

Beverly of Graustark

By
**GEORGE BARR
M'GUTCHEON,**

Author of "Graustark"
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"Oh," moaned Beverly, suddenly leaning against the fore wheel, her eyes almost starting from her head. The leader laughed quietly—yes, good naturedly. "Oh, you won't—you won't kill us?" She had time to observe that there were smiles on the faces of all the men within the circle of light.

"Rest assured, your highness," said the leader, leaning upon his rifle barrel with careless grace, "we intend no harm to you. Every man you meet in Graustark is not a brigand, I trust, for your sake. We are simple hunters, and not what we may seem. It is fortunate that you have fallen into honest hands. There is some one in the coach?" he asked, quickly alert. A prolonged groan proved to Beverly that Aunt Fanny had screwed up sufficient courage to look out of the window.

"My old servant," she half whispered. Then, as several of the men started toward the door: "But she is old and wouldn't harm a fly. Please, please don't hurt her."

"Compose yourself; she is safe," said the leader. By this time it was quite dark. At a word from him two or three men lighted lanterns. The picture was more weird than ever in the fitful glow. "May I ask, your highness, how do you intend to reach Edelweiss in your present condition? You cannot manage those horses and, besides, you do not know the way."

"Aren't you going to rob us?" demanded Beverly, hope springing to the surface with a joyful bound. The stranger laughed heartily and shook his head.

"Do we not look like honest men?" he cried, with a wave of his hand toward his companions. Beverly looked dubious. "We live the good, clean life of the wilderness. Outdoor life is necessary for our health. We could not live in the city," he went on, with grim humor. For the first time Beverly noticed that he wore a huge black patch over his left eye, held in place by a cord. He appeared more formidable than ever under the light of critical inspection.

"I am very much relieved," said Beverly, who was not at all relieved. "But why have you stopped us in this manner?"

"Stopped you?" cried the man with the patch. "I implore you to unsay that, your highness. Your coach was quite at a standstill before we knew of its presence. You do us a grave injustice."

"It's very strange," muttered Beverly, somewhat taken aback.

"Have you observed that it is quite dark?" asked the leader, putting away his brief show of indignation.

"Dear me; so it is!" cried she, now able to think more clearly.

"And you are miles from an inn or house of any kind," he went on. "Do you expect to stay here all night?"

"I'm—I'm not afraid," bravely shivered Beverly.

"They were Cossacks, or whatever you call them. But, pray, why do you call me 'your highness'?" demanded Beverly. The tall leader swept the ground with his hat once more.

"All the outside world knows the Princess Yette—why not the humble mountain man? You will pardon me, but every man in the hills knows that you are to pass through on the way from St. Petersburg to Ganlook. We are not so far from the world, after all, we rough people of the hills. We know that your highness left St. Petersburg by rail last Sunday and took to the highway day before yesterday because the floods had washed away the bridges north of Axphain. Even the hills have eyes and ears."

Beverly listened with increasing perplexity. It was true that she had left St. Petersburg on Sunday; that the unprecedented floods had stopped all railway traffic in the hills, compelling her to travel for many miles by stage, and that the whole country was confusing her in some strange way with the Princess Yette. The news had evidently spread through Axphain and the hills with the swiftness of fire. It would be useless to deny the story; these men would not believe her. In a flash she decided that it would be best to pose for the time being as the ruler of Graustark. It remained only for her to impress upon Aunt Fanny the importance of this resolution.

"What wise old hills they must be," she said, with evasive enthusiasm. "You cannot expect me to admit, however, that I am the princess," she went on.

"It would not be just to your excellent reputation for tact if you did so, your highness," calmly spoke the man. "It is quite as easy to say that you are not the princess as to say that you are, so what matters, after all? We reserve the right, however, to do homage to the queen who rules over these wise old hills. I offer you the humble services of myself and my companions. We are yours to command."

"I am very grateful to find that you are not brigands, believe me," said Beverly. "Pray tell me who you are, then, and you shall be sufficiently rewarded for your good intentions."

"Oh, your highness, I am Baldos, the goat hunter, a poor subject for reward at your hands. I may as well admit that I am a poacher and have no legal right to the prosperity of your hills. The only reward I can ask is forgiveness for trespassing upon the property of others."

"You shall receive pardon for all transgressions, but you must get me to some place of safety," said Beverly eagerly.

"And quickly, too, you might well have added," he said lightly. "The horses have rested, I think, so with your permission we may proceed. I know of a place where you may spend the night comfortably and be refreshed for the rough journey tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? How can I go on? I am alone!" she cried despairingly.

