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Author: Jean Thomas
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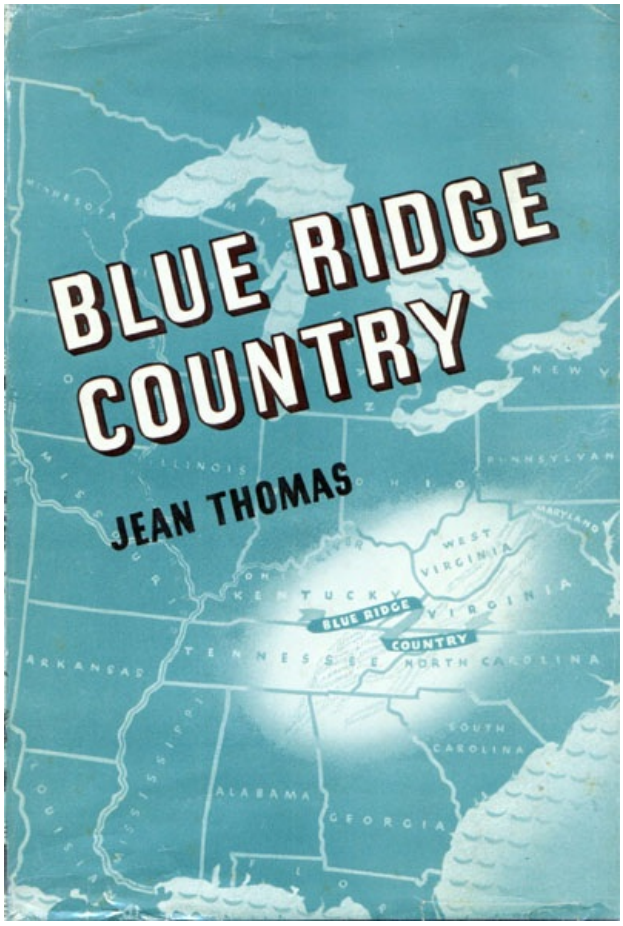

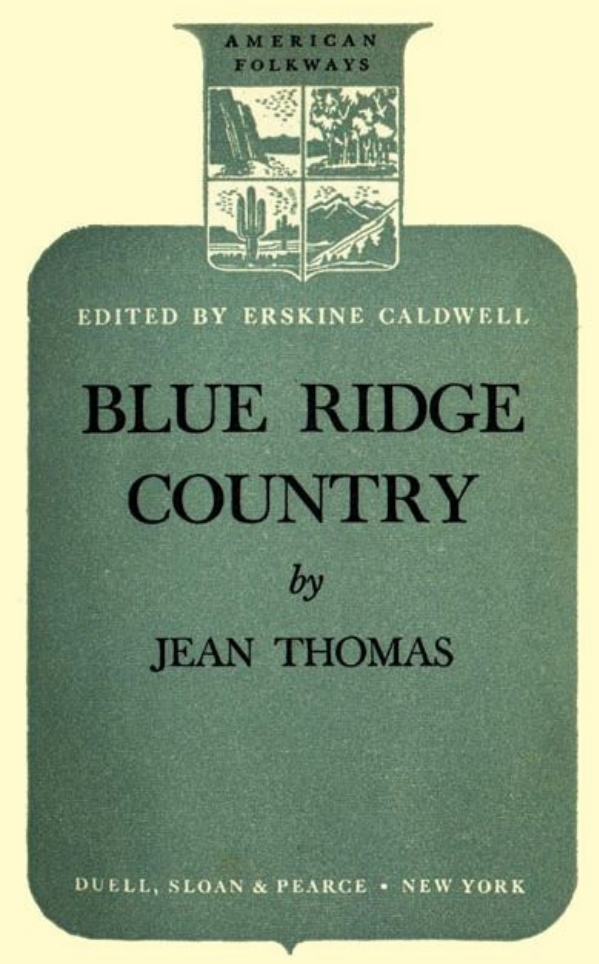

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To My Brother

DOCTOR GEORGE G. BELL

*A once itinerant "Tooth Dentist"
who became the first Republican county judge
in more than a quarter of a century
at the mouth of Big Sandy
and whose unique sentences have become legendary
throughout the Blue Ridge*

APPALACHIAN RITUAL

Emerald nobility
Reaching to the sky,
Makes the eye a ruler

Fit to measure by.

In the spring an ecstasy
Lies upon the hills—
Purpling with new red-buds,
Ruffling colored frills.

Make an early ritual
For the mountain side;
Pine and beech are spectators,
White dogwood a bride.

Give a pair of ivory birch
For a wedding gift,
All the mountain side a church
Where wild flowers sift

Velvet carpet-petals down
To the edge of hill and town,
Showing wild-grape fringes through
Opal cloud-thrones dropped from blue.

Now the summer like a queen
Does her mountain home in green;
With a season for a bier
Some old majesty lies here.

Autumn gold is swift and fleet
With a wing upon the feet,
Rushing toward a winter breath
Pausing for immaculate death.

In such economic bliss
And a swift parenthesis—
In immortal mountain trails,
There are resurrection tales.

All the while the mountains know
Sudden death is never so.

—*Rachel Mack Wilson*

Contents

BLUE RIDGE COUNTRY

1. The Country and the People

The Land

High mountain walls and bridgeless streams marooned the people of the Blue Ridge for centuries, shut them off from the outside world so that they lost step with the onward march of civilization. A forgotten people until yesterday, unlettered, content to wrest a meager living from the grudging soil, they built for themselves a nation within a nation. By their very isolation, they have preserved much of the best that is America. They have held safe and unchanged the simple beauty of the song of their fathers, the unsullied speech, the simple ideals and traditions, staunch religious faith, love of freedom, courage and fearlessness. Above all they have maintained a spirit of independence and self-reliance that is unsurpassed anywhere in these United States of America. They are a hardy race. The wilderness, the pure air, the rugged outdoor life have made them so: a people in whom the Anglo-Saxon strain has retained its purest line.

The Blue Ridge Country comprises much of Appalachia, happily called from the great chain that runs along the Atlantic coast from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico. It is a well-

watered region having numerous streams and rivers throughout, being drained by the Cumberland and Tennessee as well as by smaller, though equally well-known, rivers—Big Sandy in northeastern Kentucky, which flows into the Ohio, and the Yadkin in North Carolina, which eventually reaches the Atlantic Ocean.

