Beverly of GEORGE BARR Graustark Copyright, 1904, by Dodd

CHAPTER IV.

HOROUGHLY mystified by the action of the driver and at length terrified by the pace that carried them careening along the narrow road, Beverly cried out to him, ber voice shrill with alarm. Aunt Fanny was crouching on the floor of the coach between the seats, groaning and praying.

"Stop! Where are you going?" cried Beverly, putting her head recklessly through the window. If the man heard her he gave no evidence of the fact. His face was set forward, and he was guiding the horses with a firm, unquivering hand. The coach rattled and bounded along the dangerous way hewn in the side of the mountain. A misstep or a false turn might easily start the clumsy vehicle rolling down the declivity on the right. The convict was taking desperate chances and, with a cool, calculating brain, prepared to leap to the ground in case of accident and save himself, without a thought for the victims inside.

"Stop! Turn around?" she cried in a frenzy. "We shall be killed. Are you crazy?"

By this time they had struck a descent in the road and were rushing along at breakneck speed into oppressive shadows that bore the first imprints of night. Realizing at last that her cries were falling upon purposely deaf ears, Beverly Calhoun sank back into the seat, weak and terror stricken. It was plain to her that the horses were not running away, for the man had been lashing them furiously. There was but one conclusion-he was deliberately taking her farther into the mountain fastnesses, his purpose known only to himself. A hundred terrors presented themselves to her as she lay huddled against the side of the coach, her eyes closed tightly, her tender body tossed furlously about with the sway of the vehicle. There was the fundamental fear that she would be dashed to death down the side of the mountain, but apart from this her quick brain was evolving all sorts of possible endings-none short of absolute disaster.

Even as she prayed that something might intervene to check the mad rush and to deliver her from the horrors of the moment the rancous voice of the driver was heard calling to his horses, and the pace became slower. The awful rocking and the jolting grew less severe, the clatter resolved itself into a broken rumble, and then the coach stopped with a mighty lurch.

Dragging herself from the corner, poor Beverly Calhoun, no longer a disdainful heroine, gazed piteously out into the shadows, expecting the murderous blade of the driver to meet her as she did so. Pauloff had swung from the box of the coach and was peering first into the woodland below and then upon the rocks to the left. He wore the expression of a man trapped and seeking means of escape. Suddenly he darted behind the coach, almost brushing against Beverly's hat as he passed the window. She opened her lips to call him, but even as she did so he took to his heels and raced back over the road they had traveled so precipitously.

Overcome by surprise and dismay, she only could watch the flight in si-Ience. Less than a hundred feet from where the coach was standing he turned to the right and was lost among the rocks. Ahead, four horses, covered with sweat, were panting and heaving as if in great distress after their mad run. Aunt Fanny was still moaning and praying by turns in the bottom of the carriage, Darkness was settling down upon the pass, and objects a hundred yards away were swallowed by the gloom. There was no sound save the blowing of the tired animals and the moaning of the old negress. Beverly realized with a sinking heart that they were alone and helpless in the amountains, with night upon them.

She never knew where the strength and courage came from, but she forced open the stubborn coach door and scrambled to the ground, looking frantically in all directions for a single sign of hope. In the most despairing terror she had ever experienced she started toward the lead horses, hoping against hope that at least one of her men had remained faithful.

A man stepped quietly from the inner side of the road and advanced with the uncertain tread of one who is overcome by amazement. He was a stranger and wore an odd, uncouth garb. The failing light told her that he was not one of her late protectors. She shrank back with a faint cry of alarm, ready to fly to the protecting arms of hopeless Aunt Fanny if her uncertain legs could carry her. At the same instant another ragged stranger, then two, three, four or five, appeared as if by magic, some near her, others approaching from the shadows.

"Who-who in heaven's name are

you?" she faltered. The sound of her own voice in a measure restored the courage that had been paralyzed. Unconsciously this slim sprig of southern valor threw back her shoulders and lifted her chin. If they were brigands they should not find her a cringing coward. After all, she was a Calhoun

The man she had first observed stop-

ped near the horses' heads and peered intently at her from beneath a broad and rakish hat. He was tall and appeared to be more respectably clad than his fellows, although there was not one who looked as though he possessed a complete outfit of wearing apparel.

