

THE BATTLE CRY

By CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK

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ILLUSTRATIONS by C. D. RHODES

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SYNOPSIS.

Juanita Holland, a Philadelphia young woman of wealth, on her journey with her guide, Good Anse Talbott, into the heart of the Cumberland mountains...

CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

The girl from Philadelphia had for some days been watching the road which led in tortuous twists from Peril to the gap.

She was thinking of the man she had sent away and wondering what their meeting would be like.

She had written to him, sternly forbidding his coming, and if he obeyed that mandate he would, of course, prove himself weak and lacking in initiative.

But on the day that came she was not watching. He had pushed on at a rate of speed which mountain patience would not have countenanced.

At the front fence he hitched his mount and walked noiselessly up to the larger house.

It was Dawn who saw him first and with a glance that brought a resentful flash to her eyes, she rose silently and slipped out through a side door.

He would have taken her at once in his arms, but she held him off and shook her head.

"I told you not to come," she rebuked him in a voice that lacked conviction.

"And I flagrantly disobeyed you," he answered. "As I mean henceforth to disobey you. Once I lost you because I played a weak game.

"Oh!" said Juanita faintly. For just an instant she felt a leap at her heart.

Perhaps, after all, he had grown to her standard. That was how she must be won, if ever won, and she wanted to be won.

She saw him draw out of his pocket a small box which she had once given back to him and take from it a ring she had once worn, but again she shook her head.

"Not yet, dear," she said very softly. "You haven't proved yourself a conqueror yet, you know. You've just called yourself one."

Then her heart misgave her, for, after gazing into her eyes with a hurt look, the man masked his disappointment behind a smile of defiance and replied: "Very well, I can wait, but that's how it must be in the end."

He was still the man of brave intents and words—still the man who stood hesitant at the moment for a blow.

It was while Malcolm was Juanita's

guest that Anse Havey broke his resolve and for the first time came through the gate of the school.

A moment later the mountaineer was standing on the steps and shaking hands with Roger Malcolm, whom he greeted briefly and with mountain reserve.

"I was down at Peril with a couple of teams," he said, turning to Juanita, "and I found a lot of boxes at the station for ye. I 'lowed ye didn't hardly have any teams handy, so I fished 'em back to my house. I'll send them over in the morning, but I thought I'd ride over tonight an' tell ye."

She had been wondering how, at a time of mired roads, she was to have those books, which she would soon need, brought across the ridge.

Roger Malcolm glanced up and knocked the ash from his pipe against the rail of the porch.

But he showed no surprise as he answered with perfect frankness: "Yes and no. I came primarily to see how Miss Holland was progressing with her work."

Havey nodded and said quietly: "I hope ye decides to invest elsewhere." "So far as a casual inspection shows, this country looks pretty good to me," rejoined Malcolm easily.

"This country's mighty pore," said the head of the Haveys slowly. "About all it can raise is a little corn an' a heap of hell, but down underneath the rocks there's wealth."

"Then the man who can unlock the hills and get it out ought to be welcome as a benefactor, ought he not?" inquired the Easterner with a smile.

"The men from outside always aim to get the benefit of that wealth an' then to move us off our mountains, an' there ain't nowhere else on earth a mountain man can live. Developin' seems pretty much like plunderin' to us. We generally ask benefactors like that to go away."

"Do you expect me to believe that, Mr. Havey?" queried Malcolm, still smiling.

"I don't neither ask ye to believe it nor to disbelieve it," was the cool rejoinder. "I'm just tellin' it to ye, that's all."

Malcolm refilled his pipe and offered the tobacco pouch to Havey. Anse shook his head with a curt "Much obliged," and the visitor said casually: "Well, we needn't have any argument at that score yet, Mr. Havey. My activities, if they eventuate, belong to the future, and when that time comes perhaps we shall be able to agree, after all."

"I reckon we won't hardly agree on no proposition for despoilin' my people, Mr. Malcolm."

"Then we can disagree, when the time comes," remarked the other man with a trace of tartness in his voice.

"Then ye don't aim to develop us just now?" Malcolm shook his head, the glow of his pipe bowl for a moment lighting up a face upon which lingered an amused smile.

"All right, then," Havey's voice carried a very masked and courteous but very unmistakable warning. "When-ever yet get good an' ready—we'll argue that."

He bowed to the girl and turned into the path which led down to the gate.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was one of those nights under whose brooding wings vague things and influences are astrid and in the making.

"Not this time. Another time, perhaps."

"All right, then," Havey's voice carried a very masked and courteous but very unmistakable warning. "When-ever yet get good an' ready—we'll argue that."

In her heart vague things were stirring, too, and in another heart, the fact that she had not been allowed to see young Milt McBriar had given him an augmented importance which had kept the boy in her mind despite her denunciations.

Generally speaking, the breakfast table is the dulllest place.

