

The Battle-Cry

By CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK
The Call of the Conqueror
Illustrated by C. D. Rhoads

As the scant welcome of his greeting young Milt McBriar stiffened a little, head to foot, though he had not anticipated any great degree of cordiality.

He climbed the stile and walked across the moonlit patch of trampled hay to where the girl stood leaning, with a look of fright, against the lighted frame of the door.

"Job," he said slowly to the boy, who had stepped down into the yard, "how are ye?" Then, turning to Dawn, with his hat in his hand, he greeted her gravely.

But the son of the murdered man stood still and rigid and repeated in a hard voice: "What their hell does ye want hyar?"

"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.

Job had never gone armed before that night when Fitch fell. Now he was never unarmed.

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

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

"Don't fret, Dawn; Dhr hain't nothin' ter worry about," he said; then, facing the brother, he went on in a voice of cold and almost scornful composure:

"That hain't the first time ye've seed me greet the sights of a gun, is it, Job?"

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

"I heard about how old Bob McBriar told ye a parcel of lies about me, an' how ye come across their ridge one day. I reckon I kin guess the rest."

"What about it?" Job stood with his hand on his hip, his eyes still glowing the fire of anger.

"That this," young McBriar went on: "I ain't got no gun on me. I ain't even got a jackknife. I loved that ye thought he right smart incooned at my comin' hyar an' I come without no weapon on purpose. Ef ye hain't showed of me when I'm unarmed, I reckon ye kin put your own gun back in their holster."

Job McBriar slowly followed the explanation, and then coming forward with 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 'bout as much skeered of me as I am of you—an' that ain't none."

"What does ye want hyar?" persisted Job.

"I wants first to tell ye—an' I hain't never lied ter no feller yit—that I don't know nothin' more about who kill Fitch 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 Job's heart—a skepticism which had refused to believe that honor or truth dwelt east of the ridge.

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

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

"That calls for a fight, Job," he said with forced calm. "I can't harken ter things like that. But first, I wants ter say this: I come over hyar ter tell ye that I knowed how ye felt, an' that I didn't see no reason why you 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 wants ter see her—an' 'lows ter do hit. Now will ye lay aside yore gun an' go out thar in their road whar hit hain't on yore own ground, an' let me tell ye that 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 firelit cabin and threw herself face downward on her feather bed, they silently crossed the stile into the road and Milt turned to repeat: "Job, that war a lie ye spoke, an' I wants 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 Job who rose and held out his hand.

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

Together they rose and recrossed the stile and washed their grimed faces. Dawn looked from one to the other, and Job said: "Milt, set yore-self a cheer. I reckon ye'd better stay all night. It's most too fur 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.

Job 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 that winter closed in his heart was bitter and his thoughts were black. In a roundabout way he had learned of Young Milt's visit to the McNash cabin. His son was the apple of his eye, and now he was seeing him form embryonic 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 partisan paths. The violetness 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 Anse Havey was responsible. 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 'larnin'."

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 not only parents who brought their children, but those who came impelled by that curiosity which lurks in lonely lives. There were men in jeans and hickory shirts; women in gay shawls and linsay-woolsey and calico; people from "back of beyond," and Juanita felt her heart beat faster with the hope of success.

"I hear ye've got a right plentiful gatharin' of young barbarians over thar at the college these days," said



His Pipe Clamped Between His Teeth, His Heart Festering in His Breast.

Anse Havey one afternoon, when they met up on the ridge.

Her chin came up proudly and her eyes sparkled.

"It has been wonderful," she told him. "Only one thing has marred it. 'What's that?' he asked.

"Your sloofness. Just because I'm going to smash your wicked regime," she laughed, "is no reason why you should remain peeved about it and sulk in your tent."

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 there 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 most 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 uncoiled 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 man would be ashamed of you, Mr. Havey," but, recognizing that her voice had been overserious, 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. "That 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 won't fall in love with me. 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—comradship only in dreams. You have lived down thar 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.

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 answered 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! That'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 overmoody, come over here and we'll try to cheer each other up."

"I reckon," he 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."

CHAPTER XIX.

Once, when Anse Havey had been tramping all afternoon through the wintry woods with Juanita, he had pointed out a squirrel that sat erect on a branch high above them with its tail curled up behind it. He had stopped her with a touch on the arm; then, with a smile of amusement, he handed her his rifle with much the same manner that she might have handed him a novel in Russian, and his eyes said banteringly: "See what you can do with that."

But to his surprise she took the gun and leveled it as one accustomed to its use. Bad Anse Havey forgot the squirrel and saw only the slim figure in its loose sweater; only the stray wisps of curling hair and the softness of the cheek that snuggled against the rifle-stock. Then, at the report, the squirrel dropped.

