

THE BATTLE-CRY

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ILLUSTRATIONS by C. D. RHODES

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CHAPTER XXIV.

In a small room over the post office in Peril an attorney, whose professional success had always been precarious, received those few clients who came to him for consultation. The lawyer's name was Walter Hackley, but he was better known as Clayheel Hackley, because he never wore socks and his bare ankles were tanned to the hue of river-bank mud.

His features were wizened and his eyes shifty. He was a coward and an intriguer by nature and inclination. It was logical enough that when the verdict of the director's table that Bad Anse Haver was a nuisance filtered down the line the persons seeking native methods for abating the nuisance should come to Clayheel Hackley.

One day in August this attorney at law, together with Jim Fletcher and a tricky youth who enjoyed the distinction of holding office as telegraph operator at the Peril station, caucused together in Hackley's dingy room.

In the death of Bad Anse Haver this trio saw a joint advantage, since the abating of such a nuisance would not go unrewarded.

"Gentlemen," said the attorney, his wizened face working nervously, "this business has need to be expeditious. Gentlemen—it requires, in its nature, to be expeditious. A few more failures and we are done for."

"Well, tell us how ye aims ter do hit," growled the telegraph operator.

"Jim Fletcher has the idea," replied the lawyer impressively. "Quite the right idea. How many men can you trust on a job like this, Jim?"

"As many as ye needs," was the confident response. "A dozen or a score if they're wanted."

"Enough to make it sure, but not too many," urged Hackley. "We should set a day precisely as the court would set a day for—an execution. The force you send out should simply stay on the job until it's done. If Anse Haver can be got alone, so much the better. But above all—"

The lawyer paused and spoke with his most forceful emphasis: "Don't just wound this man. See that the thing is finally and definitely settled."

"I'll be there myself," Jim Fletcher assured him. "Now when is this day goin' ter be?"

"This is Monday," reflected the attorney. "There is no advantage in delay. It will take a day or two to get ready. Let the case be docketed, as I might say—for Thursday."

Anse Haver had gone to Lexington. Never again did he mean to hold against himself the accusation of "the unlit lamp and the ungit loin." He knew that she loved him.

In Lexington he had bought a ring and at Peril he had got a marriage license. His camp-following days were over. He had one youth, and he knew that if his enemies succeeded in their designs that might at any moment be snapped short with sudden death. It did not seem to him that one of its golden hours should be wasted.

As he came out of the courthouse with the invaluable piece of paper in his pocket two men, seemingly unarmed, rose from the doorway of the store across the street and drifted toward their hitched horses.

Young Milk McBrier had ridden over to Peril that day with several companions, and Anse Haver went back with them. So it happened that quite ac-

cently he made this journey under escort. The men who rode a little way in his rear cursed their luck—and waited. And, though they lurked in hiding all that afternoon near Anse Haver's house, they saw nothing more of their intended victim.

Anse was keenly alive to each day's impending threat, and when he recognized the face of Jim Fletcher in Peril, as he came through, he had read mischief in the eyes and recognized that the menace had drawn closer.

So, when he was ready to cross the ridge to the school, he obeyed an old sense of caution and left his horse saddled at the front fence that it might seem as if he were going out—but had not yet gone.

He had sent a messenger for Good Anse Talbot, and the preacher arrived while he was at his supper.

"Brother Anse," he said, "I'm goin' to need ye some time betwixt now and midnight. I want ye to tarry here till I come back."

"What's the nature of business ye needs me fer, Anse?" demanded the missionary. "I hadn't hardly ought ter wait. That's a child ailin' up the top fork of little fork of Turkey-Foot creek."

But Bad Anse only shook his head. "It's the best business ye ever did," he confidently assured the preacher. "But I can't tell ye yet. Is the child in any danger?"

"I reckon not; hit's jest ailin' but—"

The brown-faced man sat dubiously shaking his head, and Anse's features suddenly set and hardened.

"I needs ye," he said. "Ain't that enough? I'm goin' to need ye bad."

"That's a right strong reason, Anse, but—"

For an instant the old dominating will which had not yet learned to brook mutiny leaped into Anse Haver's eyes. His words came in a harsher voice:

"Will you stay of your own free will because I'm goin' to need ye, Brother Anse?" he demanded. "Because, by God, ye're goin' to stay—no way or another."

"Does ye mean ye aims ter hold me by force?"

"Not unless ye make me. I wouldn't hardly like to do that."

For a moment the missionary debated. He did not resent the threat of coercion. He believed in Anse Haver, and the form of request convinced him of its urgency.

So he nodded his head. "I'll be byr when ye comes," he said.

Anse left his house that night neither by front nor back, but in the dark shadows at one side, and his tall-man of luck led his noiseless feet safely between the scattered sentinels who were watching his dwelling to kill him.

The school buildings slept in silent shadows, except that from the open door of the room where her piano stood there came a soft flooding of lamplight—a single dash of orange in the nocturnes of silver and gray.

He went up very quietly, pausing to drink of the fragrance of the honey-suckle, and there drifted out to him, as he paused, the music of the piano and the better music of her voice.

She was singing a love song.