A prominent politician believes every family should keep a cow. Sim Heekley is even further advanced along the line of progressive ideas.

There is little sympathy for the Iowa man whose seventh wife has sued for divorce. Five wives are enough for any man.

SNAP SHOTS

Shiftlessness is variously construed. If a woman makes a cherry pie and leaves the seeds in, that is shiftlessness.

A German scientist has demonstrated that radium has a marked effect on woody plants, even forcing them to bud in dormant seasons.

There is little sympathy for the Iowa man whose seventh wife has sued for divorce. Five wives are enough for any man.

"Dawn, do ye know why I don't come over that no more?" The girl had only nodded and the boy went on:

"Well, some day when ye're at Jeb's cabin I'm a-comin' thar. I hain't a-comin' ter come sillin'p, but I'm a-comin' open an' upstandin', an' Jeb an' me are goin' ter talk about this business."

"No! No!" she had exclaimed, genuinely frightened and in a voice full of quick dissent. "Ye mustn't do it, Milt; ye mustn't. Ef ye does, I won't see ye."

"We'll settle that when I gits thar. I jest 'lowed I'd tell ye," persisted the boy stubbornly. "I reckon I mustn't talk ter yer now—I'm pledged," and without another word he shook up in a reins on his horse's neck and rode away.

So tonight, while the moon was weaving its spell over several hearts, the son of the McBriar leader was riding with a set face over into the heart of the Havey country, openly to visit the daughter of Fletcher McNash.

Jeb was sitting before the fire with a pipe between his teeth and Dawn plunked on a banjo—not the old folk-tune that had once been her repertoire, but a newer and sweeter thing that she had learned from Juanita Holland.

Then, as a confident voice sang out from the darkness, "I'm Milt McBriar."

"Jest this," young McBriar went on: "I ain't got no gun on me. I ain't even got a jackknife. I 'lowed that ye might be right smart incensed at my comin' hyar an' I come without no weapon on purpose. Ef ye hain't skeered of me when I'm unarmed, I reckon ye kin put your own gun back in ther holster."

Jeb McNash slowly followed the suggestion, and then coming forward until the two boys stood eye to eye, he said in deliberate accents: "I reckon ye don't 'low I'm skeered of ye."

"I reckon not," young Milt's tone was almost cheerful. "I reckon ye air jest about as much skeered of me as I am of you—an' that ain't none."

"What does ye want hyar?" persisted Jeb.

"I wants first to tell ye—an' I hain't never lied ter no feller yit—the I don't know nothin' more about you kilt Fletcher than you does. If I did, so help me God Almighty, I'd tell ye. I hain't tryin' ter shield no murderer."

There was a ring of sincerity in the lad's voice that carried weight even into the bitter skepticism of Jeb's heart—a skepticism which had refused to believe that honor or truth dwelt east of the ridge.

"I reckon, ef that's true," sneered the older boy, "thar's them in yore house that does know."

At that insult it was young Milt whose face went first red and then very white.

"Thet calls for a fight, Jeb," he said with forced calm. "I can't harken ter sayin' like thet. But first I want ter say this: I come over hyar ter tell ye thet I knowed how ye felt, an' thet I didn't see no reason why ye an' me had ter quarrel. I come over hyar ter see Dawn, because I promised I wouldn't try ter see her whilst she stayed down at the school—an' because I want ter see her—an' 'lows ter do hit. Now will ye lay aside yore gun an' go out thar in ther road whar hit hain't on yore own ground, an' let me tell ye thet ye lied when ye slurred my folks?"

The two boys stripped off their coats in guaranty that neither had hidden a weapon. Then, while the girl, who was really no longer a girl, turned back into the front cabin and threw herself face downward on her feather bed, they silently crossed the stile into the road and Milt turned to repeat: "Jeb, thet war a lie ye spoke, an' I want ye ter fight me fa'r, fist an' skull an' when we gits through, ef ye feels like hit, we'll shake hands. You an' me ain't got no cause ter quarrel."

And so the boy in each of them, which was the manlier part of each, came to the surface, and into a bitter and long-fought battle of fists and wrestling, in which both of them rolled in the dust, and each of them obstinately refused to say "enough," they submitted their long-fostered hostility to one fierce debate. At last, as the two lay panting and bloodied there in the road, it was Jeb who rose and held out his hand.

"So fur es the two of us goes, Milt," he said, "unless ther war busts loose ergin, I reckon we kin be friends."

Together they rose and recrossed the stile and washed their grimed faces. Dawn looked from one to the other, and Jeb said: "Milt, set yoreself a cheer. I reckon ye'd better stay all night. It's most too ter ter ride back."

And so, though they did not realize it, the two youths who were to stand some day near the heads of the two factions, had set a new precedent and had fought without guns, as men had fought before the feud began.