She turned with a matter-of-fact nod and handed back the gun.

"I'm rather sorry I killed it," she said, but you looked so full of scorn that I had to show you. You know, they do have a few rifles outside the Cumberland mountains."

"Where did you learn to shoot?" he demanded, and she answered casually: "I used to shoot a rifle and pistol, too, quite a good bit."

He took the gun back, and unconsciously his hand caressed the spot where her cheek had laid against its lock. He had fallen into a reverie out of which her voice called him. They had crossed the ridge itself and were overlooking his place.

"Why are they clearing that space behind your house? Are you going to put it in corn?"

"No," he laughed shortly. "Corn would be just about as bad as laurel."

He was instantly sorry he had said that. He had not meant to tell her of the plans he was making—plans of defense and, if need be, of offense. He had not intended to mention his precautions to prevent assassination at his own door or window.

But the girl understood, and her voice was heavy with anxiety as she demanded: "Do you think you're in danger, Anse?"

"There's never a day I'm not in danger," he replied casually. "I've got pretty well used to it."

"But some day," she broke out, "they'll get you."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe," he said.

As Juanita's influence grew with Bad Anse Havey, so it was growing at the school. She had to turn away pupils who had come across the mountains on wearisome journeys because as yet she had only limited room and no teachers save herself and Dawn to care for the youngest.

At the front of the hall which led into the main school building was a rack with notches for rifles and pegs for pistols. She told all who entered that she made only one stipulation, and that was that whoever crossed the threshold must leave his armament at the door.

At first some men turned away again, taking their children with them, but as time went on they grudgingly acquiesced, and at last, with a sense of great victory, she persuaded three shaggy fathers, who were coming regularly with their children, to ride back home unarmed.

Disarmament was her idea for the great solution, and when Bad Anse came over—and he came every night now—she led him with almost

sturring of enthusiasm the flushed face and glowing eye with which she spoke. It was all worth while if it could bring that sparkle of delight to her countenance.

"It's right pretty, but it won't hardly work," he said. "These men will leave them guns just so long as they don't need 'em. I'm glad to see ye pleased—but I don't want to see ye disappointed."

A little before Christmas old Milt McBriar went to Lexington, and there he met a heavily bearded man in rough clothes who had arrived that morning from the West. They conferred in a cheap eating house which bears a ragged and unwholesome appearance and is kept by an exile from the mountains.

"Now tell me, Milt," suggested Luke Thixton briefly, "what air this thing ye wants me ter do. I'm done with these hyar old flat lands that they talks so much about."

But Milt McBriar's eyes had been vacantly watching the door. It was a glass door, with its lower portion painted red and bearing in black letters the name of the proprietor.

"Damn!" he exclaimed violently, but under his breath.

"What's bittin' ye?" asked his companion, as he bolted his food.

"I jest seed Brock Havey pass by that door," explained the chief. "But I reckon he couldn't hardly recognize you this fur back. I don't want no word of yore comin' ter go ahead of ye."

"What is it I'm a-goin' back ter do?" insisted the exile doggedly.

"Oh," commented Milt McBriar, "we've got ter talk that over at some length. Ye're a-goin' back ter git Anse Havey, but ye hain't a-goin' 'list yit."

One morning as he sat over his breakfast at the kitchen table, Anse's cousin, Brock Havey, rode up in hot



There is Just One Place Here Where the Spiders Are Welcome.

haste to rouse him out of apathy and remind him that he must not shirk his role as leader of the clan.

The Havey from Peril came quickly to the point while the Havey of the backwoods listened.

"I was down ter Lexington yesterday, an' as I was passin' Jim Freeman's deadfall I happened ter lock in. Thar war old Milt McBriar an' Luke Thixton, thar heads as close together as a pair of thieves. Luke hes come back from the West, an' I reckon ye kin finger out what that means."

Anse grew suddenly rigid and his face blackened. So his destiny was crowding him!

"What air ye goin' ter do?" demanded Brock with a tone of anxious and impotent pleading. Anse shook his head.

"I don't know—quite yet," he said. "Let's see, is the high cote in session?"

Breck Havey nodded his head in perplexed assent. He wondered what the court had to do with this exigency.

"All right. Tell Sidering to have the grand jury indict Luke for the McNash murder an' Milt McBriar as accessory—"

"Good God, Anse!" burst out the other Havey. "Does ye realize what hell ye turns loose when ye tries ter drag Old Milt ter cote in Peril?"

"Yes, I know that." The answer was calm. "I'll give ye a list of witnesses. Tell Sidering to keep these true bills secret. I'll ride over and testify myself, an' I'll tend to keepin' the witnesses quiet. I don't know whether we'll ever try these cases, but it's just as well to be ready along every line."

