

Beyond the Level  
OF CUMMINGS



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Introduction.

Many years ago, long before the breaking out of the civil war, the writer of this book was a civil engineer and land surveyor in what was then, and is now, called the Attakapas country of Louisiana. I had been sent to Louisiana by my stepfather to learn the business, it being his intention that after study and experience, I should return to my home in the settlement near the mouth of the Gila River on the west coast of Africa, where he lived.

CHAPTER I.

Ten years previous to the outbreak of the late civil war, and until the fall of Fort Sumter, was a resident of the State of Louisiana. During the last five years before the war I was an accredited agent of the territorial corporation whose history, written and unwritten, contains enough romantic adventures, halfbreath escapes, examples of heroic endurance and noble scenes to furnish the annals of a nation.

Lucy was a white lady, and that the lady did not talk English to her, she was sure. She says she knows she thought that lady was her mother. Now here is a queer thing, Charlie. When I was getting well Lucy was taking a nap one day (she had enough sleep to make up I can tell you), lying on a pallet in my room. She had had a bad dream, and cried out in her sleep and what she said was, "O, non, non, non!" Now, she can't speak French when she is awake, and almost no Acadian. In her sleep she uses the purest accent. I've been teaching her Acadian, by the way, because a language other people don't know might come in handy, but her tendency to make good French of it, the way French comes back to her, shows it was her first tongue; that's as sure as we are alive here and now. Well to go back: She remembers a scene of lights moving in the darkness and water stretching around her, and a house moving on it. Now that must have been a journey on the river. Then came a great sickness, she was sick, other people were sick; she never saw the lady again, and all she knows is that, by this dim dream, that it is not a dream, she has always been a nigger slave. Charlie, she would have been about three years old the year the fever swept New Orleans out with the worst plague she has ever seen. I tell you, I have divined what happened. This child's family were strangers, they were all down with the fever. Lucy was left among the negroes to be taken care of. She got sick, the negroes sickened and died, probably, and this dark-haired baby was sold with the remains of the family property by some one who did not guess she did not want to consider the unimaged form of a horrible blunder. I know the marks

view that menaced the anatomy of a person's neck, and laughingly inquired: "What is it, George, steal a mule or rob a bank?" "Stop your chaffing, Charlie! It is not a nigger—and that in our criminal calendar is the greatest crime." "So it is, so it is," I replied. "You had better buy one if you are in want." "Can't do it, Charlie. I've tried, and Covertly won't sell her." "Covertly won't sell her! Ah, I understand." "Then the nigger is a woman and belongs to Covertly? I've got the whole story." "No, you haven't, but you shall if you have patience to listen. What I have to tell you happened before you came to Attakapas and when you have the story, you shall be the judge whether I am right and shall have your support." "In September, 1856, I came home from New Orleans sick; there was no physician to be had this side of the city. The disease developed, and my own medical knowledge told me it was small-pox. That was enough; every living soul fled in terror, and I was alone, not alone—although whites and negroes fled in terror. One bit of a chattel, one child remained—Covertly's Lucy. You have seen her?" I nodded assent. "Mama George had been very good to her, and she refused to leave him." "This girl remained true, forgetting self in her anxiety for me. Her master sent her out among the negroes to be taken care of. She got sick, the negroes sickened and died, probably, and this dark-haired baby was sold with the remains of the family property by some one who did not guess she did not want to consider the unimaged form of a horrible blunder. I know the marks

ran out of that country negroes to the value of upward of \$20,000. This was accomplished by two men living in the district they robbed and on whom they owned several slaves and working a plantation at the same time. During this time we never betrayed nor discovered, and only once on our injury. This will be explained hereafter.

CHAPTER II.  
My motive for undertaking this dangerous business was love of adventure, to assist my friend, and some small hope of gain. Wesner's heart was in the work, as it progressed. He became an enthusiast, and I much the same. Before starting we agreed never to write one word upon the subject, never to trust a negro with the secret of our identity or a white man with our business—save in absolute necessity. The fact of our testimony, we well knew, would not be taken in court; but if we were suspected even, we would never live to see the inside of a courtroom, so strong would be the feeling.

We arranged a cipher by which we could write or telegraph in case necessity required; this we committed to memory, by the way, because a language other people don't know might come in handy, but her tendency to make good French of it, the way French comes back to her, shows it was her first tongue; that's as sure as we are alive here and now. Well to go back: She remembers a scene of lights moving in the darkness and water stretching around her, and a house moving on it. Now that must have been a journey on the river. Then came a great sickness, she was sick, other people were sick; she never saw the lady again, and all she knows is that, by this dim dream, that it is not a dream, she has always been a nigger slave. Charlie, she would have been about three years old the year the fever swept New Orleans out with the worst plague she has ever seen. I tell you, I have divined what happened. This child's family were strangers, they were all down with the fever. Lucy was left among the negroes to be taken care of. She got sick, the negroes sickened and died, probably, and this dark-haired baby was sold with the remains of the family property by some one who did not guess she did not want to consider the unimaged form of a horrible blunder. I know the marks

was linked in mine, and we were drinking brandy cocktail at Pet's expense. "When did you leave? How far are you going? When are you going home?" he asked, all in one breath. "I answered him as frankly as possible, and was relieved to find that he must start for home the next morning. When morning came I accompanied him to the train. He wrote a letter to my father and another to let him know that I had seen Pet. I then left the hotel upon a tour of exploration in search of that abomination to all Southerners, the office of the New York Herald.

"I found the building, sent up my card as Mr. Smith, and requested an interview with Mr. Greeley. Horace Greeley was at this time in his prime, and the most notable of his kind, chasing the end of the Red River, and did not care to be reported as hunting for the Tribune office, so avoided, or at least, tried to avoid, meeting any Southerners, especially Attakapas people. "I found the building, sent up my card as Mr. Smith, and requested an interview with Mr. Greeley. Horace Greeley was at this time in his prime, and the most notable of his kind, chasing the end of the Red River, and did not care to be reported as hunting for the Tribune office, so avoided, or at least, tried to avoid, meeting any Southerners, especially Attakapas people.

The Life of the West  
By S. R. CROCKETT  
Pictures by G. A. SHIPLEY

Synopsis of Previous Chapters.  
Sir James Stanfield, of New Mills, in company with his grandson, young Philip, meets in an English city the man who is the father of them owning several slaves and working a plantation at the same time. During this time we never betrayed nor discovered, and only once on our injury. This will be explained hereafter.

He took me by the hand and shook it slightly. "You will find the servants civil, though Caleb behind the door there (the raised his voice) is getting into his danger." We heard feet clattering indignantly down the corridor. "The liquor and wine are in the large glass bottles in the cellar, and the brandy is in the claret excellent. Good day to you, sir!"

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CHAPTER III.  
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AT THE WORD, MY BULLET STARTED FIRST.

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It contains no alcohol, or other intoxicant, and no narcotic.

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