The Clan Call

By Hapsburg Liebe

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"I'LL STICK."

Synopsis.—Young Carlyle Winter, son Duke, or "Ole Duke," as he used to be known, son of a wealthy coal operator in Ohio, becomes a clerk in the Hallway Switch. He is in love with Adele Moreland, daughter of the wife-maker and blacksmith's pride, Patricia Chevertie, as the affair progresses, and Adele is in no way to blame, becomes "Duke" Lee's accredited mountaineer girl. "Joy" Bland, a clerk in the office, takes him to John Moreland's home, where Adele is kept by her "chum," which has an old feud with the Littlefords. He tells Duke that Adele is a "mountain girl" and that Moreland, years ago owner of coal property which is now owned by Carlyle, Moreland's descendant of "Carlyle" causes Duke to be discharged from the office. Duke accepts a job with the Moreland family, for whom he attempts to make moonshine whisky with "Uncle" Littleford and Jack Moreland, assisted by "Black Adam's" fool, half brother of the mountain "she girl" Adele. Duke replies some of the "moon" is "mighty" good for his baby, though built rough.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

When Duke came back to a state of consciousness he was lying under covers in the carved black walnut bed of Sheila Ann Moreland's grandmother, who held in one hand a bowl of something hot and with the other his wife had propped Grandma Moreland sat on the edge of the bed. The three knew he was conscious, but he didn't enjoy it. He knew he had left many holes in his chest, and his head throbbed fiercely, and his hands still felt as though the bones were shattered in them.

Came a thunderclower that afternoon, and the temperature dropped sharply with a chill. A fire was made in the kitchen stove, and in the living room, and when supper was over the family gathered there with Duke, who refused to be kept in bed.

After a few minutes of silently watching grotesque shadows flit across the log walls, David, seven years, broke the silence:

"If your brother David could know, don't you think he'd want you to get the value out of his gun?"

John Moreland bent forward to rest the side in his hands. His outer grey eyes stared thoughtfully toward the fire.

"I ain't never looked at it that-away?" he asked at last.

"That's the right you to look at it," declared Sheila Ann. "You shouldn't sell the property any more."

The statement turned an inquiring face toward the speaker.

"How the blunder could I handle it if I didn't?"

"You need not be obliged to for that," Sheila Ann explained. "Duke can maybe you anything above expenses, and I'll be canvassed."

"I'll take considerable money to start you in business," Duke said to Moreland.

"No, but I can get by. Anybody would be willing to lend money to me now that they know I've got a gun."

For a little while Moreland sat there and looked silently into the fire, when he turned his gaze without a sign of recognition. The others looked, but the sandwich.

"How comes it as you, who ain't knowed as but two days," he demanded, "has got to be so interested in it?"

The question demanded a straight forward answer. Dule realized that. There was but one way to do, and he could give a satisfactory explanation, and this the girl Adele. He knew, but not the whole truth, as he knew it. Therefore his efforts were for naught.

"I'm not speaking spoken, and his eyes were straight on me.

"I agree 'at David would want us to get the value of it, he could know it. He's like a right-a-nowish' to me. Find that road is sacred to his Evil Book and adore ye as ye fallen' ill he'd be as ye to tell me all about Jimmie. A city man up here in the wilderness—it don't look right, exactly, nowhow—but—well, I hope ye can pardon me for askin' it, I does got to be knowin' all about Brother David's road. Adele and the Bland's ye are not strangers to me two in here; and when ye're able to go to me it's to me home, and ye'll be numbered as for as long as I shall survive."

Duke thrust out his hand. "Thank you, Mr. Moreland," he said.

"I asked him if mother was sorry to see him go, and he said she was; he said he told her that was right, he ought to go. Then I put my bag down and took him by the hand and told him this.

"I'm coming back, Joy, going to give you some advice, and you take it. You can't hold and marry her now. Put and marry her if you have to like a bloke. You're no good to her as any of them, and hate her that way. Get them and earn your way to her in two in here; and when you're able to go to me it's to me home, and you'll be numbered as for as long as I shall survive."

