

The Call of the Cumberlands

By Charles Neville Buck

With Illustrations from Photographs of Scenes in the Play.

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SYNOPSIS.

On Misery creek Sally Miller finds George Lescott, a landscape painter, unconscious. Jesse Purdy of the Hollman clan has been shot and Samson is suspected of the crime. Samson denies it. The shooting breaks the truce in the Hollman-South feud. Lescott discovers artistic ability in Samson. Samson thrashes Tamara Spicer and denounces him as the "truce-buster" who shot Purdy. Samson tells the South clan that he is going to leave the mountains. Lescott goes home to New York. Samson bids good-bye to Sally and follows. In New York Samson studies art and learns much of city ways. Drennie Lescott persuades Wilfred Horton, her dilettante lover, to do a man's work in the world. Prompted by her love, Sally teaches herself to write. Horton throws himself into the business world and becomes well-to-do. At a Bohemian resort Samson meets William Farbish, a social parasite, and Horton's enemy. Farbish conspires with others to make Horton jealous, and Horton's enemy, Farbish brings Horton club shooting together, and forces an open rupture, expecting Samson to kill Horton and so rid the political and financial things of the crusader. Samson exposes the plot and thrashes the conspirators.

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

"George Lescott brought me up here and befriended me. Until a year ago I had never known any life except that of the Cumberland mountains. Until I met Miss Lescott, I had never known a woman of your world. She was good to me. She saw that in spite of my roughness and ignorance I wanted to learn, and she taught me. You chose to misunderstand, and disliked me. These men saw that, and believed that, if they could make you insult me, they could make me kill you. As to your part, they succeeded. I didn't see fit to oblige them, but now that I've settled with them, I'm willing to give you satisfaction. Do we fight now and shake hands afterward, or do we shake hands without fighting?"

Horton stood silently studying the mountaineer. "Good God!" he exclaimed at last. "And you are the man I undertook to criticize!" "You ain't answered my question," suggested Samson South. "South, if you are willing to shake hands with me I shall be grateful. I may as well admit that, if you had thrashed me before that crowd, you could hardly have succeeded in making me feel smaller. I have played into their hands. I have been a damned fool. I have riddled my own self-respect—and if you can afford to accept my apologies and my hand I am offering you both."

"I'm right glad to hear that," said the mountaineer boy, gravely. "I told you I'd just as lief shake hands as fight. . . . But just now I've got to go to the telephone." The booth was in the same room, and, as Horton waited, he recognized the number for which Samson was calling. Wilfred's face once more flushed with the old prejudice. Could it be that Samson meant to tell Adrienne Lescott what had transpired? Was he, after all, the braggart who boasted of his fights? And, if not, was it Samson's custom to call her up every evening for a good-night message? He turned and went into the hall, but, after a few minutes, returned.

"I'm glad you liked the show . . ." the mountaineer was saying. "No, nothing special is happening here—except that the ducks are plentiful. . . . Yes, I like it fine. . . . Mr. Horton's here. Wait a minute—I guess maybe he'd like to talk to you." The Kentuckian beckoned to Horton, and, as he surrendered the receiver, left the room. He was thinking with a smile of the unconscious humor with which the girl's voice had just come across the wire.

"I knew that if you two met each other you would become friends." "I reckon," said Samson, ruefully, when Horton joined him, "we'd better look around and see how bad those fellows are hurt in there. They may need a doctor." And the two went back to find several startled servants assisting to their beds the disabled combatants, and the next morning their inquiries elicited the information that the gentlemen were all "able to be about, but were breakfasting in their rooms."

Such as looked from their windows that morning saw an unexpected climax, when the car of Mr. Wilfred Horton drove away from the club carrying the man whom they had hoped to see killed and the man they had hoped to see kill him. The two appeared to be in excellent spirits and thoroughly congenial as the car rolled out of sight, and the gentlemen who were left behind decided that, in view of the circumstances, the "extraordinary spree" of last night had best go unadvertised into ancient history.

CHAPTER XII.

The second year of a new order brings fewer radical changes than the first. Samson's work began to forge out of the ranks of the ordinary and to show symptoms of a quality which would some day give it distinction.

