faint but peculiar smile at the corner of his mouth.

"Come here, sir," she exclaimed hotly. He paused, his face as somber as an owl's. "What do you mean by laughing like that?" she demanded. He caught the fierce note in her voice, but gave it the proper interpretation.

"Laughing, your highness?" he said in deep surprise. "You must be mistaken. I am sure that I could not have laughed in the presence of a princess."

"It must have been a shadow, then," she retraced, somewhat startled by his rejoinder. "Very well, then, you are dismissed."

As he was about to open the door through which he had entered the room it swung wide and Count Marlaux strode in. Baldos paused irresolutely and then proceeded on his way without paying the slightest attention to the commander of the army. Marlaux came to an amazed stop, and his face flushed with resentment.

"Halt, sir!" he exclaimed harshly. "Don't you know enough to salute me, sir?"

Baldos turned instantly, his figure straightening like a flash. His eyes met those of the Iron Count and did not waver, although his face went white with passion.

"And who are you, sir?" he asked in cold, steady tones. The count almost reeled.

"Your superior officer! That should be enough for you!" he half hissed, with deadly levity.

"Oh, then I see no reason why I should not salute you, sir," said Baldos, with one of his rare smiles. He saluted his superior officer a shade too elaborately and turned away. Marlaux's eyes glinted.

"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. The look in her eyes was very sustaining. As he left the castle he said aloud to himself with an easy disregard of the consequences:

"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 Marlaux," 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."

"The insolent dog!" snarled Marlaux, 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? Goodbye!"

And then she was racing off through the long hall, and in her hand she carried

toward the boudoir of the princess. There is no telling how long the ruffled count remained in the anteroom, for the excited Beverly forgot to tell Lorry that he was there.

There were half a dozen people in the room when Beverly entered eagerly. She was pausing with excitement. Of all the rooms in the grim old castle the boudoir of the princess was the most famously attractive. It was really her home, the exquisite abiding place of an exquisite creature. To lounge on her divans, to loiter in the chairs, to glide through her priceless rugs, was the acme of indolent pleasure. Few were they who enjoyed the privileges of "little heaven," as Harry Anguish had christened it on one memorable night long before the princess was Mrs. Grenfall Lorry.

"Now, how do you feel?" cried the flushed American girl, pausing in the door to point an impressive finger at the princess, who was lying back in a huge chair, the picture of distress and annoyance.

"I shall never be able to look that man in the face again," came dolefully from Yvette's humbled lips. Dagmar was all smiles and in the fittest of humors. She was the kind of culprit who loves the punishment because of the crime.

"Wasn't it ridiculous, and wasn't it just too lovely?" she cried.

"It was extremely theatrical," agreed Beverly, seating herself on the arm of Yvette's chair and throwing a warm arm around her neck. "Have you all heard about it?" she demanded naively, turning to the others, who unquestionably had had a jumbled account of the performance.

"You got just what you deserved," said Lorry, who was immensely amused.

"I wonder what your august vagabond thinks of his princess and her ladies in hiding?" mused Harry Anguish. The Count and Countess Haddan 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? You are so keen about him."

"He positively refuses to let me dig," explained Beverly. "I tried, you know, but he—well, he squelched 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 vagabond, but he certainly does not act like one. He admits that he is being hunted, but takes no one into his confidence. For that he cannot be blamed."

"Have you any reason to suspect who he is?" asked Lorry.

"My instructions were to refrain from questioning him," complained Dangloss, with a pathetic look at the original plotters. "Still, I have made investigations along other lines."

"And who is he?" cried Beverly eagerly.

"I don't know," was the disappointing answer. "We are confronted by a queer set of circumstances. Doubtless you all know that young Prince Dantun is dying from the wrath of his half brother, our lamented friend Gabriel. He is supposed to be in our hills with a half starved body of followers. It seems impossible that he could have reached our northern boundaries without our outposts catching a glimpse of him at some time. The trouble is that his face is unknown to most of us, I among the others. I have been going on the presumption that Baldos is in

reality Prince Dantun, but last night the belief received a severe shock."