In general the region includes three parallel chains, the Cumberlands, Alleghenies, and Blue Ridge. Like a giant backbone the Blue Ridge, beginning in the southwest portion of Old Virginia, continues northeasterly, holding together along its mountainous vertebrae some eight southern states; northeastern Kentucky, all of West Virginia, the eastern part of Tennessee, western North Carolina, the four northwestern counties of South Carolina, and straggling foothills in northern Georgia and northeastern Alabama. The broad valley of the Tennessee River separates the mountain system on the west from the Cumberland Plateau which is an extension of the West Virginia and Kentucky roughs.

Throughout its vast course the Blue Ridge is not cut by a single river. A narrow rampart, it rises abruptly on its eastern side south of the Potomac to a height of some two thousand feet, cutting Virginia into eastern and western, and descends as abruptly on the west to the Shenandoah Valley. Similar in topography in its rough, broken steepness to the Alleghenies across the valley, it consists of a multitude of saddles or dividing ridges many of which attain an elevation of six thousand feet. As it extends south, rising from the Piedmont Plateau, it grows higher. In North Carolina alone there are twenty-one peaks that exceed Mt. Washington's six thousand feet in New Hampshire. Contiguous to the Blue Ridge there is another chain between the states of North Carolina and Tennessee, which to Carolina mountaineers is still the Alleghenies. However, the United States Geological Survey has another name for it—the Unakas. It is higher as a whole than the Blue Ridge to which it is joined by transverse ranges with such names as Beech and Balsam and a sprinkling of Indian names—Cowee, Nantahala, Tusquitee. It differs, too, in physical aspect. Instead of being in orderly parallel tiers the entire system, unlike the Blue Ridge, is cut by many rivers: the Nolichucky, French Broad, Pigeon, Little Tennessee, Hiawassee. The parts so formed by the dividing rivers are also named: Iron, Northern Unaka, Bald, Great Smoky, Southern Unaka or Unicoi. Though many of its summits exceed six thousand feet, the chain itself dwindles to foothills by the time it reaches Georgia and crosses into Alabama.

If you flew high over the vast domain of the Blue Ridge, you would view a country of contrasting physical features: river and cascade, rapids and waterfall, peak and plateau, valley and ridge. Its surface is rougher, its trails steeper, the descents deeper, and there are more of them to the mile than anywhere else in the United States.

The southern mountaineer has to travel many steep, rocky roads to get to any level land, so closely are the mountains of Appalachia crowded together. It is the geography of their country that has helped to keep our highlanders so isolated all these years.

This region has the finest body of hardwood timber in the United States. Black walnut is so plentiful and so easy for the carpenter to work that this wood has been used freely for gunstocks and furniture, and even in barns, fences, and porches.

White and yellow poplars grow sometimes six to nine feet in diameter. "Wide enough for a marrying couple, their waiters, and the elder to stand on," a mountaineer will say, pointing out a tree stump left smooth by the cross-cut saw. The trunks are sixty to seventy feet to the first limb. Chestnuts are even wider, though sometimes not so tall. White oaks grow to enormous size. Besides pine, and the trees common generally to our country, these southern mountain forests are filled with buckeye, gum, basswood, cucumber, sourwood, persimmon, lynn. The growth is so heavy that there are few bare rocks or naked cliffs. Even the "bald" peculiar to the region which is sometimes found on the crown of a mountain belies its name, for it is covered with grass—not of the useless sage type either, but an excellent grass on which sheep might "use" if they chose to climb so high.

The lover of beauty finds delight in these mountains from the first daintiness of spring on through the glorious blaze of wonder that is fall in the Blue Ridge. Beginning with the tan fluff of the beeches, the red flowering of maples, the feathery white blooms of the "sarvis," on through the redbud's gaiety and the white dogwood's stark purity, all is loveliness. The enchantment continues in the flame of azaleas, which is followed by the waxy pink of the laurel and the superb glory of the rhododendron. These have scarcely vanished before the coves are golden with the fragrance of grape blossom.

The beauty of the woodland is a paradise for birds. Early in the spring the spotted thrush wings its way through leafy boughs. The cardinal in his bright red coat stays the year round. Neither snow nor winter wind dulls his plumage or stills his song. His mate, in somber green, sings too, but he, unmindful of southern chivalry, attacks her furiously when she bursts into song; ornithologists explain that jealousy prompts the ungallant act. The oriole singing lustily in the spring would seem conscious of his coat of orange and black. These are the heraldic colors worn by the servants of Lord Baltimore. The nightingale and the whippoorwill sing unpretentiously in the quiet of eventide. The blackbird makes up for his somber dress in good deeds. He destroys insects on leaf and bark. The eagle still finds a haven of safety in giant trees and hollowed trunks.

There is neither tarantula nor scorpion to be feared in the Blue Ridge; the harmless lizard is called scorpion by the mountaineer. Nor are there large poisonous reptiles. There are snakes of lesser caliber, but only rattlers and copperheads among them are venomous. The highlander is not bedeviled by biting ants but there are fleas and flies in abundance though no mosquitoes,

thanks to the absence of stagnant pools and lakes. There are no large lakes as in the eastern section of the United States and few small ones though the country has numerous cascades, rapids, and waterfalls.

The Blue Ridge is a well-watered region, and characteristic of the country are the innumerable springs which form creeks and small streams. A mild and bracing climate results from these physical features. The rapidity with which the streams rise and their swiftness, together with almost constant breezes in the mountains, reduce the humidity so prevalent in the southern lowlands. Although the rainfall is greater than anywhere else in the United States, except Florida, the sudden fall in the topography of the watercourses brings quick drainage. The sun may be scorching hot in an unprotected corn patch on a hillside, yet it is cool in the shade. And, as in California and the north woods, a blanket is needed at night. The climate is contrasting, being coldest in the highlands where the temperature is almost as low as that of northern Maine. Yet nowhere in the United States is it warmer than in the lowlands of the Blue Ridge.