"Poor wayfarers, may it please your highness," replied the tall vagabond, bowing low. To her surprise, he spoke in very good English. His voice was clear, and there was a tinge of polite irony in the tones. "But all people are alike in the mountains. The king and the thief, the princess and the jade live in the common fold." And his hat swung so low that it touched the

"I am powerless. I only implore you to take what valuables you may find and let us proceed unharmed!" she cried rapidly, eager to have it over.

"Pray, how can your highness proceed? You have no guide, no driver, no escort," said the man mockingly. Beverly looked at him appealingly, utterly without words to reply. tears were welling to her eyes, and her heart was throbbing like that of a captured bird. In after life she was able to picture in her mind's eye all the details of that tableau in the mountain pass-the hopeless coach, the steaming horses, the rakish bandit and his picturesque men, the towering crags and a mite of a girl facing the end of everything.

"Your highness is said to be brave, but even your wonderful courage can



"Oh, you won't kill us?"

avail nothing in this instance" said the leader pleasantly. "Your escort has fled as though pursued by something stronger than shadows; your driver has deserted; your horses are half dead; you are indeed, as you have said, powerless. And you are, besides all these, in the clutches of a band of merciless cutthroats."

"Oh," mouned 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 whis

Then, as several of the men pered. 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 in-

spection. "I am very much relieved," said Beverly, who was not at all relieved. "But gerly. why have you stopped us in this man-

"Stopped you?" cried the man with the patch. "I implore you to unsay that, your highness. Your coach was

its presence. You do us a grave in

"It's very strange," muttered Bever ly, somewhat taken aback. 'Have you observed that it is qui:

dark?" asked the leader, putting awd 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 shiv-"It is most dangerous."

"I have a revolver," the weak little voice went on. "Oho! What is it for?"

"To use in case of emergency." "Such as repelling brigands who sud-

lenly appear upon the scene?" "May I ask why you did not use it

this évening?" "Because it is locked up in one of my bags-I don't know just which oneand Aunt Fanny has the key," confessed Beverly.

The chief of the "honest men" laugh ed 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?"

"You mean she is a slave-a black slave?"

"We don't own slaves any mo'more." He looked more puzzled than ever-then at last, to satisfy himself, walked over and peered into the coach. Aunt Fanny set up a dismal howl. An instant later Sir Honesty was pushed aside, and Miss Calhoun was anxiously trying to comfort her old friend through the window. The man looked

men stood talking. "Is yo' daid yit, Miss Bev'ly-is de end came?" moaned Aunt Fanny. Beverly could not repress a smile.

on in silent wonder for a minute and

then strode off to where a group of his

"I am quite alive, auntie. These men will not hurt us. They are very nice gentlemen." She uttered the last observation in a loud voice, and it had its effect, for the leader came to her side with long strides.

"Convince your servant that we mean no harm, your highness," he said eagerly, a new deference in his voice and manner. "We have only the best of motives in mind. True, the hills are full of lawless fellows, and we are obliged to fight them almost daily, but you have fallen in with honest menvery nice gentlemen, I trust. Less than an hour ago we put a band of robbers

"I heard the shooting," cried Bever-"It was that which put my escort

"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. The tall leader swept the ground with his hat once more.

"All the outside world knows the Princess Yetive-why not the humble mountain man? You will pardon me but every man in the fills 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 per plexity. 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 Yetive. The news had evidently sped 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

"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.'

"I? 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 ea-

"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 | Hawk and Raven."

for the rough journey tomorrow." "Tomorrow? How can I go on?

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 are the walls of the Hawk and Raveu.

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 Washin'ton!"

CHAPTER V.

