

Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

A MOUNTAIN EUROPA

John Fox, Jr.



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John Fox, Jr. asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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Chapter I



AS Clayton rose to his feet in the still air, the tree-tops began to tremble in the gap below him, and a rippling ran through the leaves up the mountain-side. Drawing off his hat he stretched out his arms to meet it, and his eyes closed as the cool wind struck his throat and face and lifted the hair from his forehead. About him the mountains lay like a tumultuous sea-the Jellico Spur, stilled gradually on every side into vague, purple shapes against the broken rim of the sky, and Pine Mountain and the Cumberland Range racing in like breakers from the north. Under him lay Jellico Valley, and just visible in a wooded cove, whence Indian Creek crept into sight, was a mining-camp-a cluster of white cabins-from which he had climbed that afternoon. At that distance the wagon-road narrowed to a bridle-path, and the figure moving slowly along it and entering the forest at the base of the mountain was shrunk to a toy. For a moment Clayton stood with his face to the west, drinking in the air; then tightening his belt, he caught the pliant body of a sapling and swung loose from the rock. As the tree flew back, his dog sprang after him. The descent was sharp. At times he was forced to cling to the birch-tops till they lay flat on the mountain-side.

Breathless, he reached at last a boulder from which the path was easy to the valley below, and he leaned quivering against the soft rug of moss and lichens that covered it. The shadows had crept from the foot of the mountains, darkening the valley, and lifting up the mountain-side beneath him a long,