

# 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 Purvy 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 Tamarack Spicer and denounces him as the "truce-buster" who shot Purvy. Samson tells the South clan that he is going to leave the mountains. Lescott goes home to New York. Samson bids Spicer and Sally farewell and follows. In New York Samson studies art and learns much of city ways. Drennie Lescott persuades Wilfred Horton, her distant 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, sporty social parasite, and Horton's enemy. Farbish conspires with others to make Horton jealous, and succeeds. Farbish brings Horton and Samson together at the Kegmore club's shooting lodge, and forces an open rupture, expecting Samson to kill Horton and so rid the political and financial thugs of the crusader. Samson exposes the plot and thrashes the conspirators. Samson is advised by his teachers to turn to portrait painting. Drennie commissions him to paint her portrait. Sally goes to school. Samson goes to Paris to study.

## CHAPTER XII—Continued.

"No," she said, "we haven't done that yet. I guess we won't. . . . I think he'd rather stay outside, Wilfred. If I was sure I loved him, and that he loved me, I'd feel like a cheat—there is the other girl to think of. . . . And, besides, I'm not sure what I want myself. . . . But I'm horribly afraid I'm going to end by losing you both."

Horton stood silent. It was tea time, and from below came the strains of the ship's orchestra. A few ulster-muffled passengers gloomily paced the deck.

"You won't lose us both, Drennie," he said, steadily. "You may lose your choice—but, if you find yourself able to fall back on substitutes, I'll be there, waiting."

For once he did not meet her scrutiny, or know of it. His own eyes were fixed on the slow swing of heavy, gray-green waters. He was smiling, but it is as a man smiles when he confronts despair and pretends that everything is quite all right. The girl looked at him with a choke in her throat.

"Wilfred," she said, laying her hand on his arm, "I'm not worth worrying over. Really, I'm not. If Samson South proposed to me today, I know that I should refuse him. I am not at all sure that I am the least little bit in love with him. Only, don't you see I can't be quite sure I'm not? It would be horrible if we all made a mistake. May I have till Christmas to make up my mind for all time? I'll tell you then, dear, if you care to wait."

## CHAPTER XIII.

Tamarack Spicer sat on the top of a box car, swinging his legs over the side. He was clad in overalls, and in the pockets of his breeches reposed a bulging flask of red liquor, and an unbulging pay envelope. Tamarack had been "railroading" for several months this time. He had made a new record for sustained effort and industry, but now June was beckoning him to the mountains with vagabond yearnings for freedom and leisure. Many things had invited his soul. Almost four years had passed since Samson had left the mountains, and in four years a woman can change her mind. Sally might, when they met on the road, greet him once more as kinsman and agree to forget his faulty method of courtship. This time he would be more diplomatic. Yesterday he had gone to the boss and "called for his time." Today he was paid off, and a free lance.

As he reflected on these matters a fellow-trainman came along the top of the car and sat down at Tamarack's side. This brakeman had also been recruited from the mountains, though from another section—over toward the Virginia line.

"So yer quittin'?" observed the newcomer.

Spicer nodded.

"Goin' back thar on Misery?"

Again Tamarack answered with a jerk of his head.

"I've been layin' off ter tell ye somethin', Tam'rack."

"Cut her loose."

"I laid over in Hixon last week, an' some fellers that used ter know my mother's folks took me down in the cellar of Hollman's store, an' give me some hicker."

"What of hit?"

"They was talkin' 'bout you."

"What did they say?"

"I seen that they was enemies of yours, an' they wasn't in no good humor, so, when they axed me if I knowed ye, I 'lowed I didn't know nothin' good about ye. I had ter cuss ye out, or git in trouble myself."

Tamarack cursed the whole Hollman tribe, and his companion went on:

"Jim Asberry was thar. He 'lowed they'd found out that you'd done shot

Purvy that time, an' he said"—the brakeman paused to add emphasis to his conclusion—"that the next time ye come home, he 'lowed ter git ye plumb shore."