"Permit me to remind you that you are no longer alone. You have a ragged following, your highness, but it shall be a loyal one. Will you re-enter the coach? It is not far to the place I speak of, and I myself will drive you there. Come, it is getting late, and your retinue, at least, is hungry."

He flung open the coach door, and his hat swept the ground once more. The light of a lantern played fitfully upon his dark, gaunt face, with its gallant smile and ominous patch. She hesitated, fear entering her soul once more. He looked up quickly and saw the indecision in her eyes, the mute appeal.

"Trust me, your highness," he said gravely, and she allowed him to hand her into the coach.

A moment later he was upon the driver's box, reins in hand. Calling out to his companions in a language strange to Beverly, he cracked the whip, and once more they were lumbering over the wretched road. Beverly sank back into the seat with a deep sigh of resignation.

"Well, I'm in for it," she thought. "It doesn't matter whether they are thieves or angels, I reckon I'll have to take what comes. He doesn't look very much like an angel, but he looked at me just now as if he thought I were one. Dear me, I wish I were back in Washington!"

CHAPTER V.
TWO of the men walked close beside the door, one of them bearing a lantern. They conversed in low tones and in a language which Beverly could not understand. After awhile she found herself analyzing the garb and manner of the men. She was saying to herself that here were her first real specimens of Graustark peasantry, and they were to mark an ineffaceable spot in her memory. They were dark, strong faced men of medium height, with fierce black eyes and long black hair. As no two were dressed alike, it was impossible to recognize characteristic styles of attire. Some wore in the rude, baggy costumes of the peasant as she had imagined him; others were dressed in the tight fitting but dilapidated uniforms of the soldiery, while several were in clothes partly European and partly oriental. There were hats and feathers and caps, some with feathers in the bands, others without. The man

nearest the coach wore the dirty gray uniform of an army officer, full of holes and rents, while another strode along in a pair of baggy yellow trousers and a dusty London dinner jacket. All in all, it was the motliest band of vagabonds she had ever seen. There were at least ten or a dozen in the party. While a few carried swords, all lugged the long rifles and crooked daggers of the Tartars.

"Aunt Fanny," Beverly whispered, suddenly moving to the side of the subdued servant, "where is my revolver?" It had come to her like a flash that a subsequent emergency should not find her unprepared. Aunt Fanny's jaw dropped, and her eyes were like white rings in a black screen.

"Good Lawd, wha—what fo', Miss Beverly!"

"Sh! Don't call me Miss Beverly. Now, just you pay 'tention to me, and I'll tell you something queer. Get my revolver right away and don't let those men see what you are doing." While Aunt Fanny's trembling fingers went in search of the firearm, Beverly outlined the situation briefly, but explicitly. The old woman was not slow to understand. Her wits sharpened by fear, she grasped Beverly's instructions with astonishing avidity.

"Ve'y well, yo' highness," she said, with fine reverence, "Ah'll 'pouch de bottle o' peppermint fo' yo' if yo' jes' don' mine me pullin' an' haulin' 'mongst dese boxes. Mebbe yo' all 'druther hab de gingeh?" With this wonderful subterfuge as a shield she dug slyly into one of the bags and pulled forth a revolver. Under ordinary circumstances she would have been mortally afraid to touch it, but not so in this emergency. Beverly shoved the weapon into the pocket of her gray traveling jacket.

"I feel much better now, Aunt Fanny," she said, and Aunt Fanny gave a vast chuckle.

"Yaas, ma'am, indeed—yo' highness," she agreed suavely.

The coach rolled along for half an hour and then stopped with a sudden jolt. An instant later the tall driver appeared at the window, his head uncovered. A man hard by held a lantern.

"Qua vandos ar delatant, vos serent," said the leader, showing his white teeth in a triumphant smile. His exposed eye seemed to be glowing with pleasure and excitement.

"What?" murmured Beverly hopelessly. A puzzled expression came into his face; then his smile deepened and his eye took on a knowing gleam.

"Ah, I see," he said gayly, "your highness prefers not to speak the language of Graustark. Is it necessary for me to repeat in English?"

"I really wish you would," said Beverly, catching her breath. "Just to see how it sounds, you know."

"Your every wish shall be gratified. I beg to inform you that we have reached the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. This is where we dwell last night. Tomorrow we, too, abandon the place, so our fortunes may run together for some hours at least. There is but little to offer you in the way of nourishment, and there is none of the comforts of a palace. Yet princesses can no more be choosers than beggars when the fare's in one pot. Come, your highness, let me conduct you to the guest chamber of the Inn of the Hawk and Raven."