Though he had sent no word of his coming, she was once more in evening dress, all black save for a crimson flower at her breast and one in her hair. But this time the sight of her in a costume so foreign to the

hills did not distress him; it was a night that called for wonders.

She rose as the man's footstep sounded on the floor, and then, at memory of their last meeting, the color mounted to her cheeks and he took her again in his arms.

She raised her hands to his shoulders and tried to push him away, but he held her firmly, and while she sought to tell him that they must find their way back to the colorless level of friendship, he could feel the wild flutter of her heart.

"Listen," she protested. "You must listen."

But Bad Anse Haver laughed. "Ever since the first time I saw ye," he declared, "I've been listenin' to it. It has been a duel always between you and me. But the duels' over now, an' this time I win."

She looked up and her pupils began to widen with that intense gaze which is the drawing aside of the curtain from a woman's soul, and as though she realized that she could not trust herself to his eyes, she turned her face away. Only in its profile could he read the struggle between mind and heart, and what he read filled him with elation.

"Anse," she said in a very low voice, "give me a truce. For one hour let me think; it involves both our lives for always; let me at least have the chance to be sane. Give me an hour."

The man stepped back and released her, and she turned and led the way out to the porch, where she sank down in the hammock with her face buried in both hands. When at length she looked up she was smiling rather wanly.

"It can't be, dear," she said. "But she argued with words and ostensible reasons, the night was arguing, too—arguing for him with all its sense-steeping fragrance and alluring cadences and appeals to sleeping fires in their hearts!"

And while she talked he made no response, but sat there silently attentive. At last he looked at his watch and put it back in his pocket. He rose and said quietly, but with a tone of perfect finality:

"Your truce is over."

Slowly he drew back, still tense and alert, and from his eyes the tender glow died until they narrowed and hardened and the jaw angle stiffened and the lips drew themselves into the old line of warlike sternness.

She looked again into the face of the mountaineer, the feudist, of the wild creature turning to stand at bay.

For a moment they remained motionless, and her fingers rested on his arms and felt the strain on his tautened biceps.

"God!" he muttered almost inaudibly.

"What is it?" she whispered, but he replied only with a warning shake of the head.

Once more he stood listening, then gently turned her so that his body was between her and the outside world. He thrust her back into the open door and followed her inside.

His words came slowly, and though they were calm they carried a very bitter note.

"I must go. I hoped they'd let me live long enough to marry ye, but I reckon they're weary of bidin' their time."

He had closed the door and stood looking down at her with a deep hunger in his face.

"What is it, Anse? What did you hear out there?" Her face had gone pallid and she clung to his arms with a grip that indicated no intention of release.

"Nothin' much. Just the crackin' of a twig or two; just some steps in the bush that was too cautious to sound honest; little noises that wouldn't mean much if I didn't know what they do mean. They weren't friendly sounds. They're after me."

"Who? What do you mean?" Her voice came in a low panic of whispering, and even as she spoke the man was listening with his head bent toward the closed door.

He laughed mirthlessly under his breath.

"I don't know who they've picked out to get me. It don't matter; much, does it? But I know they've picked tonight. I've been lookin' for it, but it seems they might have let me have

waiting. But despite his seeming of confidence and calm his brain reeled gloriously with an intoxication of the soul. He saw her standing there, straight and lithe and slender, with the moon-washed sky at her back and the inky shadows of the porch throwing the picture into a vivid relief.

She took an involuntary step toward him with lifted arms, and then, with a strong effort, as if struggling against a spell, she drew back again, and her voice came very low and broken.

"I can't—I can't!" she pleaded. "But I wish to God I could."

Then Anse Haver began to speak. "Ye've talked, an' I've listened to ye. Ye've taken my life away from me an' made it a little scrap of your own life—ye've let us both come to needin' each other more than food an' drink an' breath. For me there's no life without ye. In all the earth there's just you—you—you!"

For every true woman in the world a day comes when there's just one man, an' for every man there's just one woman. When that day comes nothin' else counts. That's why all them reasons of yours don't mean anything."

His voice had the ring of triumph as he added: "You're goin' to marry me tonight. Come!"

He raised both arms and held them out, and though for a moment she hung back, her eyes were still irresistibly held by his and the magnetism that dwelled in them. With a gasping exclamation that was half surrender and half echo of his own triumph she swept into his embrace.

As she locked her fingers caressingly behind his dark head she wished for words fine and splendid beyond the ordinary to tell him of her love. But no phrases of eloquence came.

Then she felt his arms grow abruptly rigid and he was pressing her from him with a gentle insistence, while his face turned to peer into the moonlight with the tenacity of one who is listening not only with his ears, but with every nerve of his being.

Slowly he drew back, still tense and alert, and from his eyes the tender glow died until they narrowed and hardened and the jaw angle stiffened and the lips drew themselves into the old line of warlike sternness.

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"I don't know who they've picked out to get me. It don't matter; much, does it? But I know they've picked tonight. I've been lookin' for it, but it seems they might have let me have

tonight— His lips smiled, and for an instant his eyes softened again to tenderness. "This was my night—our night."