Tamarack scowled.

"Much obleeged," he replied.

At Hixon Tamarack Spicer strolled along the street toward the courthouse. He wished to be seen. So long as it was broad daylight and he displayed no hostility, he knew he was safe—and he had plans.

Standing before the Hollman store were Jim Asberry and several companions. They greeted Tamarack affably and he paused to talk.

"Ridin' over ter Misery?" inquired Asberry.

"'Lowed I mout as well."

"Mind ef I rides with ye es fur es Jesse's place?"

"Plumb glad ter have company," drawled Tamarack.

They chatted of many things, and traveled slowly, but, when they came to those narrows where they could not ride stirrup to stirrup each jockeyed for the rear position. And the man who found himself forced into the lead turned in his saddle and talked back over his shoulder, with wary, though seemingly careless, eyes. Each knew the other was bent on his murder.

At Purvy's gate Asberry waved farewell and turned in. Tamarack rode on, but shortly he hitched his horse in the concealment of a hollow, walled with huge rocks, and disappeared into the laurel.

He began climbing, in a crouched position, bringing each foot down noiselessly and pausing often to listen. Jim Asberry had not been outwardly armed when he left Spicer. But, soon, the brakeman's delicately attuned ears caught a sound that made him lie flat in the lee of a great log, where he was masked in clumps of flowering rhododendron. Presently Asberry passed him, also walking cautiously, but hurriedly, and cradling a Winchester rifle in the hollow of his arm. Then Tamarack knew that Asberry was taking this cut to head him off and waylay him in the gorge a mile away by road but a short distance only over the hill.

Spicer held his heavy revolver cocked in his hand, but it was too near the Purvy house to risk a shot. He waited a moment, and then, rising, went on noiselessly with a snarling grin, stalking the man who was stalking him.

Asberry found a place at the foot of a huge pine where the undergrowth would cloak him. Twenty yards below ran the creek-bed road, returning from its long horseshoe deviation. When he had taken his position his faded butternut clothing matched the earth as inconspicuously as a quail matches dead leaves, and he settled himself to wait. Slowly and with infinite caution his intended victim stole down, guarding each step, until he was in short and certain range, but, instead of being at the front, he came from the back. He, also, lay flat on his stomach and raised the already cocked pistol. He steadied it in a two-handed grip against a tree trunk and trained it with deliberate care on a point to the left of the other man's spine just below the shoulder blades.

Then he pulled the trigger! He did not go down to inspect his work. It was not necessary. The instantaneous fashion with which the head of the ambuscader settled forward on its face told him all he wanted to know. He slipped back to his horse, mounted and rode fast to the house of Spicer South, demanding asylum.

The next day came word that if Tamarack Spicer would surrender and stand trial in a court dominated by the Hollmans the truce would continue. Otherwise the "war was on."

The Souths flung back this message: "Come and git him."

But Hollman and Purvy, hypocritically clamoring for the sanctity of the law, made no effort to come and "git him." They knew that Spicer South's house was now a fortress, prepared for siege. They knew that every trail thither was picketed. Also, they knew a better way. This time they had the color of the law on their side. The circuit judge, through the sheriff, asked for troops and troops came. Their tents dotted the river bank below the Hixon bridge. A detail under a white flag went out after Tamarack Spicer. The militia captain in command, who feared neither feudist nor death, was courteously received. He had brains, and he assured them that he acted under orders which could not be disobeyed. Unless they surrendered the prisoner, gatling guns would follow. If necessary they would be dragged behind ox teams. Many militiamen might be killed, but for each of them the state had another. If Spicer would surrender, the officer would guarantee him personal protection, and, if it seemed necessary, a change of venue would secure him trial in another circuit. For the soldiers they felt no enmity. For the young captain they felt an instinctive liking. He was a man.

Old Spicer South, restored to an echo of his former robustness by the call of action, gave the clan's verdict.