In the highlands, carboniferous rocks produce a sandy loam which is responsible for the vast timber growth there. Throughout it is rich in minerals, coal, iron, and even gold, which has been mined in Georgia. In some sections there are fertile undulating uplands contrasting with the quagmired bottoms and rocky uplands of other parts of the Blue Ridge. There are high and uninviting quaternary bluffs that lure only the eye. It was the fertile valleys with their rich limestone soil producing abundant cane that first proved irresistible to the immigrants of Europe and lured them farther inland from the Atlantic seaboard.

Long before man came with ax and arrow the wilderness of the Blue Ridge teemed with wild animal life. The bones of mastodon and mammoth remained to attest their supremacy over an uninhabited land thousands upon thousands of years ago. Then, following the prehistoric and glacial period, more recent fauna—buffalo, elk, deer, bear, and wolf—made paths through the forest from salt lick to refreshing spring. These salt licks that had been deposited by a receding ocean centuries before came to have names. Big Bone Lick located in what today is Boone County, Kentucky, was one of the greatest and oldest animal rendezvous in North America, geologists claim. It took its name doubtless from the variety of bones of prehistoric and later fauna found imbedded in the salty quagmire.

Man, like beast, sought both salt and water. Following the animal trails came the mound builder. But when he vanished, leaving his earthen house and the crude utensils that filled his simple needs—for the mound builder was not a warrior—there was but little of his tradition from which to reconstruct his life and customs.

A century passed before the Indian in his trek through the wilderness followed the path of buffalo and deer. Came the Shawnee, Cherokee, and Chickasaw to fight and hunt. To the Indian the Blue Ridge was a favorite hunting ground with its forests and rolling plains, while the fertile valleys with thick canebrakes offered bread in abundance. Sometimes these primeval trails which they followed took their names from the purpose they served. For instance, the Athiamiowee trail was, in the Miami dialect, the Path of the Armed Ones or the Armed Path and became known as the Warrior’s Path. It was the most direct line of communication between the Shawnees and the Cherokees, passing due south across the eastern part of the Cuttawa country (Kentucky) from the mouth of the Sciotha (Scioto) to the head of the Cherokee (Tennessee). Another trail was called Old Buffalo Path, another Limestone because of the soil. Then there was a Shawnee Trail named for the tribe that traversed it.

The Indian was happy and content with his hunting ground and the fertile fields. The streams he converted to his use for journeys by canoe. He had his primitive stone plow to till the soil and his stone mill for grinding grain. The fur of animals provided warm robes, the tanned hides gave him moccasins. Tribal traditions were pursued unmolested, though at times the tribes engaged in warfare. Each tribe buried its dead in its own way and when a tribe wearied of one location it moved on. Unlike the mound builders, the Indian had a picture language and he delighted to record it in cuttings on rocks and trees. He would peel the bark from the bole of a tree and with a sharp stone instrument carve deep into the wood figures of feather-decked chieftains, of drums, arrows, wild beasts. And having carved these symbols of the life about him, depicting scenes of the hunt and battle and conflict, he covered the carving with paint fashioned in his crude way from the colored earth on the mountain side. The warrior like his picture language vanished in time from the Blue Ridge. But not his trails.

These trails, the path of buffalo and deer and the lines of communication between the tribes, finally marked the course of explorer, hunter, and settler. As each in turn made his way to the wilderness he was glad indeed to find paths awaiting his footsteps. The scene was set for a rugged race. They came and stayed.

The People

The men and women who came to settle this region were a stalwart race, the men usually six feet in height, the women gaunt and prolific. They were descendants of English, Scotch, and

Scotch-Irish who landed along the Atlantic coast at the close of the sixteenth century—around 1635, when the oppression of rulers drove them from England, Scotland, and Ireland. Some were impelled by love of religious freedom, while others sought political liberty in the new world. Their migration to America really started with a project, a project that had its beginning in Ireland as far back as 1610. It was called the English invasion of Ireland. King after king in England had sent colonists to the Emerald Isle and naturally the native sons resented their coming. Good Queen Bess in turn continued with the project and tried to keep peace between the invaders and the invaded by donating lands there to court favorites. But the bickerings went on. It was not until after Elizabeth's death that King James I of England worked out a better project—temporarily at least. He sent sturdy, stubborn, tenacious Scots to Ulster; their natures 11
made of them better fighters than the Irish upon whose lands they had been transplanted. But even though it was English rulers who had "planted" them there the Scots were soon put to all sorts of trials and persecution. They resented heartily the King's levy of tax upon the poteen which they had learned to make from their adopted Irish brothers. Resentment grew to hatred of excise laws, hatred of authority that would enforce any such laws. These burned deep in the breast of the Scotch-Irish, so deep that they live to this day in the hearts of their descendants in the southern mountains.

So political strife, resentment toward governmental authority, hatred toward individuals acting for the rulers developed into feuds. In some such way the making of poteen and feuds were linked hand-in-hand long before the Anglo-Celtic and Anglo-Saxon set foot in the wilderness of America.

They were pawns of the Crown, used to suppress the uprisings of the Irish Catholics and in turn themselves even more unfairly treated by the Crown. They could not—these Presbyterians—worship as they chose; rather the place and form was set by the State. Their ships were barred from foreign trade, even with America; they were forbidden to ship products or cattle back to England, though after the Great Fire of London, Ireland generously sent thousands of head of cattle to London. Barred then from engaging in profitable cattle trade, they turned to growing wool. This too was defeated by prohibitive duties, and when Ireland undertook to engage in producing linen, England thwarted that industry too. They were forbidden to possess arms, they were expelled from the militia, and what with incessantly being called upon to pay tithes, added 12
rents, and cess they had little left to call their own, little to show for their labors. Then adding insult to injury, the Crown declared illegitimate the children born of a marriage performed by the ministers of these Presbyterians, so that such offspring could not legally inherit the lands of their parents.

Oppressed and persecuted for a century, they could bear it no longer; these transplanted Scotch-Irish (as America came to call them) turned their faces to the new world.

The massacres of 1641 sent them across the uncharted seas in great numbers. And to stimulate and spur their continued migration to America these "adventurers" and "planters" were offered land in Maryland by Lord Baltimore—three thousand acres for every thirty persons brought into the state, with the provision of "free liberty of religion." But Pennsylvania offered a heartier welcome and "genuine religious liberty" besides.

