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Beverly of Graustark

By GEORGE BARR N'UTCHEON, Author of "Graustark."

(Continued from last week.)

"Oh," moaned Beverly, suddenly leaning against the fore wheel, her eyes almost starting from her head.

"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.

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

"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 inles 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.

"It is most dangerous." "I have a revolver," the weak little voice went on.

"Oh! What is it for?" "To use in case of emergency."

"Such as repelling brigands who suddenly appear upon the scene?" "Yes."

"May I ask why you did not use it this evening?" "Because it is locked up in one of my bags—I don't know just which one—and Aunt Fanny has the key," confessed Beverly.

The chief of the "honest men" laughed again, a clear, ringing laugh that bespoke supreme confidence in his right to enjoy himself.

"And who is Aunt Fanny?" he asked, covering his patch carefully with his slouching hat.

"My servant. She's colored!" "Colored?" he asked in amazement.

"What do you mean?" "Why, she's a negress. Don't you know what a colored person is?"

very nice gentlemen, I trust. Less than an hour ago we put a band of robbers to flight!"

"I heard the shooting," cried Beverly. "It was that which put my escort to flight."

"They could not have been soldiers of Graustark, then, your highness," quite gallantly.

"They were Cossacks, or whatever you call them. But, pray, why do you call me 'your highness'?" demanded Beverly.

"All the outside world knows the Princess Yette—who 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."

"Beverly listened with increasing perplexity. It was true that she had left St. Petersburg on Sunday; that the unprecedented floods had stopped all railway travel in the hills, compelling her to travel for many miles by stage, and that the whole country was confounding her in some strange way with the Princess Yette."

"What wise old hills they must be," she said, with evasive enthusiasm.

"It would not be just to your excellent reputation for tact if you did so, your highness," calmly spoke the man.

"I am very grateful to find that you are not brigands, believe me," said Beverly.

"I beg to inform you that we have reached the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. This is where we dwell last night."

"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."

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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.

"Aunt Fanny," Beverly whispered, suddenly moving to the side of the subdued servant, "where is my revolver?"

"Vey well, yo' highness," she said, with fine reverence, "Ah'll p'ocahab de bottle o' peppermint fo' yo' if yo' jes' don't mine me pullin' an' haulin' 'mongst dese boxes. Mebbe yo' all 'druther hab de gingeh?"

"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.

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which they walked carefully. Her feet fell upon a soft, grassy sward, and the clatter of stones was now no longer heard. They were among the shadowy trees, gaunt trunks of enormous size looming up in the light of the lanterns.

"It is the river, your highness. There is no danger. I will not lead you into it," he said, a trifle roughly. "We are low in the valley, and there are marshes yonder when the river is in its natural bed."

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.

"You are well at the Inn of the Hawk and Raven," she said to him, her voice tremulous with excitement.

"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.

"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.

"It is a typical mountain resort," she said.

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 humorously.

"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 wif all dese scalawags?" said Aunt Fanny rebelliously.

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

"Deys' de queeres' lot o' tramps Ah eveh did see, an' Ah wouldn't trust 'em as fer as Ah could leave a brick house."

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

"Yaas, ma'am; he mussa come f'm Gawgia or Kalntuck," 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 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."

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