

The Watchman and Southron.

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"Be Just and Fear not—Let all the Ends thou Aims't at, be thy Country's, thy God's and Truth's."

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THE BEATTY CLAN

By ALFRED R. CALHOUN.

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CHAPTER I.

The Beattys were quite a large family in the fall of 1861. Their home was and had been for three generations in Beatty's creek—"Beatty's crick," the people down there call it. This creek is an unmapped and not at all an affluent tributary of the Clinch river, rising in the heart of the Cumberland range, just south of the Kentucky line. As the creek is supposed to dry, but never does, the Beatty settlement is about 35 miles west of Cumberland Gap. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say "was about 35 miles," for when I saw the place a few years ago it was covered with a fine second growth of timber, and, except the rustling ironworks scattered about the site of the little grist mill, there is nothing to indicate that man ever lived there. A careful search up the creek from where the dam stood would show, however, that persons had died or been buried there, for, as my guide on the occasion of my last visit said:

"Yes, that's a right smart lot of graves in that bunch, and they wuz all kinder kin to each other."

But I am getting ahead of my story and marching it "left in front," like a military funeral procession.

All this region splendidly wooded, well watered, and the valleys that seam the irregular mountain spurs in an intricate maze are as fertile as the heart of the blue grass country to the north. It might have been a land of wine and honey and oil, with proper cultivation and a population that did not believe that pork, corn and whisky are the trinity that make life worth the living.

At the breaking out of the war there were 14 buildings, not counting corn-cribs and out-houses, at Beatty's. All these structures were log and much better built and more commodious than the majority of mountain abodes. Indeed they might be called "houses," for the smallest had more than the one room of the average mountain cabin. The oldest and by no means the best of these houses was the home of old Hugh Beatty, the patriarch of the hamlet and at this time a tall well preserved man of 73. Five of the houses were occupied by Hugh Beatty's five married sons, the oldest, "young Hugh," being 50 and Andy, the youngest, 23. These mountain folk marry early, and as there is no danger as yet of overcrowding, and they are blissfully ignorant of the Malthusian theory, large families are the rule. Three daughters—two of them were married to brothers named Mullins, and the third to a cousin of the Mullins named Martin—had three of the dwellings. The remaining three residences were occupied by two young Hugh's married daughters—the husbands were Martins—and by Sam Mullins and his wife. Sam was the oldest son of Mag, old Hugh's second child.

It may be noticed that there was quite a mixing of the Beattys, the Mullins and the Martins, but this is not unusual. The mountain people intermarry a great deal, and first cousins hardly count in reckoning consanguinity, though a fourth cousin, particularly if of the same name, is "counted kin" if it is necessary to espouse his quarrel for the sake of the family honor.

The thirteenth building was a little corn grist mill, the exclusive property of the old man. It was the only mill within a day's journey, Jellico being the nearest point at which corn could be ground when Beatty's dam broke down or the simple machinery got out of order. All the grist arrived on horse or mule back. There were two wagons at Beatty's, and young Hugh had a buggy which, on its first appearance, excited the mountains round about, and people came for miles to see it and then shook their heads, for the bravest felt that it would be "temptin' o' Providence to ride in such a slim, risky thing."

The fourteenth building, known as "the store," was the largest in the place and was "run" by young Hugh. Cheap prints, yarn, hats, tinware, tobacco and snuff, with nails, coffee and dried cod-fish, all wagoned from Knoxville, constituted the principal stock in trade of the store. Whisky, perhaps, should be given first place, but that was purely a domestic article, manufactured by Andy and his brother Dan in a stillhouse about half a mile down the stream—not to avoid the internal revenue officers, for there was none in those days, but to be free from the offensive odor of the piggins, the pork fed on the still "slops" being a prime source of income.

Old Hugh Beatty had been a soldier, and so something of a traveler in his time. In the war of 1812 he marched to Nashville with his rifle on his shoulder

and joined General Jackson's brigade, and then he marched to New Orleans and helped to win the battle and marched home again without ever drawing a cent of pay. It was this contact with the outer world that made him more ambitious than his neighbors. He cleared the land and planted an orchard and grew corn and oats and hay. He had a kitchen garden that was a source of wonder to his neighbors, none of whom could be tempted to "take sich truck into their innards." He raised cows and chickens and turkeys, and he carried a silver watch and could tell the time by it, and, still more amazing, old Hugh could read, and he taught his children the same mystery.