Beverly took his hand and stepped to the ground, looking about in wonder and perplexity.

"I see no inn," she murmured apprehensively.

"Look aloft, your highness. That great black canopy is the roof; we are standing upon the floor, and the dark shadows just beyond the circle of light are the walls of the Hawk and Raven. This is the largest tavern in all Graustark. Its dimensions are as wide as the world itself."

"You mean that there is no inn at all?" the girl cried in dismay.

"Alas, I must confess it. And yet there is shelter here. Come with me. Let your servant follow." He took her by the hand and led her away from the coach, a ragged lantern bearer preceding. Beverly's little right hand was rigidly clutching the revolver in her pocket. It was a capacious pocket, and the muzzle of the weapon bored defiantly into a timid powder rag that lay on the bottom. The little leather purse from which it escaped had its silver lips opened as if in a broad grin of derision, revealing in the plight of the chamois. The guide's hand was at once firm and gentle, his stride bold, yet easy. His rakish hat, with its aggressive red feather, towered a full head above Beverly's Parisian violets.

"The Hawk and Raven."

He bowed and pointed with his hat to the smoldering fire a short distance ahead. They had turned a bend in the overhanging cliff and were very close to the retreat before she saw the glow.

The fire was in the open air and directly in front of a deep cleft in the rocky background. Judging by the sound the river could not be more than 200 feet away. Men came up with lanterns and others piled brush upon the fire. In a very short time the glen was weirdly illuminated by the dancing flames. From her seat on the huge log Beverly was thus enabled to survey a portion of her surroundings. The overhanging ledge of rock formed a wide, deep canopy, underneath which was perfect shelter. The floor seemed to be rich, grassless loam, and here and there were pallets of long grass, evidently the couches of these homeless men. All about were huge trees, and in the direction of the river the grass grew higher and then gave place to reeds. The foliage above was so dense that the moon and stars were invisible. There was a deathly stillness in the air. The very loneliness was so appalling that Beverly's poor little heart was in a quiver of dread. Aunt Fanny, who sat near by, had not spoken since leaving the coach, but her eyes were expressively active.

The tall leader stood near the fire conversing with half a dozen of his followers. Miss Calhoun's eyes finally rested upon this central figure in the strange picture. He was attired in a dark gray uniform that reminded her oddly of the dragoon choruses in the comic operas at home. The garments, while torn and soiled, were well fitting. His shoulders were broad and square, his hips narrow, his legs long and straight. There was an air of impudent grace about him that went well with his life and profession.

"Surely here was a careless free lance upon whom life weighed lightly, while death 'stood afar off' and despaired. The light of the fire brought his gleaming face into bold relief, for his hat was off. Black and thick was his hair, rumpled and apparently uncared for. The face was lean, smooth and strong, with a devil-may-care curve at the corners of the mouth. Beverly found herself lamenting the fact that such an interesting face should be marred by an ugly black patch, covering she knew not what manner of defect. As for the rest of them, they were a grim company. Some were young and beardless, others were old and grizzled, but all were active, alert and strong. The leader appeared to be the only one in the party who could speak and understand the English language. As Beverly sat and watched his virile, mocking face and studied his graceful movements she found herself wondering how an ignorant, homeless wanderer in the hills could be so poetic and so cultured as this fellow seemed to be.

Three or four men, who were unmistakably of a lower order than their companions, set about preparing a supper. Others unhitched the tired horses and led them off toward the river. Two dashing young fellows carried the seat cushions under the rocky canopy and constructed an elaborate couch for the "princess." The chief, with his own hands, soon began the construction of a small chamber in this particular corner of the cave near the opening. The walls of the chamber were formed of carriage robes and blankets, cloaks and oak branches.

"The guest chamber, your highness," he said, approaching her with a smile at the conclusion of his work.

"It has been most interesting to watch you," she said, rising.

"And it has been a delight to interest you," he responded. "You will find seclusion there, and you need see none of us until it pleases you."

She looked him fairly in the eye for a moment and then impulsively extended her hand. He clasped it warmly, but not without some show of surprise.

"I am trusting you implicitly," she said.

"The knave is glorified," was his simple rejoinder. He conducted her to the improvised bedchamber, Aunt Fanny following with loyal but uncertain tread. "I regret, your highness, that the conveniences are so few. We have no landlady except Mother Earth, no waiters, no porters, no maids, in the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. This being a men's hotel, the baths are on the river front. I am having water brought to your apartments, however, but it is with deepest shame and sorrow that I confess we have no towels."