Heretofore his instructors had held him rigidly to the limitations of black and white, but now they took off the bonds and permitted him the colorful delight of attempting to express himself from the palette. It was like permitting a natural poet to leave prose and play with prosody.

One day Adrienne looked up from a sheaf of his very creditable landscape studies to inquire suddenly: "Samson, are you a rich man or a poor one?"

He laughed. "So rich," he told her, "that unless I can turn some of this stuff into money within a year or two I shall have to go back to hoeing corn."

She nodded gravely. "Hasn't it occurred to you," she demanded, "that in a way you are wasting your gifts? They were talking about you the other evening—several painters. They all said that you should be doing portraits."

The Kentuckian smiled. His masters had been telling him the same thing. He had fallen in love with art through the appeal of the skies and hills. He had followed its call at the proselyting of George Lescott, who painted only landscape. Portraiture seemed a less artistic form of expression. He said so.

"That may all be very true," she conceded, "but you can go on with your landscapes and let your portraits pay the way. And," she added, "since I am very vain and moderately rich, I hereby commission you to paint me, just as soon as you learn how."

Farbish had simply dropped out. Bit by bit the truth of the conspiracy had leaked, and he knew that his usefulness was ended and that well-lined pocketbooks would no longer open to his profligate demands.

Sally had started to school. She had not announced that she meant to do so, but each day the people of Misery saw her old sorrel mare making its way to and from the general direction of Stagbone college, and they smiled. No one knew how Sally's cheeks flamed as she sat alone on Saturdays and Sundays on the rock at the back-bone's rift. She was taking her place, morbidly sensitive and a woman of eighteen, among little spindle-shanked girls in short skirts, and the little girls were more advanced than she. But she, too, meant to have "Latin," as much of it as was necessary to satisfy the lover who might never come. And yet, the "rotched-on" teachers at the "colleges" thought her the most voraciously ambitious pupil they had ever had, so unforgoingly did she toil, and the most remarkably acquisitive, so fast did she learn. But her studies had again been interrupted, and Miss Grover, her teacher, riding over one day to find out why her prize scholar had deserted, met in the road an empty "jolt wagon," followed by a ragged cortege of mounted men and women, whose faces were still lugubrious with the effort of recent mourning. Her question elicited the information that they were returning from the "burial" of the Widow Miller.

Towards the end of that year Samson undertook his portrait of Adrienne Lescott. The work was nearing completion, but it had been agreed that the girl herself was not to have a peep at the canvas until the painter was ready to unveil it in a finished condition. Often, as she posed, Wilfred Horton idled in the studio with them, and often George Lescott came to criticize, and left without criticizing. The girl was impatient for the day when she, too, was to see the picture, concerning which the three men maintained so profound a secrecy. She knew that Samson was a painter who analyzed with his brush, and that his picture would show her not only features and expression, but the man's estimate of herself.

"Do you know," he said one day, coming out from behind his easel and studying her, through half-closed eyes, "I never really began to know you until now? Analyzing you—studying you in this fashion, not by your words, but by your expression, your pose, the very unconscious essence of your personality—these things are illuminating."

"Although I am not painting you," she said with a smile, "I have been studying you, too. As you stand there before your canvas your own personality is revealed—and I have not been entirely unobservant myself."

"And under the X-ray scrutiny of this profound analysis," he said with a laugh, "do you like me?" "Wait and see," she retorted. "At all events"—he spoke gravely—"you must try to like me a little, because I am not what I was. The person that I am is largely the creature of your own fashioning. Of course you had very raw material to work with, and you can't make a silk purse of"—he broke off and smiled—"well, me, but in time you may at least get me mercerized a little."

For no visible reason she flushed, and her next question came a trifle eagerly: "Do you mean I have influenced you?"

"Influenced me, Drennie?" he repeated. "You have done more than that. You have painted me out and painted me over."

She shook her head, and in her eyes danced a light of subtle coquetry. "There are things I have tried to do, and failed," she told him. "His eyes showed surprise. "Perhaps," he apologized, "I am dense, and you may have to tell me bluntly what I am to do. But you know that you have only to tell me."