Breck Havey stood gazing down at the hearth with a troubled face. At last he hazarded a remonstrance.

"Anse," he said, "I hain't never questioned ye. I've always took yore counsel. Ye're the head of the Haveys, but next to you I'm the man they harkens to most. If any man has got ter dispute yer, I reckon ye'd take it most willin'ly from me."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NEW KIND OF COTTON.

Discovered Through Chance in Georgia, is of Fine Texture and Closely Resembles Wool.

Augusta Chronicle.

By what appears to have been the merest chance in the world, a new kind of cotton has been discovered and developed in Georgia, in which the government has interested itself.

A couple of years ago a man by the name of A. G. Spiller, Pike county, farming near Barnesville, received a shipment of goods from Europe and in the packing were several seeds having much the appearance of cotton seed. Out of curiosity he planted them and from the first planting grew what was a peculiar stalk of cotton. It was carefully cared for and the seed were planted the past season. Out of the second planting other stalks were grown and from them was gathered about 25 pounds of lint cotton. It is of a very fine texture resembling closely wool. The staple has been exhibited to a number of people, among them agricultural experts, and has attracted a great deal of attention. From a number of sources where the cotton had been heard of, or by those who have seen it, Mr. Spiller was offered a dollar each for the seed, but he declined to sell.

The matter was brought to the attention of the agricultural department in Washington, and announcement is now made that experts are to be sent to Pike county to make a survey of the soil and an examination of the product and conditions under which it was produced. In order to make further experiments it is said the federal department will, if it finds it necessary, to trace the origin of the seed, secure a lot of them and find out what can be done with the new cotton in this section.

GROWING PIGEONS FOR MARKET

Climate of South Carolina Fine for Producing Squabs, Says Clemson Poultryman.

Clemson College, Dec. 30.—The climate of South Carolina is ideal for growing pigeons, according to the poultry husbandman of Clemson College. The winters of this section are not too cold, nor are the summers too hot for the production of squabs on a commercial scale. It is only in the molting period that the number of eggs and young pigeons will be decreased.

No special pigeon house is necessary in this State. An open-front chicken house, 10 feet long and 8 feet wide, and with a height of 7 feet in front and 5 feet in back, will accommodate 30 pairs of pigeons. The house should face south and should have the east, north, and west sides boarded tightly, as described in Farmers' Reading Course Bulletin 16, of Clemson College.

To complete the plant, erect in front of the house a frame 16 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 6 feet 6 inches high, using 2x2-inch posts and 1x3-inch boards. Cover the frame with 1-inch mesh wire netting. This "fly" gives the pigeons the necessary exercise and the small wire keeps out sparrows.

Good varieties are White King, White Homers, White Swiss Mondaines, and Red, Yellow, or Splashed Carneau. White pigeons are preferred because they can be sold alive at good prices when a surplus of stock arises. For some time the demand for good breeding stock will take care of the supply and the squabs can also be killed, chilled, packed in ice, and sold in Atlanta and other markets.

A mixed feed consisting of equal parts of peas, cracked corn (free from mold), sorghum or cane seed, and wheat produces excellent results. Small or broken peanuts may be substituted for peas. The important thing to remember is to make one-fourth of the mixture either peas or peanuts. These foods take the place of cottonseed meal in an egg mash. They supply protein and without one of them very few eggs and young pigeons will be produced. Feed the grain in a hopper or liberally twice daily. Hopper feeding is best.

Keep in the flying pen at all times a supply of grit, small oyster shells, rock salt, and water. Pigeons enjoy and require a bath twice weekly. A dishpan half filled with water is all that is needed.

For further information, write to the Extension Division of Clemson College for a bulletin on squab raising.

Indeed!

Mistress: "What did the lawyer say to you Bridget?"

Bridget: "Shure, the old haythen, he axed me did Oi know there was brass enough in me face to make a good sized kettle, an' Oi told him there was sauce enough in his tongue to fill it."—American Magazine.

The next meeting of the Bible Class Federation of the City of Sumter will be held at the First Baptist Church on the afternoon of the first Sunday in February, the 6th, at 4 o'clock. Prof. S. H. Edmunds will make the address.

90 Bales on 6-Horse Farm.

About 90 bales of cotton from a six horse farm will be the record made on the Watts place north of the city this year. This particular record is made on that part of the place cultivated by T. I. Swygert and Bill Fisher with R. M. Mills as overseer. Mr. Mills stated Saturday that he had already ginned 87 bales and expected to gin several more, bringing the total up to about 90 bales.—Laurens Advertiser.