Jeb kicked off his shoes and lay down, and before the flaming logs sat the Havey girl and the McBriar boy talking.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When winter has come and settled down for its long siege in the Cumberland human life shrinks and shrivels into a shivering wretchedness, and a spirit of dreariness steals into the human heart.

The house of old Milt McBriar was not so dark and cheerless a hovel as the houses of his lesser neighbors, but as the winter closed in his heart was bitter and his thoughts were black.

"I come over hyar ter see Dawn," was the calm response, and then, as the girl convulsively moistened her dry lips with her tongue, she saw her brother's hand sweep under his coat and come out gripping a heavy revolver.

POSTSCRIPTS

A fairly accurate sundial has been invented that can be held in the hand and adjusted to tell the time in any latitude.

Rubber tubing can be kept from deteriorating when not in use by storing it in water to which a little salt has been added.

Cannon loaded with sand have been found effective in breaking up swarms of locusts that frequently appear in Costa Rica.

Jeb had never gone armed before that night when Fletcher fell. Now he was never unarmed.

"Don't, Jeb!" she screamed in a transport of alarm, as she braced herself and summoned strength to seize the hand that held the weapon.

Jeb shook her roughly off and wheeled again to face the visitor with the precaution of a sidewise leap. He had expected that the other boy would use that moment of interference to draw his own weapon, but the young McBriar was standing in the same attitude, holding his hat in one hand while he reassured the girl.

"Don't fret, Dawn; thar hain't nothin' ter worry about," he said, then, facing the brother, he went on in a voice of cold and almost scornful composure: "Thet hain't ther first time ye've seed me across the sights of a gun, is it, Jeb?"

"What does ye mean?" The other boy's face went brick-red and he lowered his muzzle with a sense of sudden shame.

"Oh, I heered about how old Bob McGregor told ye a passel of lies about me, an' how ye come across ther ridge one day. I reckon I kin guess ther rest."

"Well, what of hit?" Jeb stood with his pistol now hanging at his side, but in his eyes still glowed the fire of hatred.

"Jest this," young McBriar went on: "I ain't got no gun on me. I ain't even got a jackknife. I 'lowed that ye might be right smart incensed at my comin' hyar an' I come without no weapon on purpose. Ef ye hain't skeered of me when I'm unarmed, I reckon ye kin put your own gun back in ther holster."

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bryonic affiliations with the people of his enemy.

Young Milt had visited Dawn; he had watched with Anse Havey. The father had always taken a natural pride in the honesty that gleamed from his son's alert eyes, and the one person from whom he had concealed his own ways of guile and deceit most studiously was the lad who would some day be leader in his stead.

There were few things that this old intriguer feared, but one there was, and now it was tracing lines of care and anxiety in the visage that had always been so masklike and imperturbable. If his son should ever look past his outward self and catch a glimpse of the inner man, the father knew that he would not be able to sustain the scorn of those younger eyes. So, while the lad, who had gone back to college in Lexington, conned his books, his father sat before the blaze of his hearth, his pipe tight clamped between his teeth, his heart festering in his breast, and his mind dangerously active.

The beginnings of all the things which he deplored, and meant to punish, went back to the establishment of a school with a "fetched-on" teacher. Had Dawn McNash not come there, his boy's feet would not have gone wandering westward over the ridge, straying out of partizan paths. The slimmest of her body, the lure of her violet eyes, and the dusky meshes of her dark hair had led his own son to guard the roof that sheltered her against the hand of arson the father had hired.

But most of all, Anse Havey was responsible: Anse Havey who had persuaded his son to make common cause with the enemy. For that Anse Havey must die.

Heretofore Old Milt had struck only at lesser men, fearing the retribution of too audacious a crime, but now his venom was acute, and even such grave considerations as the danger of a holocaust must not halt its appeasement.

Still the mind of Milt McBriar, the elder, had worked long in intrigue, and even now it could not follow a direct line. Bad Anse must not be shot down in the road. His taking off must be accomplished by a shrewd method, and one not directly traceable to so palpable a motive as his own hatred.

Such a plan his brain was working out, but for its execution he needed a hand of craft and force—such a hand as only Luke Thixton could supply—and Luke was out West.

It was not his intention to rush hastily into action. Some day he would go down to Lexington and Luke should come East to meet him. There, a hundred and thirty miles from the hills, the two of them would arrange matters to his own satisfaction.

Roger Malcolm had gone back, and he had not, after all, gone back with a conqueror's triumph. He was now discussing in directors' meetings plans looking to a titanic grouping of interests which were to focalize on these hills and later to bring developments. The girl's school was gradually making itself felt, and each day saw small classes at the desk and blackboard—small classes that were growing larger.

Now that Milt had laid the groundwork of his plans, he was making the field fallow by a seeming of general beneficence. His word had gone out along the creeks and branches and into the remote coves of his territory that it "wouldn't hurt folks none ter give their children a little 'armin'."