For a moment she said nothing, then shook her head again. "Issue your orders," he insisted. "I am waiting to obey."

She hesitated again, then said, slowly: "Have your hair cut. It's the one uncivilized thing about you."

For an instant Samson's face hardened. "No," he said; "I don't care to do that."

"Oh, very well!" she laughed lightly. "In that event, of course, you shouldn't do it." But her smile faded, and after a moment he explained: "You see, it wouldn't do."

"What do you mean?" "I mean that I've got to keep something as it was to remind me of a prior claim on my life."

For an instant the girl's face clouded and grew deeply troubled. "You don't mean," she asked, with an outburst of interest more vehement than she had meant to show, or realized she was showing—"you don't mean that you still adhere to ideas of the vendetta?" Then she broke off with a laugh, a rather nervous laugh. "Of course not," she answered herself. "That would be too absurd!"

"Would it?" asked Samson, simply. He glanced at his watch. "Two minutes up," he announced. "The model will please resume the pose. By the way, may I drive with you tomorrow afternoon?" The next afternoon Samson ran up the street steps of the Lescott house and rang the bell, and a few moments later Adrienne appeared. The car was waiting outside, and as the girl came down the stairs in motor coat and veil, she paused and her fingers on the banister tightened in surprise as she looked at the man who stood below holding his hat in his hand, with his face upturned. The well-shaped head was no longer marred by the mane which it had formerly worn, but was close cropped, and under the transforming influence of the change the forehead seemed bolder and higher, and to her thinking the strength of the purposeful features was enhanced, and yet, had she known it, the man felt that he had for the first time surrendered a point which meant an abandonment of something akin to principle.

She said nothing, but as she took his hand in greeting her fingers pressed his own in handclasp more lingering than usual. Late that evening, when Samson returned to the studio, he found a mislaid letter box, and, as he took it out, his eyes fell on the postmark. It was dated from Hixon, Kentucky, and, as the man slowly climbed the stairs, he turned the envelope over in his hand with a strange sense of misgiving and premonition.

The letter was written in the cramped hand of Brother Spencer. Through its faulty diction ran a plainly discernible undertone of disapproval for Samson, though there was no word of reproach or criticism. It was plain that it was sent as a matter of courtesy to one who, having proved an apostate, scarcely merited such consideration. It informed him that old Spicer South had been "mighty porely," but was now better, barring the breaking of age. Everyone was "tolerable." Then came the announcement which the letter had been written to convey.

The term of the South-Hollman truce had ended, and it had been renewed for an indefinite period. "Some of your folks thought they ought to let you know because they promised to give you a say," wrote the informant. "But they decided that it couldn't hardly make no difference to you, since you have left the mountains, and if you cared anything about it, you knew the time, and could of been here. Hoping this finds you well."

Samson's face clouded. He threw the soiled and scribbled missive down on the table and sat with unseeing eyes fixed on the studio wall. So, they had cast him out of their councils! They already thought of him as one who had been. In that passionate rush of feeling everything that had happened since he had left Misery seemed artificial and dreamlike. He longed for the realities that were forfeited. He wanted to press himself close to the great, gray shoulders of rock that broke through the greenery like giants tearing off soft raiment. Those were his people back there. He should be running with the wolf pack, not courting with eagles.

He had been telling himself that he was loyal and now he realized that he was drifting like the lotus eaters. He rose and paced the floor, with teeth and hands clenched and the sweat standing out on his forehead. His advisers had of late been urging him to go to Paris. He had refused, and his unconfessed reason had been that in Paris he could not answer a sudden call. He would go back to them now and compel them to admit his leadership.

Then his eyes fell on the unfinished portrait of Adrienne. The face gazed at him with its grave sweetness; its fragrant subtlety and its fine-grained delicacy. Her pictured lips were silently arguing for the life he had found among strangers, and her victory would have been an easy one, but for the fact that just now his conscience seemed to be, on the other side. Samson's civilization was two years old—a thin veneer over a century of feudalism—and now the century was thundering its call of blood bondage. But, as the man struggled over the dilemma, the pendulum swung back. The hundred years had left, also, a heritage of quickness and bitterness to resent injury and injus-

tice. His own people had cast him out. They had branded him as the deserter; they felt no need of him or his counsel. Very well, let them have it so. His problem had been settled for him. His Gordian knot was cut.