Oppression and unfairness continued to grow in Ireland. Protestants there had never owned outright the land which they struggled to clear and cultivate. Moreover they toiled without pay. Protest availed them little. And the straw that broke the camel's back was laid on in the form of rent by Lord Donegal. In 1717 when their leases had expired in County Antrim, they found themselves in a worse predicament than ever. Their rents were doubled and trebled. Now, to hand over more than two thirds of what they had after all the other taxes that had been imposed upon them left them with little or nothing. How was a man to pay the added rent? Pay or get out! demanded Lord Donegal. Eviction from the lands which their toil had developed—a wasteland converted into fertile productive fields—stirred these Scotch-Irish to fury. They didn't 13
sit and tweedle their thumbs. Not the Scotch-Irish.

In 1719, just two years after the Antrim Eviction, thirty thousand more Protestants left Ulster for America. They continued to come for the next half century, settling in various parts of our land. There was a goodly settlement in the Virginia Valley of Scotch-Irish. You'd know by their names—Grigsby, Caruthers, Crawford, and McCuen.

As early as 1728 a sturdy Scot from Ulster, by name Alexander Breckinridge, was settled in the Shenandoah Valley, though later he was to be carried with the tide of emigration that led to Kentucky.

Naturally, first come first served—so the settlers who arrived first on the scene chose for themselves the more accessible and fertile lands, the valleys and rich limestone belts at the foot of the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies. The Proprietors of Pennsylvania, who had settled on vast tracts, were prevailed upon by the incoming Scotch-Irish to sell them parts of their lands. The newcomers argued that it was "contrary to the laws of God and nature that so much land should lie idle when Christians wanted it to labor on and raise their bread." But that wasn't the only reason the Scotch-Irish had. There were other things in the back of their heads. A burnt child fears the fire. Their unhappy experience in Ulster had taught them a bitter lesson and one they should never forget, not even to the third and fourth generation. They would not be renters! Hadn't they been tricked out of land in Ulster? They would not rent! They would buy outright. And buy they did from the Proprietors at a nominal figure. Nor were the Pennsylvanians blind to the fact that the newcomers were good fighters and that they could act as a barrier against Indian attacks on the settlement's fringe. There was still a fly in the ointment for the Scotch- 14

Irish. That was—the Proprietors' exacting from them an annual payment of a few cents per acre. It wasn't so much the amount that irked the newcomers as the legal hold on their land it gave the Proprietors. They objected stoutly and didn't give up their protest until their perseverance put an end to the system of "quitrents."

This cautious characteristic persists to this day with the mountaineer and can be traced back to the persecution of his forbears in Ulster. Mountaineers in Kentucky refused point-blank to accept fruit trees offered them gratis by a legislator in 1913, fearing it would give the state a hold on their land.

But to get back to the settling of the Blue Ridge Country.

When political and religious refugees continued to come to America in such vast shoals they found the settlements along the Atlantic coast already well occupied by Huguenots who had been driven from France, by Quakers, Puritans, and Catholics from England, Palatine Germans escaping the scourge of the Thirty Years' War. Here too were Dunkers, Mennonites, Moravians from Holland and Germany. Among them also were followers of Cromwell who had fled the vengeance of Charles II, Scots of the Highlands who could not be loyal to the Stuarts and at the same time friends to King George.

The Scotch-Irish among the newcomers wanted land of their own—independence. Above all independence. So they drifted down the coast to the western fringe of settlement and established themselves in the foothills east of the Blue Ridge in what is now the Carolinas. Migration might just as well have moved west from Virginia and across the Alleghenies. However, not only did the mountains themselves present an impenetrable barrier, but settlers 15
were forbidden to cross by "proclamation of the authorities" on account of the hostility of the Indians on the west of the mountain range. Then too there were inviting fertile valleys on this eastern side of the Blue Ridge, where they might dwell.

But these newcomers, at least the Scotch-Irish among them, were not primarily men who wanted to till the soil. They were not by nature farmers like the Germans in Pennsylvania. And they did not intend to become underlings of their more prosperous predecessors and neighbors who had already taken root in the valleys and who had set up projects to further their own gains. Furthermore, being younger in the new world they were more adventurous. The wilderness with its hunting and exploring beckoned. And so they pressed on deeper into the mountains. There was always more room the higher up they climbed. And as they moved on they carried along with them, as a surging stream gathers up the life along its course, a sprinkling of all the various denominations whose lives they touched among the settlements along the coast.

In that day many men were so eager for freedom and a chance to get a fresh start that before sailing, through the enterprises set up by shipowners and emigration agents, they bound themselves by written indentures to work for a certain period of time. These persons were called Indents. Their labor was sold, so that in reality they were little more than slaves. When finally they had worked out their time they had earned their freedom, and were called Redemptioners. The practice of selling Redemptioners continued until the year 1820, all of forty-four years after "Honest" John Hart had signed his name to the Declaration of 16
Independence. It is said that a lineal descendant of Emperor Maximilian was so bound in Georgia.

Many were imposed upon in another way. Their baggage and possessions were often confiscated and even though friends waited on this side ready to pay their passage, innocent men and women were duped into sale.

Then there were the so-called convicts among the pioneers of the Blue Ridge. It must be remembered that in those days offense constituting crime was often a mere triviality. Men were imprisoned for debt; even so they were labeled convicts. But, as Dr. James Watt Raine assures us in his *The Land of Saddle-Bags*, the few such convicts who were sent by English judges to America could scarcely have produced the five million or more people who today are known as southern mountain people.

Widely different though they were in blood, speech, and customs, there was an underlying similarity in the nature of these pioneers. It was their love of independence. Independence that impelled them to give up the security of civilization to brave the perils of uncharted seas, the hazards of warfare with hostile Indians, to seek homes in an untamed wilderness.

Blazing the Trail

Sometimes a single explorer went ahead of the rest with a few friendly Indians to accompany him. If not he went alone, tramping into the forest, living in a rough shack, suffering untold hardship through bitter winter months. For weeks when he had neither meal nor flour he lived on meat alone—deer and bear. It was the stories of valuable furs and the vast quantities of them which trickled back to the settlements that lured others to follow. Hunters and trappers came 17
bringing their families. The stories of furs and the promise of greater possessions to be had in

the wilderness grew and so did the number of adventurers. They began to form little settlements and their coming crowded before them the earlier hunter or trapper who wanted always the field to himself.