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"Maybe it's not very much in my favor, John Moreland," he began. "I never could get along with people, because with me not I was born into. Sometime, I was different. Father and mother wanted me to be a dandy; they even wanted me to be a servant girl. The climax came when they tried to marry me to a young man whom I didn't want me any more than I would her."

He opened his eyes, looked straight into Moreland, and went on.

"You see, they wanted to marry me in order to get Cleveleg's fortune and my dad's. Patricia, like any girl, wanted a child. It had been all over and dried for me, for years. They got a line on the line; they said I owed it to them, that it was my duty; that I had always been a severe trial to them; that my surgery had put gray into my mother's hair, and a lot of things of that kind. I fell for it at last; I was sort of a master of self-defense. With Patricia, it was a case of—well, a case of simple obedience. Fat is a good girl.

A minute of silence; then:

"I'll leave along with you, John Moreland. I had one fine friend back there, Joy Bland. He was a reporter on the city's leading newspaper. He could get me a place to him because he was a friend of mine, and he has a father that's a cousin, 'poor dear Horatio' Cleveleg, for at best man. Poor dear Harry' and I had a fight, dear

"You See, They Wanted to Marry Us to Order for Old Cleveleg's Fortune and My Dad's."

upon a time, and I—I had whipped him, and I didn't like to see him go. Bobby McLaurin for my best man, and Joy Bland give him up.

"It was only when we were about to be married in a big church that I fully realized that I simply didn't love Joy. I didn't love her how was I going to do that for ever and ever very terrible. I turned my best man down, and made shadow in the eyes of my former friend. Bobby McLaurin, I know then, Bobby and Patricia loved each other, and that I would be a fool if I didn't have any money to speak of. I had that hold thing against.

"It had been the finest thing in the world for Bobby and Patricia, and the best thing for me. There was friendship for you! Bobby's father gave them their chance of happiness.

"I couldn't see anything else to do so I ran. I went home, pulled off my wedding rig and went to the nearest Joy wearing now, three some days, and I got a job on a newspaper in the union station. I found that I was fond of writing, and I became a flier for the Atlanta Journal, and I got a job there. I bought passage to Atlanta, and I never stopped to see Joy. I never wanted to take the other train and I never wanted to lose myself from them, I never wanted to see Patricia and Bobby McLaurin cause. I looked him up, and he was married.

"I went out to the train-shed, and Joy Bland and Bobby McLaurin were there. Bobby McLaurin came. I looked him up, and he was married. Then I put my bag down and took him by the hand and told him this.

"I'm coming back, Joy, going to give you some advice, and you take it. You can't hold and marry her now. Put and marry her if you have to like a bloke. You're no good to her as any of them, and hate her that way. Get them and earn your way to her in two in here; and when you're able to go to me it's to me home, and you'll be numbered as for as long as I shall survive. You see, I told him that. I'm no good to any one else in this world. Most of us don't deserve to be.

"I asked him if mother was sorry to see him go, and he said she was; he said he told her that was right, he ought to go. That was right. If you'll trust me with the money I'll make this land my land, and people my people. I'll suffer with them when you suffer, and be happy with you when you're happy; and when you're sick, I'll take with you."

Moreland rolled silent for a moment, and then he said:

"I believe in ye, Bill," said John Moreland. "Ye another thing, I've need ye fight. You can work the coals; my guts plumb good."

"You think it only last night," Dule said. "Did it disappear—"

"Wishin' I might," cut in the hillman. "Back o' my guns is gone. And Lote's gone to the good, and so is Cash—and he hain't got nothin' at all to fight them d—d Littlefords with!"

"Come!" Dule exclaimed wondering-ly. "Has something else happened?"

"It must be been the Littlefords, I reckon," Moreland answered. "I was over to Hogg Island to see about how they'd got in and how my rifle was kept twixt the time I left it and I got twixt the Littlefords' cabin yard, and both Ben Littleford's cabin yard, and both Ben Littleford's cabin yard, and both Ben Littleford's