"What are you going to do with us?" "Yes" came from several eager lips. "My men who are watching the Dawbergen frontier came in last night and reported that Dantun had been seen by mountaineers no later than Sunday, three days ago. These mountaineers were in sympathy with him and refused to tell whither he went. We only know that he was in the southern part of Graustark three days ago. Our new guard speaks many languages, but he has never been heard to use that of Dawbergen. That fact in itself is not surprising, for, of all things, he would avoid his mother tongue. Dantun is part English by birth and wholly so by cultivation. In that he evidently finds a mate in this Baldos."

"Then he really isn't Prince Dantun?" cried Beverly, as though a cherished ideal had been shattered.

"Not if we are to believe the tales from the south. Here is another complication, however. There is, as you know, Count Haddan, and perhaps all of you, for that matter, a pretender to the throne of Aphahn, the fugitive Prince Frederic. He is described as young, good looking, a scholar and the next thing to a pauper."

"Baldos a mere pretender?" cried Beverly in distress. "Never!"

"At any rate, he is not what he pretends to be," said the baron, with a wise smile.

"Then you think he may be Prince Frederic?" asked Lorry, deeply interested.

"I am inclined to think so, although another complication has arisen. May it please your highness, I am in an amazingly tangled state of mind," admitted the baron, passing his hand over his brow.

"Do you mean that another mysterious prince has come to life?" asked Yvette, her eyes sparkling with interest in the revelations.

"Early this morning a dispatch came to me from the Grand Duke Michael of Rapp-Thorberg, a duchy in western Europe, informing me that the duke's eldest son had fled from home and is known to have come to the far east, possibly to Graustark."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Anguish. "It never rains but it hails, so here's hail to the princess three."

"We are the Mecca for runaway royalty, it seems," said Count Haddan.

"Go on with the story, Baron Dangloss," cried the princess. "It is like a book."

"A description of the young man accompanies the offer of a large reward for information that may lead to his return home for reconciliation, and here the baron paused dramatically.

"And what?" interjected Beverly, who could not wait.

"The description fits our friend Baldos perfectly!"

"You don't mean it?" exclaimed Lorry. "Then he may be any one of the three you have mentioned?"

"Let me tell you what the grand duke's secretary says. I have the official notice, but left it in my desk. The runaway son of the grand duke is called Christobal. He is twenty-seven years of age, speaks English fluently, besides French and our own language. It seems that he attended an English college with Prince Dantun and some of our own young men who are still in England. Six weeks ago he disappeared from his father's home. At the same time a dozen wild and venturesome retainers left the grand duchy. The party was seen in Vienna a week later, and the young duke boldly announced that he was off to the east to help his friend Dantun in the fight for his throne. Going on the theory that Baldos is this same Christobal we have only to provide a reason for his preferring the wilds to the comforts of our cities. In the first place, he knows there is a large reward for his apprehension and I fear our police. In the second place, he does not care to direct the attention of Prince Dantun's foes to himself. He missed Dantun in the hills and doubtless was lost for weeks, but the true reason for his flight is made plain in the story that was printed recently in Paris and Berlin newspapers. According to them, Christobal rebelled against his father's right to select a wife for him. The grand duke had chosen a noble and wealthy bride, and the son had selected a beautiful girl from the lower walks of life. Father and son quarreled and neither would give an inch. Christobal would not marry his father's choice, and the grand duke would not sanction his union with the fair plebeian."

Here Beverly exclaimed proudly: "He doesn't look like the sort of man who could be bullied into marrying anybody if he didn't want to."

"And he strikes me as the sort who would marry any one he set his heart upon having," added the princess, with a taunting glance at Miss Calhoun.

"Umph!" sniffed Beverly defiantly. The baron went on with his narrative, exhibiting signs of excitement.

"To lend color to the matter, Christobal's sweetheart, the daughter of a game warden, was murdered the night before her lover fled. I know nothing of the circumstances attending the crime, but it is my understanding that Christobal is not suspected. It is possible that he is ignorant even now of the girl's fate."

"Well, by the gods, we have a goodly lot of heroes about us!" exclaimed