In the meantime settlers in the Valley of Virginia were growing more smug and prosperous. They wanted to invest part of their earnings. They wanted to set up other undertakings. So they began sending out expeditions into the wilderness with the intention of trading with the Indians and possibly of securing lands for settlers.

As early as 1673 young Gabriel Arthur had set out on an expedition for his master Colonel Abraham Wood of Virginia with a small party. Through the Valley of Virginia went the young adventurer, taking the well-defined Warrior's Path; he followed watercourses and gaps that cut through high mountain walls, down the Holston River through Tennessee, through the "great gap" into the Cuttawa country. Finally separated from his companions, the lad lost all count of time. Even if he had had a calendar tucked away in the pocket of his deerskin coat, however, it would have done him no good for he could neither read nor write. Weeks and months passed. Winter came. Finally after many adventures young Arthur started on the long journey back to Virginia. As he drew near Colonel Wood's home he heard merriment within and the voice of his master wishing his household a merry Christmas. Not till then did the young adventurer know how long he had been away.

With the master and the household and the friends who had gathered to celebrate and offer thanks at the Yuletide season, with all listening eagerly, young Gabriel Arthur, though unable to bring back any written record, told many a stirring tale. A swig of wine may have spurred the telling of how he had been captured by the Shawnees (in Ohio), of how he had been surrounded by a wild, shouting tribe who tied him to a stake and were about to put a flaming torch to his feet when he thought of a way to save his life. They were charmed with the gun he carried, and the shiny knife at his belt. If they'd set him free he promised to bring them many, many knives and guns. Once young Gabriel made his escape he didn't intend to be caught napping again. He painted his fair face with wild berry juice, and color from bark and herbs. After much wandering he found himself with friendly Cherokees in the upper Tennessee Valley. They were so friendly, in fact, that a couple of them accompanied him on his return to Virginia. He returned along other watercourses—by way of the Rockcastle and Kentucky Rivers. He crossed the Big Sandy—the Indians called it Chatterawha and Totteroy. He got out of their canoe at a point where the Totteroy flows into the Ohio and stood on the bank and looked about at the far-off hills. So it was young Gabriel Arthur who was the first white man to set foot in Kentucky, and that at the mouth of the Big Sandy. 18

Young Gabriel's tales traveled far. Soon others, fired with the spirit of adventure, were turning to the wilderness. Nor was adventure the only spur. Investors as well as hunters and trappers saw promise of profits in Far Appalachia. Cartographers were put to work. A glimpse at their drawings shows interesting and similar observations.

In 1697 Louis Hennepin's map indicated the territory south of the Great Lakes, including the southern Appalachians and extending as far west as the Mississippi River and a route which passed through a "gap across the Appalachians to the Atlantic seaboard." Later the map of a Frenchman named Delisle labeled the great continental path leading to the Carolinas "Route que les François." Successive maps all showed the passing over the Cumberland Mountain at the great wind gap, indicating portages and villages of the Chaouanona (Shawnees) in the river valleys. Lewis Evans' map in 1755 of "The Middle British Colonies in America" shows the courses of the Totteroy (Big Sandy River) and of the Kentucky River. Thomas Hutchins in 1788, who became a Captain in the 60th Royal American Regiment of Foot, was appointed Geographer General under General Nathanael Greene and had unusual opportunity to observe geographically the vast wilderness beyond the Alleghenies. On his map the Kentucky River (where Boone was to establish a fort) was called the Cuttawa, the Green River was the Buffalo, the Cumberland was indicated as Shawanoe, and the Tennessee was the Cherokee. Though there were numerous trails in the Cumberland plateau, the Geographer General indicated only one, the Warrior's Path which he called the "Path to the Cuttawa Country." He too showed the Gap in the "Ouasioto" Mountains leading to the Cuttawa Country. 19

With the increase of map-making, more projects were launched. There were large colonizing schemes to induce settlement along the frontier, but colonizing was not the only idea in the heads of the wealthy Virginia investors. They were not unmindful of the riches in furs to be garnered in the Blue Ridge. In this connection Dr. Thomas Walker's expedition for the Loyal Land Company in 1750 was important. Dr. Walker, an Englishman, was sent into what is now Kentucky where the company had a grant of "eight hundred thousand acres." A man could buy fifty acres for five shillings sterling, the doctor explained. He was not only a physician but a surveyor as well, and primarily the purpose of these early expeditions was surveying—to lay out the boundaries of the land to be sold to incoming settlers. Such an expedition was composed usually of some six or eight men each equipped with horse, dog, and gun. Fortunately the doctor-surveyor was not illiterate like young Gabriel Arthur. Walker set down an interesting account of the expedition which was especially glowing from the trader's point of view. In their four months in the wilderness the Walker expedition killed, aside from buffalo, wild geese, and turkeys, fifty-three bears and twenty deer. And the doctor added that they could have trebled the number. Walker followed the Warrior's Path as young Gabriel Arthur had more than seventy years before. The rivers they crossed, as well as the places on the way which were sometimes no more than salt licks, bore Indian names. But when Dr. Walker reached the great barrier between Kentucky and Virginia he was so deeply moved by the vastness and grandeur of the 20

mountains that he called his companions about him. “It is worthy of a noble name,” said Dr. Walker. “Let us call it Cumberland for our Duke in far-off England.” When the expedition reached the gap that permitted them to pass through into the Cuttawa country he cried exultantly, “This too shall be named for our Duke.” So Cumberland Gap it became and the mountain known to pioneers as Laurel Mountain became instead Cumberland Mountain.

The doctor-surveyor could not know that one day he would be hailed as “the first white man in Cumberland Gap” by those sturdy settlers who were to follow his course. When Dr. Walker reached the Indians’ Totteroy River, or rather the two forks that combine to make it, he called the stream to the right, which touched West Virginia soil, Louisa or Levisa for the wife of the Duke of Cumberland.