"If they are out there, Anse—" her eyes flashed suddenly and her grip tightened—"you shan't go. I won't let you go. In this house you are behind walls at least. I can't let you go."

"It's the only way," he told her, and again she read unshakable resolve written in his face. "My best chance is out there. These mountains'll take better care of me than any walls—if I can once get to cover."

Suddenly he wheeled and caught her fiercely in his arms holding her very close, and now her heart was beating more wildly than before—beating with a sudden and sickening terror.

He bent low and covered her temples and cheeks and lips and eyes with kisses.

"God knows, when I came here tonight," he declared, talking fast and passionately, "I didn't aim to ever go away again without ye. Now I've got to go, but if I come through, an' there's a breath or a drop of blood left in me, I'll be back. I'm a comin' back, dearest, if I live."

Her answer was a low moan. He released her at last and went over to the gun-rack.

Standing before her shrine of guns, in her temple of disarmament, he said slowly: "Dearest, I was about the last man to leave my rifle here, an' I reckon I've got to be the first to take it out again. I'm sorry. Will you give it to me or must I take it without permission?"

She came slowly over, conscious that her knees were trembling, and that ice-water seemed to have taken the place of hot blood in her veins.

"If you need it," she faltered, "take it, dear—nothing else matters—Which one shall I give you?"

"My own!" His voice was for the instant imperious. It was almost as if someone had asked Ulysses what bow he would draw in battle. "I reckon my own gun's good enough for me. It has been till today."

She withdrew the rifle from the rack herself, and he took it from her trembling hands, but when he had accepted it she threw her arms about him again and clung to him wildly, her eyes wide with silent suffering and dread.

The crushing grasp of his arms hurt her and she felt a wild joy in the pain. Then she resolutely whispered: "Go, dearest, go! Time is precious now. God keep you!"

"Juanita," he said slowly, "I have refused to talk to you in good speech. I have clung to the rough phrases and the rough manners of the hills, but I want you to know always, most dear one, that I have loved you not only fiercely, but gently too. Not a derider worship lives in your own world. If I don't come back, think of that. God knows I love you."

"Don't, Anse!" she cried with a smothered sob. "Don't talk like a soft, muscled lowlander! Talk to me in your own speech. It rings of strength, and God knows"—her voice broke, and she added with fierce tenderness, "God knows, dear, eagle-heart, you need all the strength of wing and talon to-night."

Then she opened the back door very cautiously on the shadows that crept into inky blackness, and saw him slip away and meet instantly into the murk.

(To Be Continued.)

Small Boy's Request. Little Claude has been told that Uncle Ezra is afflicted with a glass eye, and forgets that he has been instructed to say nothing about it.

General Omission. People occasionally announce their intention of "summering" or "wintering" here or there, but oddly enough they never say they will "fall" or "spring" in any place in particular.

WHERE TEUTONS AND BULGARS MEET TO BLAST WAY TO CONSTANTINOPL



SHOWING JUNCTION OF TEUTONS AND BULGARS

The terrific French artillery attack along the western front was made possibly by equally unremitting and intensive effort in the production of projectiles in works which have been transformed by equipment with American machine tools and are working regularly twenty-four hours a day. One of these great establishments, near Paris, makes more than 5,000 shells and a number of aeroplane motors a day. The workers there produced 600 automobiles annually before the war. In peace times material taken in at one end followed a regular progression until it came out at the other a finished car. The order of operations was different in shell making, so it was necessary to displace and rearrange 600 machines, install many new ones and at the same time find hands to replace a thousand mobilized mechanics. The picture shows a scene in a French ammunition factory.

Not Fine For Her. Miss Reda Freden of the cigarmakers' union, was one of the Pennsylvania delegation of woman suffragists that visited President Wilson, and in a talk with a Washington correspondent she said:

"I sometimes think, when I consider woman's position of today, of a Philadelphia gentleman who made a horse-back tour in the southwest."

"The gentleman during his tour arrived one day at a cabin. Before the cabin on a bench in the sun a man sat smoking and cleaning a gun, while half a dozen dogs lounged at his feet."

"Friend," said the gentleman, "can I get dinner here?"

"Wall, I guess ye kin, stranger," drawled the man, "if ye wait till the old woman turns up."

"So the gentleman waited, and pretty soon a hot and tired woman came down the road, leading a hot and tired mule. They had been plowing."

"The woman greeted the visitor, and then she chopped some wood, built a fire, drew some water, killed a couple of chickens, and in a short time had a good dinner ready."

"The gentleman, while eating his chicken, said: 'You seem to have a fine country here, friends.'"

"Fine," said the man, his mouth full of white meat. "'I reckon it's a fine kentry,' said the woman, rising to fetch more bread, 'as fine a kentry as there is for men and daws; but I tell ye, stranger, it's mighty hard on mules and women.'"

World's Oldest Tree. The oldest living things in the world are the giant sequoia trees of our Pacific coast. Naturalists have found seventy-nine specimens more than 2,000 years old, according to their rings, three more than 3,000 years and one that was 3,150. This oldest tree was a sturdy sapling when Paris and Helen fled to Troy.

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