At uncertain times a circuit rider would drop down on the settlement, and then the store would be turned into a meeting house, particularly if it was the winter season, and messengers would be sent up to invite the neighbors for 10 miles round about to "come down to meetin'." These meetings often lasted for two weeks and were seasons of great physical excitement and spiritual refreshment. On such occasions old Hugh always professed religion and went up to the mourners' bench, and all his family and neighbors followed his example in this, as they did in his subsequent lapses from grace.

All this and much of what is to follow I learned from the lips of old Hugh himself.

Tinker Dave Beatty is a name well known to the surrounding officers and men of the Seventh and the Ninth Pennsylvania cavalry and of the First Kentucky and other mounted Union regiments that operated along the Cumberland plateau at different times in the course of the war. He was a Confederate guerrilla of the most vicious, cunning and bloodthirsty stamp and would have stretched a halter had he ever been captured. It is possible that this man was related to old Hugh Beatty, but the latter indignantly denied it.

Before the war Tinker Dave Beatty made a living by traveling on horseback through the mountains mending tinware, and he frequently took excursions into the slave lands to the south, where it is believed he contracted his secession notions. His life gave him a knowledge of the roads and trails that subsequently was of the greatest value to the Confederates, and an acquaintance with the mountaineers that resulted in the exile or annihilation of many a Union family.

Secession as a doctrine, practical or theoretic, was something old Hugh Beatty and his sons and kinsmen did not understand, but when they heard that the stars and stripes had been torn to shreds and trampled under foot, and that Tennessee had joined a new republic, and that many of her sons were existing to uphold it, they saw into the situation and its necessities at once.

Hitherto the mountaineers had taken but little interest in the affairs of their own state and none at all in the states beyond, but now they made journeys down to the postoffice towns and villages to learn the news and then went back to their cabins to discuss it.

"The rich slaveholders have grown tired of the old Union because they can no longer run it, and now they have set up a government of their own and brought on a fight. They say the mountain men must side with them for our lives and property and liberty, but we don't see it in that light."

This is how the men in the Cumberland range reasoned. Their hearts were with the Union. They could not give perhaps a logical reason for this inclination, but they stood ready to attest their devotion by the strongest evidence of sincerity—they would fight for the stars and stripes till the death.

The store at Beatty's, in October and November, 1861, was crowded day and night as if a revival were in progress as in truth there was, but there was neither psalm singing nor preaching nor praying, nor for the matter of that, much talking, but there was a great deal of earnest swearing and a great deal of quiet discussion as to the right thing to do in the very unusual circumstances that confronted them. There was a strong hope, if not a strong belief, that neither side would bother the Cumberland mountain men, but old Hugh Beatty, the man who had fought under and shaken hands with Andrew Jackson, and by virtue of this had become an authority that it would be folly for less favored men to dispute, held to it that no man able to fight could keep out of the trouble.

Scouts were sent down to the Holston, even as far south as Knoxville, and over to Powell's valley, and soon they began to return with the news that Andrew Johnson had fled north; that Parson Brownlow was in jail, and that Jeff Davis' soldiers were conscripting men in the Great Smoky range and would soon come into the Cumberland hills for the same purpose. When old Hugh heard this, he addressed the tall, butternut clad men in the store as follows:

"Boys, we uns is in fo' it. We uns hez got to be carried off like d—d niggers to fight fo' Jeff Davis or else show his doggone hounds our teeth and go in for the ole flag and the Union. Seein my chillen and growed gran'chillen 'bout me, I was jist 'bout gittin to think that mebbe I was comin right to be a ole man, more particklar as this fall I failed to chip a squirl for the first time in 60 years, but a man is a heap sight bigger'n a squirl, and, by the eternal, the man that forces me to be a rebel agin my will must be able to shoot quicker and straighter and off'er nor me."

"Me and my sons and my gran'sons and the gals' husbands hev got our rifles in good order, and the wimmin in a-moldin bullets and a-greasin patches. If any of you uns want ammunition

thar's bread baked and meat handy, fotch along a few days' lastin. Ef it'll take too much time, don't wait. We uns must be a right smart way to the north afore sun up."