She laughed so heartily that his face brightened perceptibly, while the faces of his men turned in their direction as though by concert.

"It is a typical mountain resort, then," she said. "I think I can manage very well if you will fetch my bags to my room, sir."

"By the way, will you have dinner served in your room?" very good humoredly.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to eat in the public dining room," said she. A few minutes later Beverly was sitting upon one of her small trunks, and Aunt Fanny was laboriously brushing her dark hair.

"It's very jolly being a princess," murmured Miss Calhoun. She had bathed her face in one of the leather buckets from the coach, and the dust of the road had been brushed away by the vigorous lady in waiting.

"Yaas, ma'am, Miss—yo' highness, hit's monstrous fine fo' yo', but whar is Ah goin' to sleep? Out yondah whar all dese sealawags?" said Aunt Fanny rebelliously.

"You shall have a bed in here, Aunt Fanny," said Beverly.

"De'y's de queeres' lot o' tramps Ah eveh did see, an' Ah wouldn't trust 'em as far as Ah could heave a brick house."

"But the leader is such a very courteous gentleman," remonstrated Beverly.

"Yaas, ma'am; he mussa come f'm Gawgia or Kaintuck," was Aunt Fanny's sincere compliment.

The pseudo princess dined with the

vagabonds that night. She sat on the log beside the tall leader and ate heartily of the broth and broiled goat meat, the grapes and the nuts, and drank of the spring water, which took the place of wine and coffee and cordial. It was a strange supper amid strange environments, but she enjoyed it as she had never before enjoyed a meal. The air was full of romance and danger, and her imagination was enthralled. Everything was so new and unreal that she scarcely could believe herself awake. The world seemed to have gone back to the days of Robin Hood and his merry men.

"You fare well at the Inn of the Hawk and Raven," she said to him, her voice tremulous with excitement. He looked mournfully at her for a moment and then smiled naively.

"It is the first wholesome meal we have had in two days," he replied.

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes. We were lucky with the guns today. Fate was kind to us—and to you, for we are better prepared to entertain royalty today than at any time since I have been in the hills of Graustark."

"Then you have not always lived in Graustark?"

"Alas, no, your highness. I have lived elsewhere."

"But you were born in the principality?"

"I am a subject of its princess in heart from this day forth, but not by birth or condition. I am a native of the vast domain known to a few of us as Circumstance," and he smiled rather recklessly.

"You are a poet, a delicious poet," cried Beverly, forgetting herself in her enthusiasm.

"Perhaps that is why I am hungry and unshorn. It had not occurred to me in that light. When you are ready to retire, your highness," he said, abruptly rising, "we shall be pleased to consider the Inn of the Hawk and Raven closed for the night. Having feasted well, we should sleep well. We have a hard day before us. With your consent, I shall place my couch of grass near your door. I am the porter. You have but to call if anything is desired."

She was tired, but she would have sat up all night rather than miss any of the strange romance that had been thrust upon her. But Sir Redfeather's suggestion savored of a command, and she reluctantly made her way to the flapping blanket that marked the entrance to the bedchamber. He drew the curtain aside, swung his hat low and muttered a soft good night.

"May your highness' dreams be pleasant ones!" he said.

"Thank you," said she, and the curtain dropped impertinently. "That was very cool of him, I must say," she added as she looked at the wavering door.

When she went to sleep she never knew. She was certain that her eyes were rebellious for a long time and that she wondered how her gray dress would look after she had slept in it all night. She heard low singing as if in the distance, but after awhile the stillness became so intense that its pressure almost suffocated her. The rush of the river grew louder and louder, and there was a swishing sound that died in her ears almost as she wondered what it meant. Her last waking thoughts were of the "black patch" poet. Was he lying near the door?

She was awakened in the middle of the night by the violent flapping of her chamber window. Startled, she sat bolt upright and strained her eyes to pierce the mysterious darkness. Aunt Fanny, on her bed of grass, stirred convulsively, but did not awake. The blackness of the strange chamber was broken ever and anon by faint flashes of light from without, and she lived through long minutes of terror before it dawned upon her that a thunderstorm was brewing. The wind was rising, and the night seemed agog with excitement. Beverly crept from her couch and felt her way to the fluttering doorway. Drawing aside the blanket, she peered forth into the night, her heart jumping with terror. Her highness was very much afraid of thunder and lightning.