"Hit hain't the co'te we're skeered of. Ef this boy goes ter town he won't never git into no co'te. He'll be murdered."

The officer held out his hand. "As man to man," he said, "I pledge you my word that no one shall take him except by process of law. I'm not working for the Hollmans or the Purvys. I know their breed."

For a space old South looked into the soldier's eyes and the soldier looked back.

"I'll take yore handshake on that bargain," said the mountaineer, gravely. "Tam'rack," he added, in a voice of finality, "ye've got ter go."

The officer had meant what he said. He marched his prisoner into Hixon at the center of a hollow square, with muskets at the ready. And yet, as the boy passed into the courthouse yard, with a soldier rubbing elbows on each side, a cleanly aimed shot sounded from somewhere. The smokeless powder told no tale, and with blue shirts and army hats circling him, Tamarack fell and died.

That afternoon one of Hollman's henchmen was found lying in the road with his lifeless face in the water of the creek. The next day, as old Spicer South stood at the door of his cabin, a rifle barked from the hillside, and he fell, shot through the left shoulder by a bullet intended for his heart. All this while the troops were helplessly camped at Hixon. They had power and inclination to go out and get men, but there was no man to get.

The Hollmans had no man to get. As far as they knew, Spicer South was as good as dead. A fire broke out in the store. A strong wind blew from the west. A door opened. A man stepped out. He was dead.



"Tam'rack," she said, "I'm not worth worrying over. Really, I'm not. If Samson South proposed to me today, I know that I should refuse him. I am not at all sure that I am the least little bit in love with him. Only, don't you see I can't be quite sure I'm not? It would be horrible if we all made a mistake. May I have till Christmas to make up my mind for all time? I'll tell you then, dear, if you care to wait."

Old Spicer South would ten years ago have put a bandage on his wound and gone about his business, but now he tossed under his patchwork quilt, and Brother Spicer expressed grave doubts for his recovery. With his counsel unavailable Wile McCager, by common consent, assumed something like the powers of a regent and took upon himself the duties to which Samson should have succeeded.

That a Hollman should have been able to elude the pickets and penetrate the heart of South territory to Spicer South's cabin was both astounding and alarming. The war was on without question now, and there must be council. Wile McCager had sent out a summons for the family heads to meet that afternoon at his mill. It was Saturday—"mill day"—and in accordance with ancient custom the lanes would be more traveled than usual.

Those men who came by the wagon road afforded no unusual spectacle, for behind each saddle sagged a sack of grain. Their faces bore no stamp of unwonted excitement, but every man balanced a rifle across his pommel. None the less, their purpose was grim, and their talk when they had gathered was to the point.

Old McCager, himself sorely perplexed, voiced the sentiment that the others had been too courteous to express. With Spicer South bedridden and Samson a renegade, they had no adequate leader. McCager was a solid man of intrepid courage and honesty, but grinding grit was his vocation, not strategy and tactics. The enemy had such masters of intrigue as Purvy and Judge Hollman.

Then a lean sorrel mare came jogging into view, switching her fly-bitten tail, and on the mare's back, urging him with a long, leafy switch, sat a woman. Behind her sagged the two loaded ends of a corn sack. She was lithe and slim, and her violet eyes were profoundly serious, and her lips were as resolutely set as Joan of Arc's might have been, for Sally Miller had come only ostensibly to have her corn ground to meal. She had really come to speak for the absent chief, and she knew that she would be met with derision. The years had sobered the girl, but her beauty had increased, though it was now a chastened type, which gave her a strange and rather exalted refinement of expression.

Wile McCager came to the mill door as she rode up and lifted the sack from her horse.

"Howdy, Sally?" he greeted.

"To'able, thank ye," said Sally. "I'm goin' ter get off."

As she entered the great half-lighted room, where the mill stones creaked on their cumbersome shafts, the hum of discussion sank to silence. The girl nodded to the mountaineers gathered in conclave, then, turning to the miller, she announced:

"I'm going to send for Samson."