In discussing the possibility of just this state of affairs with his family old Hugh Beatty had declared that every man and boy who could shoot a rifle must either volunteer to fight on the side of the Union or be forced to do so on the side of the rebellion. His sons agreed with him in this, but they urged that he should stay at home, not because he was feeble, for they did not believe that, but to watch over the women and the children. To this the old man replied:

"My grandfather and my father and all his brothers fought in the Revolution, and at one time—that was when they lived over on the Big Kanawha in Varginny—they didn't see their wimmin folks for nigh on three year. Yet things went on jest nigh 'bout ez good ez ef they'd staid home. Then, ef I was to stay back, I'd be took like Parson Brownlow and toted off to Nashville or Knoxville to rot in a jail. Why, boys, if they was to put me—me ez hev lived my life in these mountains—in such a place it'd kill me plum dead in a week. But I tell you uns ef so be hit ain't knowed to all that I can march with the youngest and tire him out, and while I can't thread the needle fo' the ole mother any more without usin them doggone specs I won't ax no odds fo' any man in all aist Tennessee whin hit comes to drivin a nail with a bullet. Besides all that I've been a sojer and you uns ain't, so I'll take the crowd up to Camp Dick Robinson in Kaintuck, whar the Union men is a-makin ready to give Governor Harris h—l."

There was no setting aside this argument. The old man was going, not as impedimenta, but as a leader, and his gray haired wife "loved hit would be best fo' the boys."

When it became known that all the men of the settlement would leave that night, the towheaded children and the gray eyed women ceased their wailing, and working with an awful earnestness for the living they forgot to sorrow for the dead. They made bread and cooked meat for husband and father and brother. They tied up the bullets and patches and rolled blankets to be slung at the shoulder, for the nights in the hills at that season were "pow'ful cold."

Before the death of Andy Beatty and his nephew, young Sam Mullins, there were 18 men in the settlement, including the old man, able to bear arms, though two of them, Dan Mullins and Burt Martin, were under 17. They had horses, but as there was snow on the ground and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get fodder in the mountains to the north, it was decided to make the trip on foot.

By 11 o'clock that night 21 men came in from the hills with their rifles at their backs and said they were ready. This made a force of 37 all told, and they felt strong enough to annihilate the regiment then in the mountains, but a bitter experience cured them of this confidence.

Although old Hugh knew little or nothing of military discipline—and indeed these mountaineers never took kindly to military restraint—he had a natural leader's appreciation of the necessity of obedience, and by way of having a reason for the authority he meant to exercise he proposed that two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, be elected. This was soon settled by the selection of himself for the first position and young Hugh for the second.

A great many of the women in the adjoining valleys had come with their husbands, brothers and sweethearts, and these, with the women and children from the Beatty settlement, made a crowd that filled the store. Old Mrs. Beatty replenished the bottles of all the women with snuff, and they manifested their suppressed nervousness by "dipping" a great deal.

When midnight came and the men were ready to move, old Hugh told them to uncover and kneel, and when they had done this each man, with a group of shrieking women and children about him, "the captain," as they called him, the greater Captain summoned him, raised his white bearded face to the black rafters and prayed as no revivalist had ever prayed before in that building, and the women sobbed, and with broken voices the men called out, "Praise God!" and "Amen!" Two scouts were sent ahead along the designated trail; then the men kissed their wives and little ones—an unusual thing, for these people are as undemonstrative as the Indians whom they superseded—and the march for Camp Dick Robinson, 150 miles across the tempest tossed Cumberland range to the north, began.

Neither then nor at any time during the terrible struggle on which they had so suddenly and so daringly entered did these men or any of the survivors believe that they were heroic or even doing anything that was particularly praiseworthy. Nor were they impressed with the notion that they were acting from a high sense of duty to God and themselves, as did their Covenanter ancestors when they went psalm singing to battle. They had simply made a choice in which the feelings only were consulted, and, come victory or defeat, come life or death, they were ready to accept the result—even the worst—without a murmur.

There were three bodies of men whom the captain cautioned his scouts that they must learn about and avoid. First, the troops that Tinker Dave Beatty was guiding; second, the men who were assembling at and fortifying Cumberland Gap, and, lastly, the large bodies of young Kentuckians who at this time were making their way south to join the Confederate army.