Sally and his uncle alone had his address. This letter, casting him out, must have been authorized by them, Brother Spencer acting merely as amanuensis. They, too, had repudiated him—and, if that was true, except for the graves of his parents, the hills had no tie to hold him.

"Sally, Sally!" he groaned, dropping his face on his crossed arms, while his shoulders heaved in an agony of heartbreak, and his words came in the old, crude syllables: "I loved you'd believe in me of hell froze!" He rose after that, and made a fierce gesture with his clenched fists. "All right," he said, bitterly, "I'm shot of the lot of ye. I'm done!"

But it was easier to say the words of repudiation than to cut the ties that were knotted about his heart. With a rankling soul, the mountaineer left New York. He wrote Sally a brief note, telling her that he was going to cross the ocean, but his hurt pride forbade his pleading for her confidence, or adding, "I love you." He plunged into the art life of the "other side of the Seine," and worked voraciously. He was trying to learn much—and to forget much.

One sunny afternoon when Samson had been in the Quartier Latin for eight or nine months the concierge of his lodgings handed him, as he passed through the door, an envelope addressed in the hand of Adrienne Lescott. As he read it he felt a glow of pleasurable surprise, and, wheeling, he retraced his steps briskly to his lodgings, where he began to pack. Adrienne had written that she and her mother and Wilfred Horton were sailing for Naples, and commanded him, unless he were too busy, to meet their steamer. Within two hours he was bound for Lucerne to cross the Italian frontier by the slate-blue waters of Lake Maggiore.

A few weeks later Samson and Adrienne were standing together by moonlight in the ruins of the Coliseum. The junketing about Italy had



His Eyes Fell on the Postmark.

been charming, and now in that circle of sepia softness and broken columns he looked at her and suddenly asked himself:

"Just what does she mean to you?" "If he had never asked himself that question before he knew now that it must some day be answered. Friendship had been a good and seemingly a sufficient definition. Now he was not so sure that it could remain so."

Then his thoughts went back to a cabin in the hills and a girl in calico. He heard a voice like the voice of a song bird saying through tears: "I couldn't live without ye, Samson. . . . I jest couldn't do hit!" For a moment he was sick of his life. It seemed that there stood before him, in that place of historic wreaths and memories, a girl, her eyes sad, but loyal, and without reproach.

"You look," said Adrienne, studying his countenance in the pallor of the moonlight, "as though you were seeing ghosts."

"I am," said Samson. "Let's go." Adrienne had not yet seen her portrait. Samson had needed a few hours of finishing when he left New York. Though it was work which could be done away from the model. So it was natural that when the party reached Paris Adrienne should soon insist on crossing the Pont d'Alexandre III to his studio near the "Boule Mich" for an inspection of her commissioned canvas.

For a while she wandered about the businesslike place, littered with the gear of the painter's craft. It was, in a way, a form of mind-reading, for Samson's brush was the tongue of his soul. The girl's eyes grew thoughtful as she saw that he still drew the leering, saturnine face of Jim Asberry. He had not outgrown hate, then? But she said nothing until he brought out, and set on an easel her own portrait. For a moment she gasped with sheer delight for the colorful mastery of the technique, and she would have been hard to please had she not been delighted with the conception of herself mirrored in the canvas. It was a face through which the soul showed, and the soul was strong and flawless. The girl's personality radiated from the canvas—and yet—A disappointed little look crossed and clouded her eyes. She was conscious of an indefinable catch of pain at her heart.

Samson stepped forward, and his waiting eyes, too, were disappointed. "You don't like it, Drennie?" he anxiously questioned. But she smiled in answer, and declared: "I love it." He went out a few minutes later to telephone for her to Mrs. Lescott, and

gave Adrienne carte blanche to browse among his portfolios and stacked canvases until his return. In a few minutes she discovered one of those efforts which she called his "rebellious pictures."