The statement was at first met with dead silence, then came a rumble of indignant dissent, but for that the girl was prepared, as she was prepared for the contemptuous laughter which followed.

"I reckon if Samson was here," she said, dryly, "you all wouldn't think it was quite so funny."

Old Caleb Wiley spat through his bristling beard, and his voice was a quavering rumble.

"What we wants is a man. We hain't got no use fer no traitors that's too almighty damn busy doin' fancy work ter stand by their kith an' kin."

"That's a lie!" said the girl, scornfully. "There's just one man living that's smart enough to match Jesse Purvy—an' that one man is Samson. Samson's got the right to lead the Souths, and he's going to do it—ef he wants to."

"Sally," Wile McCager spoke, soothingly, "don't go gettin' mad. Caleb talks hasty. We knows ye used ter be Samson's gal, an' we hain't aimin' ter hurt yore feelin's. But Samson's done left the mountings. I reckon ef he wanted ter come back, he'd a-come afore now. Let him stay whar he's at."

"Whar is he at?" demanded old Caleb Wiley, in a truculent voice.

"That's his business," Sally flashed back, "but I know. All I want to tell you is this. Don't you make a move till I have time to get word to him. I tell you, he's got to have his say."

"I reckon we hain't a-goin' ter wait," said Caleb, "fer a feller that won't be know'n whar he's a-joornin'."

"Ye air so shore of him, why don't ye tell us whar he is now?"

"That's my business, too," Sally's eyes flashed.

"I do thank you."

Next afternoon Adrienne and Samson were sitting with a gay chat-group at the side lines of the courts.

"You go back to the mountains, Samson," Wilfred was suggesting, "might form a partnership."

"Horton & Co., Development of Timber." There are millions of acres here."

"Years ago I should have met you with a Winchester rifle," laughed Wilfred. "Now I shall not."

"I'll be with you, Horton, and make you or two," volunteered George Spicer, who had just then arrived from the North.

"And, by the way, Samson, a letter that came for you left the studio."

"The mountaineer took the envelope from the Hixon postmark, and for an instant gazed at it with a puzzled expression. It was addressed in a feminine hand, which he did not recognize. It was careful, but perfect, writing, such as one sees in a school copybook. With an apology he tore the covering and read the letter. Adrienne, glancing at his face, saw it suddenly pale and grow as set and hard as marble.

Samson's eyes were dwelling with only partial comprehension on the script. This is what he read:

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Samson's return from Europe, after a year's study, was in the nature of a moderate triumph. With the art sponsorship of George Lescott and the social sponsorship of Adrienne, he found that orders for portraits, from those who could pay munificently, seemed to seek him. He was tasting the novelty of being lionized.

That summer Mrs. Lescott opened her house on Long Island early, and the life there was full of the sort of gaiety that comes to pleasant places when young men in flannels and girls in soft summery gowns and tanned cheeks are playing wholesomely and singing tunefully and making love—not too seriously.

Samson, tremendously busy these days in a new studio of his own, had run over for a week. Horton was, of course, of the party, and George Lescott was doing the honors as host.

One evening Adrienne left the dancers for the pergola, where she took refuge under a mass of honeysuckle.

Samson South followed her. She saw him coming, and smiled. She was contrasting this Samson, loosely clad in flannels, with the Samson she had first seen rising awkwardly to greet her in the studio.

"You should have stayed inside and made yourself agreeable to the girls," Adrienne reproved him, as he came up. "What's the use of making a lion of you, if you won't roar for the visitors?"

"I've been roaring," laughed the man. "I've just been explaining to Miss Willoughby that we only eat the people we kill in Kentucky on certain days of solemn observance and sacrifice. I wanted to be agreeable to you, Drennie, for a while."

"Do you ever find yourself homesick, Samson, these days?"