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From midnight till noon of the following day they kept on, with the long tireless, stride peculiar to these mountaineers, stopping at daylight for a few minutes to heap some stones on the shallow graves of Andy Beatty and Sam Mullins and drawing some comfort from the fact that on the other side of the spring there was a cluster of six graves, with the names of the dead penciled on pieces of bark at the head.

The men were halted and had just finished eating when the two scouts—one of them was Dan Beatty, the old captain's son—returned and reported the hills "bout a half hour's run to the north" covered with men in gray. The younger men, burning to avenge their dead, were for keeping right on, confident that they could sweep any number of rebels from their path, but the old captain shook his head and gave the order to leave the trail and make for the trackless and more inaccessible mountain heights.

It had been snowing since daylight, a fact that made against them, but they hoped that they would have passed beyond the line of the enemy before their tracks were discovered. With a view to throwing the Confederates off the trail, the old captain divided his force into two parties, the younger men, under young Hugh, to make a detour of Oak Mountain, while he, with the others, kept along the western side, both parties to meet at the Point of Rocks, due north of the mountain, about dusk that night. This plan appeared to work admirably, and the men, now pretty well exhausted, were about to make a camp for the night, when one of the pickets came running in, shouting at the top of his voice:

"They are comin, boys! Comin fo' om every p'int!"

CHAPTER II.

The news brought in by the scouts did not demoralize Captain Hugh Beatty or his men. They did not expect to get out of Tennessee without a fight, and if it had to come there could be no better time nor place. A great fire had been lighted near the spring, but it would be fatal to remain about the light with the enemy in the outer circle of darkness. Calling to the men to follow him, old Hugh made for a pile of rocks that crowned, like a ruined castle, the crest of a hill a hundred yards north of the place selected for a camp.

They reached these rocks in time to head off the Confederates, who, seeing the advantage of the position, made a dash to seize and hold it.

"Shoot at every movin thing and make sure to hit it."

This was the old captain's advice to his men, and acting on it they poured a murderous fire into the soldiers in gray, who were not a hundred feet from the rocks when the Union men seized them.

"After shootin, the next thing is to load ez quick as God will let you."

This was another of old Hugh's standing commands, and with the allusion to Deity left out it might take a prominent place in tactics designed to meet the necessities of irregular troops.

Oaths, shouts of anger and cries of agony told that the fire of the Union men had been effective, and the captain reasoned that the enemy would not attack again before daylight. He knew that country, to use his own language, "Ez well ez ef I'd dug out the valleys and piled up the hills." He realized that, while the rocks were a good place for temporary defense, they might be turned into a trap if he remained there till the enemy could collect all his force and surround the place.

"We uns must git out o' heah afore sun up, and so's to keep from shootin each other in the dark, we uns must keep a-holerin 'The Union! the Union! d—n you!'" The men understood this. They made a supper of the cooked bacon and corn bread they had brought with them; then in a circle of 100 yards about the rocks several of the force acted as pickets, while the others, under the captain's orders, slept as best they could.

"Two o'clock by my watch." This was the time set for starting, the hour in the morning which Napoleon believed most severely tested the courage. The old captain knew this quite so well as did Napoleon, and he also knew that the advantage, numbers apart, was always with the party attacking in the darkness. The best course from the rocks was due north in the direction of the Kentucky line, and the old man reasoned, and rightly, too, that the Confederates would place their largest forces in that direction.

At 2 o'clock, and after all the men, himself excepted, had had about four hours' sleep, he gave the order to move "to the south still as death and shoot down everything in front." In addition to his rifle every man had a knife in his belt and one or two revolvers strapped over his hips, and the youngest of the old man's grandsons could shoot as well as himself, and that meant a phenomenal expertness in the use of firearms.

There are times when prisoners cannot be taken—when to accept a surrender would mean ruin—and this was one of the occasions. The Union men, silent as the night shadows about them, came upon the drowsy pickets of the enemy and shot them down, then shouting, "The Union! the Union! d—n you!" Captain Beatty and his kinsmen

and neighbors dashed into a camp in which there was a force twice as strong as their own. They fired, and the demoralized enemy, after a wild fusillade, broke and ran, while Beatty's men reloaded and then dashed back to the Point of Rocks. The other Confederates ran in the direction of the firing, leaving the road to the north open.