This leader of the expedition of the Loyal Land Company jotted down much that he saw. There was the amazing “burning spring” that shot up right out of the earth, its flame so brilliant the doctor could read his map by the glow at a distance of several miles. Apparently he was not concerned with the cause but rather with the effect of the burning spring. He saw the painted picture language of the Indians on mountain side and tree trunk.

Dr. Walker returned on a second expedition in 1758, but he gained only partial knowledge of the wilderness land. However, the mountain he named determined the course of the trail which was to be laid out by Daniel Boone, and the gap through which he passed became the gateway for thousands of horizon-seekers.

Their coming was not without hazard.

The southern Indians resented the invasion of their hunting ground by the English. The French-Indians incited by the French settlers in the Mississippi Valley who wanted the wealth of fur-bearing animals for themselves, began to swoop down on the settlements of the English-speaking people along the frontier, massacring them by the hundreds.

The Assembly in Philadelphia turned a deaf ear to the frontiersmen’s plea for help, so the Scotch-Irish, accustomed to fighting for their rights, organized companies of Rangers to defend themselves against the attacks of the Indians. With continued massacre of their people their desperation grew. If they could have no voice in governmental matters in Pennsylvania and could expect no protection from that source against the warring Indians, they could move on. They did. On down the Valley of Virginia they came into Carolina. They built their little cabins, planted crops, and by 1764 had laid out two townships, one of which, Mecklenburg, figured in an important way in America’s independence.

As each settlement became more thickly settled the more venturesome spirits pressed on into the mountains. And as they moved forward, clearing forests and planting ground for their bread, they dislodged hunters and trappers who had preceded them. For all of them there was always the troublesome Indian to be reckoned with. A cunning warrior, he pounced upon the newcomer at most unexpected times. To maintain a measure of safety the pioneer began to build block houses and forts along the watercourses traveled by the Indians. Fur-trading posts were set up by the Crown but even when the Indian seemed satisfied with the exchange he might take prisoner a trader or explorer and subject him to torture, or even put him to death. The homes of settlers were objects of constant attack. It would take white men of more cunning than the Indian to deal with him: fearless and daring fighters.

About the time Dr. Walker had started on his expedition in 1755, a family living in Pennsylvania packed up their belongings and moved down into the Valley of Virginia. There were the father, his sons, and his brothers. They hadn’t stayed long in Rockingham County, barely long enough to raise a crop, when they moved again. This time they journeyed on down to the valley of the Yadkin River in North Carolina and there they stayed. All but one son—Daniel Boone, a lad of eighteen. Even as a boy he had roamed the woods alone, and once was lost for days. When his father and friends found him, guided by a stream of smoke rising in the distance, Daniel wasn’t in tears. Instead, seated on the pelt of a wild animal he had killed and roasting a piece of its meat at the fire, he was whistling gaily. He had made for himself a crude shelter of branches and pelts. It was useless to chide his son, the older Boone found out. So he saved his breath and let Daniel roam at his will. Soon the boy was exploring and hunting farther and farther into the mountains.

On one such venture the young hunter alone “cilled a bar” and left the record of his feat carved with his hunting knife upon a tree. His imagination was fired with the tales of warfare about him, of the courage and independence of the men who dwelt far up in the mountains. He knew of the heroism of George Washington who, four years after the Boones left Pennsylvania, had led a company of mountain men against the French. He had heard the stories of how Washington had been driven back with his mountain men at Great Meadows. Boone longed to be in the thick of the fray. So in 1755, when General Braddock came to “punish the French for their insolence” and Washington accompanied him with one hundred mountain men from North Carolina, Daniel Boone, for all his youth, was among them—as brave a fighter and as skilled a shot as the best.

This was high adventure for young Daniel. It spurred him to further daring, and he set out on more and more distant explorations. Each time he returned from his trips with marvelous tales of what he had seen, of unbelievable numbers of buffalo and deer and wild beasts he had encountered. He always had an audience. No one listened with greater eagerness than the pretty dark-eyed daughter of the Bryans who were neighbors to the Boones. Daniel was still a young man, only twenty-three, when in 1755 he married Rebecca Bryan. They had five sons and

four daughters. Rebecca stayed home and took care of the children, while her adventurous husband continued to rove and hunt on long expeditions.

Neighbors gossiped, even in a pioneer settlement. They said Daniel wasn't nice to Rebecca, going away all the time on such long hunting trips. They even talked to Rebecca about her careless husband. But Rebecca paid little heed, though she may have chided him in private for returning so tattered. Sometimes his hunting coat, which was a loose frock with a cape made from dressed deerskin, would literally be tied together when he returned. Even the fringe which Rebecca had painstakingly cut to trim his leggings and coat had been left hanging on jagged rocks and underbrush through which he had dragged himself. His coonskin cap, with the bushy brush of it hanging down on his neck, was sometimes a sorry sight. One can hear Rebecca asking, as the hunter removed his outer garments, "Were there no creeks on your journey?" His leather belt he hung upon a wall peg after he had oiled it with bear grease. His tomahawk which he always wore on the right side, and the hunting knife which he carried on the left with his powder horn and bullet pouch, he laid carefully aside. He inspected his trusty flintlock rifle.... He had slept under cliffs, wrapped in his buffalo blanket with his dog, with leaves and brush for a pillow. His thick club of hair had not been untied in weeks. The chute bark with which it was fastened was full of chinks. There was something worse. "What are you scratching for?" 25
Rebecca would pause from stirring the kettle at the hearth, to survey her husband who was digging his fingers into his scalp. "Lice!" gasped Rebecca. Instead of jowering, she would give him a good scrubbing, comb out his matted hair, and clean him up generally and thoroughly.

Daniel was a restless soul. And every time he returned home he was more restless. So the Boones moved from place to place and each time others went along with them. Daniel had a knack of leadership, but no sooner would everyone be settled around him than he'd pack up and go to another place. Daniel couldn't be crowded. He had to have elbow room no matter where he had to go to get it.

In the twenty-five years he spent in North Carolina Boone cleared ground, cut timber, and built a home many times—and all the while he continued to hunt and explore.