The man answered with a short laugh. Then his words came softly, and not his own words, but those of one more eloquent:

"Who hath desired the sea? Her excellent loneliness rather than the forecourts of kings, and her uttermost pits than the streets where men gather. . . . His sea that his being fulfills? So and no otherwise—so and no otherwise hillmen desire their hills."

"And yet," she said, and a trace of the argumentative stole into her voice, "you haven't gone back."

"No." There was a note of self-reproach in his voice. "But soon I shall go. At least, for a time. I've been thinking a great deal lately about 'my flattered folk and wild.' I'm just beginning to understand my relation to them, and my duty."

"Your duty is no more to go back there and throw away your life," she found herself instantly contending, "than it is the duty of the young eagle, who has learned to fly, to go back to the nest where he was hatched."

"But, Drennie," he said, gently, "suppose the young eagle is the only one that knows how to fly—and suppose he

could react on others? Don't you see? I've only seen it myself for a little while."

"What is it that—that you see now?"

"I must go back, not to relapse, but to come to be a constructive force. I must carry some of the outside world to Misery. I must take to them, because I am one of them, gifts that they would reject from other hands."

From the house came the strains of an alluring waltz. For a little time they listened without speech, then the girl said very gravely:

"You won't—you won't still feel bound to kill your enemies, will you, Samson?"

The man's face hardened.

"I believe I'd rather not talk about that. I shall have to win back the confidence I have lost. I shall have to take a place at the head of my clan by proving myself a man—and a man by their own standards. It is only at their head that I can lead them. If the lives of a few assassins have to be forfeited I shan't hesitate at that. I shall stake my own against them fairly. The end is worth it."

The girl breathed deeply, then she said, in a low voice:

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## Carefully Treat Children's Colds

Neglect of children's colds often lays the foundation of serious lung trouble. On the other hand, it is harmful to continually dose delicate little stomachs with internal medicines or to keep the children always indoors.

Plenty of fresh air in the bedroom and a good application of Vick's "Vap-O-Rub" Salve over the throat and chest at the first sign of trouble, will keep the little chaps free from colds without injuring their digestions. 25c, 50c, or \$1.00.

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**"HOMING INSTINCT" IN BIRDS**  
Attachment to First Home is Much the Same as is Evidenced in Humanity.

The habit of birds in migrating South when winter comes on is influenced by the need of finding a sufficient supply of food. As food grows scarce when winter approaches in the farthest northern places where birds live they naturally turn to the South, where, their instinct tells them, food will be plentiful. The return of the birds in the spring to their accustomed haunts in the North is one of the evidences of their possession of an instinct which is also strong in man.

The environment in which a bird or human being is brought up generally becomes a permanent part of its nature. Ornithologists have not yet made it clear just what enables the bird to find its way back and forth to the same spot every year, and our knowledge is confined to the fact of what the "homing instinct" does.

After they mate and build their first nest and bring up their first family, birds cherish a fondness for that spot much the same as the attachment that man feels for his early home. The spring migration of birds is their joyful return home after a temporary sojourn abroad to secure the means of livelihood.

**Helpless Man.**  
The late Fanny Crosby, author of "Nearer, My God, to Thee" and innumerable other hymns, was blind, but this did not prevent her from seeing straight into the hearts of men.

A Brooklyn friend of the aged hymn writer was repeating some of her epigrams.

"A Brooklyn bank clerk," she said, "had stolen a lot of money and run off with a chorus girl. When I told Fanny Crosby about this she sighed and said: 'Every man becomes a fly when a web of lace is spread.'"

**After the Meeting.**  
Orator's Wife—Did the people applaud?  
Orator (with bitterness)—Applaud? They made less noise than a rubber heel in a feather bed!

**Educated.**  
"Making much progress in the classics?"  
"Sure; I can do every one of the steps."

**After Winter's Wear and Tear**  
one requires a food in Springtime that builds up both brain and body.

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