One of Captain Beatty's men, a neighbor named Campbell, was killed, and young Hugh, the lieutenant, had a bullet in his right breast. The brave fellow, with the blood frothing from his mouth and nose, kept on till daylight; then he fell on the trail and begged his friends to go on and save themselves. The old man's first born was stricken down, and his youngest born was already dead, yet he still retained his courage and calmness, still kept to himself the terrible agony at his heart, still was resolved to do his duty by the living and to his country till he was called himself.

Making a stretcher of a blanket and two poles, young Hugh was laid on it, and men were detailed to carry it. This interfered with their progress, but though they knew that the lieutenant could not live for many days, or even hours, they bravely determined to stand by him till the last and to die by him if need be.

The enemy followed close behind. The Kentucky line at daylight was only 20 miles away, and Captain Beatty hoped that the Confederates would not follow into that territory. About the middle of the afternoon they were in Kentucky, but to their surprise they found the men in gray ahead of them. Here death came in mercy to young Hugh, and at the base of a rock directly on the border, his kinsmen and neighbors hollowed a grave with their knives, wrapped him up in his blanket and laid him to rest, "till sich times as the good Lord will let the livin tote him back to Beatty's crick," said the old man as he arose from his knees beside the grave.

"Hit was like drivin a knife into my heart to leave Hugh thar," said the old man, with a suppressed sob, as he told me this part of his story. "He was a son, and a brother, and a friend, all rolled into one. He was 50 when he died, but he allus called me 'dad,' and he was never sot on doin a thing that I opposed. He never gin me a cross word nor a angry look. He was allus my boy, even whin the great Master sent om boys of his own. Hugh wasn't so d—d pious ez some folks, but he had a clean soul, and I reckon thar wasn't a stain on it ez his blood shed for the old fag wouldn't wash clean ez rain and pure ez the snow on the hilltops. The angels guardin the gates of heaven will be kep' right busy a-lettin souls in and a-barrin souls out durin this wab, but whin they see my Hugh they didn't chin fo' long, but jest swung the doah wide open and said: 'Enter, ole feller. This is the place built since the foundation of the world and glorified by the blood of Jesus Christ, jest fo' men o' yo'r blood.'" Captain Beatty had heard of Kentucky's "neutrality," to him a very vague word, but he had an idea that it meant that armed men from Tennessee could not or would not enter that state. He knew nothing of the doings of Zolliecoffer and Albert Sidney Johnston, nor did he try to reason out why General Thomas of the Union army should have established a camp over near Danville, which had then continued to be for more than a year the rendezvous of the mountain Union men of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Leaving their own state did not bring rest or safety to the men from Beatty's creek, and they soon saw that the men who wanted to break up the Union under the plea of state rights had no respect for state lines. They entered Kentucky at the southeast corner of Wayne county, and here they were joined by little parties of refugees who increased the force to about 50 men. The newcomers were Unionists and all mountaineers, and Camp Dick Robinson was their objective point. These men knew or had heard of old Hugh Beatty, and one and all were ready to take service under him.

"We uns ain't huntin no fight yet, boys. Ef so be the d—d rebels will keep out of our way and let us go up to Camp Dick Robinson, thar won't be no shootin to hurt, but if so be they wants to stop us then we uns'll give 'em the best we has."

This was Captain Beatty's advice to the new men, and they agreed with him, as they were ready to do if he had proposed to hunt up the enemy and fight him. But there was no need to hunt for the enemy. He was all about them, and from the time Captain Beatty's men crossed the line till they reached the Cumberland river, on the 1st day of January, 1862, there was not an hour when they were not fighting or within sight of the Confederates.

When Captain Beatty started out, he believed that he could reach Camp Dick Robinson, 150 miles to the north, within a week, and his party carried enough provisions to last for that time, but he was forced to change his course so many times and to double back on his trail so often that they had made only 100 miles after three weeks, and out of the original 37 nearly one-half had been killed in the frequent skirmishes. Many of the others were so severely wounded that they had to be helped or carried, and all



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