In response to that hint they trooped in from the east, wherever the roads could be traveled. Among those who "hitched an' lighted" at the fence were

He had always thought quickly and dared to face realities. He was now facing his hardest reality. He loved her with utter hopelessness. Her eyes told him that it must always be just that way, and yet she had appealed to him—she had said she needed his friendship. To call it love would make it necessary for her to decline it. Henceforth life for Anse Havey was to mean a heartache, but if she wanted his allegiance she might call it what she would. It was hers.

Swiftly he vowed in his heart to set a seal on his lips and play the part she had assigned to him.

"I'm right glad ye said that," he assured her. "I reckon ye're right. I reckon we can go on fightin' and bein' friends. Ye see, as I said, I didn't know much about womenfolks, an' because I liked ye I was worried."

She nodded understandingly. Suddenly he bent forward and his words broke impetuously from his lips.

"Do ye 'low to marry that man Malcolm?" He came a step toward her, then raising his hand swiftly, he added: "No—don't answer that question! Thet's your business. I didn't have no license to ask. Besides, I don't want ye to answer it."

"It's a bargain, isn't it?" she smiled. "Whenever you get lonely over there by yourself and find that Hamlet isn't as lively a companion as you want, or that Alexander the Great is a little too fond of himself, or Napoleon is over-moody, come over here and we'll try to cheer each other up."

"I reckon," she said with an answering smile, "I'm liable to feel that way tonight, but I ain't comin' to learn civilization. I'm just comin' to see you."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Fashionable Ills Disappear. Some of the most fashionable London physicians have been badly hit by the war. This is mainly caused by the shrinkage in the number of imaginary ailments. Those people who used to swell the fashionable physicians' bank balance prodigiously with their fancied maladies have now simply no time to imagine themselves ill, or rather the war has distracted their attention. One never seems to meet a hypochondriac or neurotic in these days. The war has also been the cause of the termination of many family feuds.

Roosevelt's Idea. A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal. More than that no man is entitled to, and less than that no man shall have.—Theodore Roosevelt.

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He shook his head and gazed away. Into his eyes came that troubled look which nowadays they sometimes wore.

"I reckon it wouldn't hardly be honest for me to come. I've told ye I don't think the thing will do no good."

He was looking at her and his hands slowly clenched. Her beauty, with the enthusiasm lighting her eyes, made him feel like a man whose thirst was killing him, and who gazed at a clear spring beyond his reach—or, like the caravan driver whose sight is tortured by a mirage. He drew a long breath, then added:

"I've got another reason an' a stronger one for not comin' over ther very often. Any time ye wants me for anything I reckon ye knows I'll come."

"What is your reason?" she demanded.

"I ain't never been much interested in any woman." He held her eyes so directly that a warm color suddenly flooded her cheeks, then he went on with naked honesty and an unceasing bitterness of heart: "When I puts myself in the way of havin' to love one, I'll pick a woman that won't have to be ashamed of me—some mountain woman."

For an instant she stared at him in astonishment, then she exclaimed: "Ashamed of you! I don't think any woman would be ashamed of you, Mr. Havey," but, recognizing that her voice had been over-erous, she laughed, and once more her eyes danced with gay mischief.

"Don't be afraid of me. I'll promise not to make love to you."

"I'm obliged," he said slowly. "Thet ain't what I'm skeered of. I'm afraid ye couldn't hardly stop me from makin' love to you."

He paused, and the badinage left her eyes.

"Mr. Havey," she said with great seriousness, "I'm glad you said that. It gives us a chance to start honestly as all true friendship should start. In some things any woman is wiser than any man. You thought you were going to hate me, but you don't."

"God knows I don't," he fiercely interrupted her.

"Neither will you fall in love with me. You told me once of your superior age and wisdom, but in some things you are still a boy. You are a very lonely boy, too—a boy with a heart hungry for companionship. You have had friends only in books—comradeship only in dreams. You have lived down there in that old prison of a house with a sword of Damocles hanging always over your head. Because we have been in a way congenial, you are mistaking our friendship for danger of love."

Danger of love! He knew that it had gone past a mere danger, and his eyes for a moment must have shown that he realized its hopelessness, but Juanita shook her head and went on:

"Don't do it. It would be a pity. I'm rather hungry, too, for a friend; I don't mean for a friend in my work, but a friend in my life. Can't we be friends like that?"

She stood looking into his eyes, and slowly the drawn look of gravity left his face.

He had always thought quickly and dared to face realities. He was now facing his hardest reality. He loved her with utter hopelessness. Her eyes told him that it must always be just that way, and yet she had appealed to him—she had said she needed his friendship. To call it love would make it necessary for her to decline it. Henceforth life for Anse Havey was to mean a heartache, but if she wanted his allegiance she might call it what she would. It was hers.

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