The Clan Call

By Hapsburg Liebe

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A FEUD OF THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS

From somewhere on a nearly mountainside a rifle's been report in the air; a bullet whined like a mad hornet; Dale's head ducked a little on one side.

The awakening was exceedingly rude. Dale whistled, his gray eyes shone, and one only a tiny cloud of smoke-mist rising from the boards more than fifty feet away.

"Come out, you coward!" he roared. "Come out and let me see you! You certainly taking the place of anger in his voice. "I've wanted to know just what a real bushwhacker was like!"

A mocking sound of a twig breaking a short distance off to his left claimed his attention. He was being closely watched by a pair of round, clear-of brown eyes he had ever seen. He saw her for a moment, forgot that.

A slim girl of about the low cliff beyond the sparkling creek that ran at the foot of the hill. And she was partially hidden by a clump of trees, but Dale could see that she was about twenty, dressed in a neat, graceful figure whispered of a delicate form. Her straight as a young pine; that her chinfeatures were regular, and that her face was cool-shaped eyes, and that her face was cool-shaped more than pretty—in spite of its tan.

"You have a bullet hole in the top of your hat. There was a bullet hole in the top of his hat. There

"Here!" he frowned.

"A rubber," she said. "Maybe he thought you were dead—you don't had hurt, are ye?"

"No, I'm all right," he said.

The good heroine of "The Clan Call" must, Rather But then they meet in an extraordinary manner, whose ancestors were of the proudest and most aristocratic families in the state—and educated Americans left in the darkness of ignorance, in order that they might send missionaries and education to foreign countries—the greatest mistake of church and state since the Civil war."

But it is a fascinating country and a fascinating people. And this is a fascinating story of it and them. Of course it's a feud story. The hero is the son of a mountain preacher. The heroine is the daughter of the mountain. A feud rages between their families, but love laughs at the feud and at the lawbreakers.

Hapsburg Liebe (Charles Hayes) Liebe is the man of all men to tell this story. Native of the Tennessee mountains, soldier, lumberjack, cowboy, newspaper man, literary critic—he knows the land and the people. And his story is a labor of love.

CHAPTER I.

Dale Moreland's Mountain.

Curtyle Wilburton Dale—known in himself and a few rings friends as Curt Dale—had laid out a course of

drunkard on, "and there's moonshine stills, bad health, and coal. You above of'n't got bad health, and you ain't got the out of a revenuer, though a few minutes ago I thought mebbe ye was."

"And you shot at me!" said Dale.

"Sho," objected Hesh. "I shot at yer hat. I allus hits at what I shoulder, mine. I wanted ye to turn yore head, so I could see it, and ye did. An fer my trouble—"

"As Moreland, they owns the coal land David Moreland's mountain, and they won't sell it for no 'amount of money. They lives over in the settlement, there, and the Littlefords. They're every dumped one fine folks I'm a-goin' over ther now. Want to go long? Say—long my picture of I didn't forgit to as what might be pore mean mister?"

"Bill Dale," came quickly—"Bill Dale, Kentuckian!" Sure! Look the way, By Heck. Where the young woman as I was talking with when you came up?"

"Who? Her? That's old Ben Littleford's gyurl. Her name's Dale. That's what they call her. She's got another name; but it ain't been used for so long it's been forgit, I reckon. She's the youngest one of old Ben's children. She hain't like none of the rest o' the Littlefords. By gosh, she's awful high-headed. She can read good. Babe can, not Major Bradley, from down at the terville in the lowland, he spends his summers up here for her sake. Found her teached Babe how to read. Finds her, her. Major Bradley, he's a fine feller. She has done read everything in the world, I reckon, almost. They's several books, and a book about a feller named Frog-tree, and a Baker's Hess and Uncle Almanack, and a dictionary."

"But we'd better high out for the settlement, Hesh," said Dale, "before it's dark. I'm a-goin' over that way to see Littleford's gyurl. Her name's Dale, you say? Sounds like a good name, and I'm a-goin' over ther now. Come to see her, Mr. Dale. Come to see her, Bill and her."

They went down to the creek, crossed it on a foot log, and began to climb the low cliff.

"Hesh," said Dale, traveling Hesh stopped in the trail and put his hand on his rifle to the ground.

"I'm right likely, Bill," he said, "to run me every house in the whole Littleford settlement."

They were standing on the crest of the cliff, looking down into a valley. Below them lay a broad valley checkered with small farms; and each farm had its log cabin, its log barn and its apple orchard. Beyond all was a range of low and majestic Fog Pine, which was higher and denser than ever. Dale and then David Moreland's mountain.

"Where's the rubber?" he frowned.

The girl blushed.

"I reckon he ain't a rubber," she said, "Maybe he thought you was somebody else."

"Where?"

"At pups, or grandpups, or with some sort o' my people or pet dog, or with a contemptuous twist to her lips. "I don't know who with—none of them down Moreland people live!"

"About as much as a mile back that way." She pointed over her shoulder with a free finger.

"Would you mind showing me the way to your parental domicile?"

"What's that, for goodness' sake?"

"Where you live," Dale explained with a smile.

"Oh, I'll show you the way, but you ain't going to see none of them. I'm a-goin' over ther now to see Major Bradley. He's a fine feller. He has done read everything in the world, I reckon, almost. They've several books, and a book about a feller named Frog-tree, and a Baker's Hess and Uncle Almanack, and a dictionary."

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