WO 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 mark an ineffaceable spot in her memory. They were dark, strong faced men of medium height, with fierce black came to her ears the swish of waters, the tight fitting but dilapidated uniforms of the soldiery, while several were in clothes partly European and partly oriental. There were hats and fezzes 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 Bev'ly"-

"Sh! Don't call me Miss Bev'ly. Now, just you pay 'tention to me, and I'll tell you something queer. Get my to be rich, grassless loam, and here and revolver right away and don't let those there were pallets of long grass, evimen see what you are doing." While dently the couches of these homeless Aunt Fanny's trembling fingers went men. All about were huge trees, and lined the situation briefly, but explicit- grew higher and then gave place to ly. The old woman was not slow to reeds. The foliage above was so dense understand. Her wits sharpened by that the moon and stars were invisible. fear, she grasped Beverly's instructions with astonishing avidity.

with fine reverence, "Ah'll p'ocuah de a quiver of dread. Aunt Fanny, who bottle o' pepp'mint fo' yo' if yo' jes' don' mine me pullin' an' haulin' 'mongst dese boxes. Mebbe yo' all pressively active. '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 ordi- rested upon this central figure in the nary circumstances she would have been mortally afraid to touch it, but dark gray uniform that reminded her not so in this emergency. Beverly oddly of the dragoon choruses in the 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 appeared at the window, his head uncovered. A man hard by held a lan-

"Qua vandos ar deltanet, yos serent," said the leader, showing his white The face was lean, smooth and strong, teeth in a triumphant smile. His exposed eye seemed to be glowing with pleasure and excitement.

"What?" murmured Beverly hopeless 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 dwelt 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

and perplexity

"I see no inn," she murmured apprebensively.

"Look aloft, your highness. great black canopy is the roof; we are standing upon the floor, and the dark shadows just beyond the circle of

This is the largest tavern in all Graustark. Its dimensions are as wide as he world itself."

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

"Alas, I must confess it. And yet here 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 ter 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, reveling 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. "Have you no home at all-no house in which to sleep?" Beverly asked.

"I live in a castle of air," said he, waving his band gracefully. "I sleep in the house of my fathers.

"You poor fellow," cried Beverly pityingly. He laughed and absently patted the hilt of his sword.

She heard the men behind them turning the coach into the glen through 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 lanwere her first real specimens of Grau- terns. Unconsciously her thoughts stark peasantry, and they were to went over to the forest of Arden and the woodland home of Rosalind, as she had imagined it to be. Soon there eyes and long black hair. As no two as of some turbulent river hurrying were dressed alike, it was impossible by. Instinctively she drew back, and to recognize characteristic styles of at- her eyes were set with alarm upon the tire. Some were in the rude, baggy black wall of night ahead. Yetive had costumes of the peasant as she had spoken more than once of this wilderimagined him; others were dressed in ness. Many an unlucky traveler had been lost forever in its fastnesses.

"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. The floods have covered the low grounds, and there is a torrent coming down from the hills. Here we are, your highness. This is the Inn of 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 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 in search of the firearm, Beverly out- in the direction of the river the grass There was a deathly stillness in the air. The very loneliness was so appalling "Ve'y well, yo' highness," she said, that Beverly's poor little heart was in sat near by, had not spoken since leaving the coach, but her eyes were ex-

The tall leader stood near the fire conversing with half a dozen of his followers. Miss Calhoun's eyes finally strange picture. He was attired in a 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 An instant later the tall driver 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. 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 grizzly, 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, mock ing 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 unmis takably 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 quite at a standstill before we knew of the night comfortably and be refreshed | Beverly took his hand and stepped to a small chamber in this particular cor-

the ground, looking about in wonder | ner 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

anid. "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 walters, 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 wif all dose scalawags?" said Aunt Fanny rebelliously.

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

"Dey's de queeres' lot o' tramps Ah eveh did see, an' Ah wouldn' trust 'em as fer as Ah could heave a brick house.

"But the leader is such a very courteous gentleman," remonstrated Beverly. "Yaas, ma'am; he mussa came 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 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 seem ed 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 en-

tertain royalty today than at any time since I have been in the hills of Grau-"Then you have not always lived in

Graustark?" "Alas, no, your highness. I have

lived elsewhere.' "But you were born in the princi-

pality?" "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 add-

ed 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. rush of the river grew louder and louder, and there was a swishing sound