These were such things as he painted, using no model except memory perhaps, not for the making of finished pictures, but merely to give outlet to his feelings; an outlet which some men might have found in talk.

This particular canvas was roughly blocked in, and it was elementally simple, but each brush stroke had been thrown against the surface with the concentrated fire and energy of a blow, except the strokes that had painted the face, and there the brush had seemed to kiss the canvas. The picture showed a barefooted girl, standing in barbaric simplicity of dress, in the glare of the arena, while a gaunt lion crouched eyeing her. Her head was lifted as though she were listening to faraway music. In the eyes was indomitable courage. That canvas was at once a declaration of love, and a misereere. Adrienne set it up beside her own portrait, and as she studied the two with her chin resting on her gloved hand, her eyes cleared of questioning. Now she knew what she missed in her own more beautiful likeness. It had been painted with all the admiration of the mind. The other had been dashed off straight from the heart—and this other was Sally! She replaced the sketch where she had found it, and Samson returning found her busy with little sketches of the Seine.

"Drennie," pleaded Wilfred Horton, as the two leaned on the rail of the Mauretania, returning from Europe. "are you going to hold me off indefinitely? I've served my seven years for Rachel, and thrown in some extra time. Am I no nearer the goal?" The girl looked at the oily heave of the leaden and cheerless Atlantic, and its somber tones found reflection in her eyes. She shook her head.

"I wish I knew," she said, wearily. Then she added vehemently: "I'm not worth it, Wilfred. Let me go. Chuck me out of your life as a little pig who can't read his own heart; who is too utterly selfish to decide upon her own life."

"Is it"—he put the question with foreboding—"that, after all, I was a prophet? Have you—and South—wiped your feet on the doormat marked 'Platonic friendship'? Have you done that, Drennie?" She looked up into his eyes. Her own were wide and honest and very full of pain.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

AGE HAS ITS COMPENSATION

Philosophical View as Taken by This Man Seems to Have Much to Recommend It.

He was a lively old chap of past seventy at a lobster palace table with a glass of plain water for tippie. "Of course," he was saying to the younger men with him, "I am not as long for this world as you chaps are, if you live to be as old as I am, but I have a satisfaction in life that you haven't. I know, because when I was in my forties every time I had anything the matter with me I got scared."

"I was afraid that either it would kill me with only half my life lived or that it was some lingering disease that would make thirty or forty years of my life a burden. Nor was I alone in thinking that way. Every man of my age had the same feeling. I think that comes to most men when they are about thirty."

"Youth's carelessness lasts only a very short time and a man mighty soon begins to wonder what will happen to him next, or how long he will stay in good shape. When a man reaches my age he begins to be careless again. Most of what will happen has happened, and he is through with it, and what is to happen next doesn't make much difference because in the nature of things it can't last long whatever it is and the finality comes as a resting spell and a cessation from the worries of the flesh."

"I know some old men who don't take the same view of themselves that I do, and I am sorry for them, because a man owes it to himself, I think, to quit bothering about giving up when he knows he has to do it whether or no."

Pleasure in One's Work.

Pleasure in work produces a sympathetic, teachable mental attitude toward the task. It makes the attention involuntary, and causes the strain of attending. It stops the nervous leaks of worry. One of the secrets of lasting well is to avoid getting stale and tired and in a mental rut. Pleasure gives a sense of freedom that is a rest, as a wide road rests the driver. To know a thing thoroughly and attain mastery in it, one must be drawn back to it repeatedly by its attractions, and must find one's powers evoked and trained by its inspiration. —Prof. Edward D. Jones, in Engineering Magazine.

Primitive Chinese Still.

In the extraction of camphor the Chinese use a most primitive still, which at the same time proves of considerable more efficacy than might be expected. The leaves are placed in a wicker basket, which is fixed over an iron caldron containing water. On the top of the basket a basin of cold water is placed. The steam from the caldron passes through the leaves of the basket and carries over the camphor vapor, which is deposited in the form of camphor on the cool under surface of the basin.

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