Finally returning from one of his long expeditions he told glowing tales of another country he had found. Bears were so thick, and deer, it would take a crew of men to help him kill them and salvage the rich hides. He persuaded Rebecca to come along with him and bring the children. Once more Rebecca packed up their few worldly goods, while Daniel made sure his guns were well oiled, his hunting knife whetted, his dogs fit for the journey—they meant as much to Boone as wife and children, gossips said—and the family started for a new home.

This time, in 1760, they went far from the Yadkin into the Watauga country of Tennessee. He crossed the Blue Ridge and the Unakas, and settled in what was then western North Carolina, now eastern Tennessee. That year he led a company as far westward as Abingdon, Virginia. But no sooner were they settled than Daniel up and left to go deeper into the forest. 26

Not only was he a great hunter, he was a good advance agent. Soon, through his glowing accounts, the fame of the country spread far, even to Pennsylvania and Virginia. Hunters came to join him. Some stayed with him wherever he went. It was through his leadership that the first permanent settlement was made in Tennessee in 1768.

But to go back a year. In 1767 Boone worked his way over the Big Sandy Trail in the country which Dr. Walker had seen back in 1750. Daniel lived alone in a crude hut on a fork of the Big Sandy River, close to a salt lick, you may be sure, for he had to have salt to season the wild meat which was his only food. He too saw the burning spring that had helped Dr. Walker to scrutinize his maps at night. In 1768 he entered Kentucky through Cumberland Gap and traversed the Warrior's Path. From Pilot Knob he viewed the Great Meadow. That would be something more to tell about when he got back home.

Though his neighbors may have considered him a shiftless fellow concerned only with hunting and exploring, a fellow who was ever moving from pillar to post, his very first visit to Watauga was not without significance.

It was the way of the wilderness that settlers followed the first hunters, and Boone with his companions had been in Watauga first in 1760. Eight years afterward a few families had followed the hunters' trail for good reason.

Things had been going miserably for immigrants in North Carolina. The situation was fast reaching a desperate point. Some of the oppressed were for violence if that was needed to obtain justice in the courts. Others reasoned that there was a better way out. Why not move away in a body? The wilderness of the Blue Ridge beckoned. It was under Virginia rule and perhaps life would not be so hard there. Because of Indian treaties the lands had been surveyed 27
in those rugged western reaches and could be legally leased or even purchased. The more level-headed mountain people reasoned in this way: Why not send one of their number on ahead to look over the region, negotiate for boundaries, and stake them out for families who decided to take up their abode there? A Scotch-Irishman named James Robertson took upon himself this task.

During this period of unrest in North Carolina, Boone had returned with Rebecca and the children to Watauga where they found others to welcome them. If indeed Daniel needed a welcome or wanted it. Again he cleared a piece of ground and built a log house. But the smoke no sooner curled up from the chimney than scores of Scotch-Irish from North Carolina, who could no longer bear the injustice of government officials, began to crowd into the valley around him. This irked Daniel, for he loved the freedom of the wilds. "I've got to have elbow room," he

complained to Rebecca, “I know a place—”

The Scotch-Irish, however, stayed on in Watauga.

They had had enough of injustice and were glad to escape a country where the more prosperous were making life hard for the less fortunate immigrants who continued to come down the Virginia Valley, and the mountain people who settled in the rugged western part of the state. Like their Scotch-Irish brothers in Pennsylvania, they had determined to find a remedy. They remembered how the Rangers in the Pennsylvania border settlements had been forced to take matters in their own hands to protect life and home, and they organized their protective band called the Regulators. If armed force was needed, they meant to use it. They found the Governor as indifferent to their appeals for fairness as the Pennsylvania Assembly had been to the Rangers’ protests. If North Carolina’s Governor had been a man of cool and fair judgment, the tragedy of Alamance might have been averted. On the other hand, the first decisive step toward American independence might have been lost, or at least delayed.

28

In ironic response to the pleas of the Regulators, the Governor of North Carolina summoned a force of one thousand militia men and led them into the western settlements. At the end of the day, May 16, 1771, two hundred and fifty of the two thousand Regulators who had gathered with their rifles at Alamance when they heard of the coming of the militia, lay dead. The living were forced to retreat.

If Robertson had planned his return it could not have come at a more auspicious moment. His neighbors had been sorely tried. They eagerly welcomed words of a better land in which to live, and sixteen families followed their leader to the Watauga country.

Things loomed dark for the new settlers for a time. It turned out that the lands staked out for them were neither in Virginia nor Carolina. Indeed Robertson and his neighbors found themselves quite “outside the boundaries of civilized government.”

The Scotch-Irish had not forgotten Ulster, and they lost no time in making a treaty with the Indians upon whose territory they really were. They drew up leases, and some of the seventeen families even purchased part of the land.

Soon the ax was ringing in the forest. A cluster of cabins sprang up. Another settlement was established and before long thousands came to join the seventeen families who had followed James Robertson. So long as there had been only a handful of neighbors the problem of government did not present itself. The level-headed thinkers of the group again put their heads together and pondered well. Now that they had burned their bridges behind them they must make firm the rock upon which they built. Above all they must stand united, with hearts and hands together for the well-being of all. To that end they formed an Association, the Watauga Association they called it, and adopted a constitution (1772) by which to live. It was “the first ever adopted by a community of American-born freemen,” says Theodore Roosevelt in *The Winning of the West*.

29

If Daniel Boone had been a man to glow with pride he might well have done so over the outcome of that first hunting trip he made to the Watauga country. But Daniel was a hunter, an adventurer, an explorer who loved above all else space. He didn’t like being crowded by a lot of neighbors. So again in 1773, calling his little family around the fireside one night, he told them he meant to pull up stakes and move on. They had only been there four years which was a brief time considering the laborious journey they’d had to get there, the hardships of life, of clearing ground and taking root again. However, if Rebecca offered protest it was overcome. Daniel had a way with him. Perhaps she even helped her husband convince members of her family that it was the thing to do. Her folks, the Bryans, told others. The word passed around the family circle until forty of the Bryans had decided they’d join Daniel and Rebecca. Boone sold his home. Why bother with it! He’d probably never be back there to live, for this time Daniel and Rebecca, with their children, the Bryans, and Captain William Russell, were going on a long journey. They were headed for Kentucky. Daniel had told them some fine and promising yarns about his lone expedition to that far-off country.