The fire in the open had died down until naught remained but a few glowing embers. These were blown into brilliancy by the wind, casting a steady red light over the scene. There was but one human figure in sight. Beside the fire stood the tall wanderer. He was hatless and coatless, and his arms were folded across his chest. Seemingly oblivious to the approach of the storm he stood staring into the heap of ashes at his feet. His face was toward her, every feature plainly distinguishable in the faint glow from the fire. To her amazement the black patch was missing from his eye, and what surprised her almost to the point of exclaiming aloud, there appeared to be absolutely no reason for its presence there at any time. There was no mark or blemish upon or about the eye. It was as clear and penetrating as its fellow, darkly gleaming in the red glow from below. Moreover, Beverly saw that he was strikingly handsome—a strong, manly face. The highly imaginative southern girl's mind reverted to the first portraits of Napoleon she had seen.

Suddenly he started, threw up his head and, looking up to the sky, uttered some strange words. Then he strode abruptly toward her doorway. She fell back breathless. He stopped just outside, and she knew that he was listening for sounds from within. After many minutes she stealthily looked forth again. He was standing near the fire, his back toward her, looking off into the night.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Unfamiliar With the Beast.

"Yes," remarked the professor, "I rather pride myself on the discovery of another hypothesis."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Cumrox, a little doubtfully. "I had an idea they were quite extinct."—Washington Star.

FIGHTING GOOD WORK.

Federation of Labor Trying to Prevent Desirable Aliens From Being Brought to the South.

Washington, D. C., Nov. 13.—The protest of the agents of the American Federation of Labor against the admission of the immigrants which came on the Wittekind to Charleston has gone so far that the bureau of immigration has placed the matter in the hands of the department of justice.

The solicitor will take up the case and determine whether or not there is evidence of violation of the alien contract labor law sufficient to bring prosecution.

It is alleged not only that the immigrants were brought over under contract, but that Commissioner Watson in soliciting immigrants at all, violated the law.

If the courts so constitute it, it will put an end to all soliciting of immigrants abroad even by representatives of a State. Commissioner Watson, it seems, had the approval of Commission Sargent himself not only in this instance, but in others, so that Mr. Sargent himself in some respects might be held as guilty as Mr. Watson.

The Federation of Labor has been severely criticizing Mr. Sargent for going to Charleston and admitting the immigrants. "He put his foot in it," they say by having anything to do with it.

The Federation of Labor is trying to stop all immigration of laborers into this country and its representatives seem very determined in this case.—The State.

How's This?

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We, the undersigned, have known F. J. Cheney for the last 15 years, and believe him perfectly honorable in all business transactions and financially able to carry out any obligations made by his firm.

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THE FISH TRUST.

Boston, Mass., Nov. 15.—The fish trust is the last to appear. It is said that all the large concerns of Boston and Gloucester will co-operate under a corporate charter, the concern being capitalized at \$5,000,000. The company will establish a great drying and curing factory for the western trade.

*Need a good cathartic? A pill is best. Say a pill like DeWitt's Little Early Risers. About the most reliable on the market. Sold by all druggists.

Mrs. J. Ellen Foster, of Washington, by direction of the President, has been detailed from the department of justice to investigate the condition of women and child workers throughout the country. Legislation upon this subject is now pending before Congress. Mrs. Foster has had years of philanthropic work, and, therefore, is peculiarly fitted for the mission she has undertaken.

A Year of Blood.

*The year 1903 will long be remembered in the home of F. N. Tackett, of Alliance, Ky., as a year of blood; which flowed so copiously from Mr. Tackett's lungs that death seemed very near. He writes: "Severe bleeding from the lungs and a frightful cough had brought me at death's door, when I began taking Dr. King's New Discovery for consumption, with the astonishing result that after taking four bottles I was completely restored and as time has proven permanently cured." Guaranteed for sore lungs, coughs and colds, at Sibert's drug store. Price 50c. and \$1. Trial bottle free.

About the truest and cleverest thing Hearst said during his campaign was his remark that "the grand masters of the plunderbund never donate anything to a political party, they invest."—Raleigh News and Observer.

*The best treatment for indigestion and trouble of the stomach is to rest the stomach. It can be rested by starvation or by the use of a good digestant which will digest the food eaten, thus taking the work off the stomach. At the proper temperature, a single teaspoonful of Kodol will wholly digest 3,000 grains of food. It relieves the present annoyance, puts the stomach in shape to satisfactorily perform its functions. Good for indigestion, sour stomach, flatulence, palpitation of the heart and dyspepsia. Kodol is made in strict conformity with the National Pure Food and Drug Law. Sold by all druggists.