30

The way wasn’t easy. Following watercourses, fording swollen streams, picking their way over rocks and loose boulders, through mud and sand. Besides there was the constant dread of the Indian. Their fears were confirmed before they reached Cumberland Gap. While they were still in Powell Valley a band of Indians attacked Boone’s party. The women huddled together in terror while the men seized their guns.

But for all his skill as a marksman, Daniel Boone could not stay the hand of the Indian whose arrow pierced the heart of his oldest son. There was another grave in the wilderness and the disheartened party returned to the Watauga country. This time, however, Boone settled in the Clinch Valley.

The Indians continued on a rampage. Consequently it was nearly two years before Boone started again for Kentucky. This time he gained his goal, though at first he did not take Rebecca and his family. He meant to make a safe place for them to live.

These were times to try men’s souls. Everywhere man yearned for freedom. About this time a young Scotch-Irishman in Virginia astounded his hearers by a speech he made at St. John’s Church in Richmond. When the zealous patriot cried, “Give me liberty, or give me death,” the fervor and eloquence of his voice echoed down the valleys. It re-echoed through the mountains. That young orator, “Patrick Henry, and his Scotch-Irish brethren from the western Counties carried and held Virginia for Independence,” it has been said.

There was unity in thought and purpose among the Scotch-Irish whether they lived in highland or lowland and their purpose was to gain freedom and independence. A bond of feeling that could not have existed among the Dutch of New York, the Puritans of New England, the English of Virginia, even if they had not been so widely separated geographically. Moreover, the isolation of the Scotch-Irish in the wilderness, though it cut them off from voice in the government or protection by it, made them self-reliant people. They had had enough of royal government. Added to this was their natural hatred of British aggression, distaste for the unfairness of those in political power from whom they were so far removed by miles and mountains. They thought for themselves and acted accordingly. Their individualism marked them for leadership that was readily followed by others who also had known persecution: the Palatine Germans, the Dutch, and the Huguenots. They had another strong ally in the English who had come from Virginia to settle in the mountains and whose traditions of resolute action added to the mountaineer's spirit of independence. The flame of agitation was fanned by the unfairness of government officials in the lowlands. The mountain people had long since looked to their own protection and their Scotch-Irish nature persisted in resentment of unfairness from authority of any source. This spirit prevailed among the incoming settlers in Carolina. There was dissatisfaction between them and the planters, the men of means and influence who with unfair taxation and injustice persecuted the less prosperous newcomers. Discontent grew and brought on events that were forerunners of the expansive militant movement that came in American life.

First was the Declaration of Abingdon, Virginia, in January, 1775. Daniel Boone had led an expedition there sixteen years earlier and may have planted the seed in the minds of those who stayed on, while he went on to Kentucky. Title to much of the land which embraced Kentucky was claimed by the Cherokees. England still claimed the right to any territory in America and the war's beginnings left the whole thing in doubt. England might even make void Virginia's titles if she were so inclined. In the midst of these doubts and disputed claims several North Carolina gentlemen, including Richard Henderson and Nathaniel Hart, in the spring of 1775 formed themselves into the Transylvania Company for the purpose of acquiring title to the territory of Kentucky from the Cherokees. They meant to operate on a great scale, to establish an independent empire here in the "expansive West." They looked about for a man to help them. They didn't have to look long.

There was Daniel Boone. He had a background. He'd scouted all over the country. He'd fought with Washington against the French when he was only in his teens. He was a fearless fellow; he knew how to deal with the Indian. So the Transylvania Company employed Daniel as their representative to negotiate with the Cherokees. The council met at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga, a tributary of the Holston River. There the Cherokees ceded to the company for "ten thousand pounds, all the vast tract of land lying between the Ohio and Cumberland rivers, and west and south of the Kentucky." This region was called Transylvania.

So, just six years after his first hunting trip to Kentucky, Boone began to colonize it and that in flat defiance of the British government. He thumbed his nose too at a menacing proclamation of North Carolina's royal governor.

Now that the land was acquired by the Transylvania Company they would have to charter a course leading to and through it for prospective settlers. For theirs was a "land and improvement company." Again Daniel Boone was employed. This time his task was to open a path through the wilderness.

With ax and tomahawk, with fighting and tribulations, he blazed the trail from Holston River to the mouth of Otter Creek on the Kentucky River. "Boone's Trace," they called it, connecting with the Warrior's Path and its extensions into eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina through Cumberland Gap and even beyond. It became the Wilderness Trail or Wilderness Road. It was the first through course from the mother state of Virginia to the West.

In spite of the purchase of land from the Indian, in spite of all the treaties of peace, the cunning warrior persisted in attack upon the white men, in massacre of women and children, in capture of hunter and trapper.

Daniel Boone and his men had to safeguard their families and the future of their company. They set about building a fort. As for Boone, he felt himself "an instrument ordained to settle the wilderness." No hardship was too great, no sorrow too deep to deter him in his mission of "pioneering and subduing the wilderness for the habitation of civilized men."

After two years of hardship and toil a fort was built on the banks of the Kentucky River. It consisted of cabins of roughhewn logs surrounded by a stockade. Over this crude fort, in one cabin of which Boone and Rebecca lived with their family, a flag was raised on May 23, 1775. It marked a new and independent nation called Transylvania.

Only a week after the flag-raising in Kentucky the people of Mecklenburg, which had been established only eleven years, made another step toward independence. On May 31, 1775, the Mecklenburg Resolutions were adopted in North Carolina.

In the meantime the Revolution had begun and mountain men were first to join Washington against the British in the forces of Morgan's Riflemen and Nelson's Riflemen. Their skill with firearms, their fearlessness, made them invaluable to Washington. "It was their quality of cool courage and personal independence," said Raine, "that won the battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens and drove Lord Cornwallis to his surrender at Yorktown."

Each movement toward independence in Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina had been under the leadership of mountain men and the accomplishment of their several

declarations paved the way for the more widespread Continental Declaration of Independence at Philadelphia, July 4, 1776.

It echoed around the world, but Daniel Boone, that young rebel, didn't even hear of it until the following August. Whereupon the fearless hunter with the abandon of a happy lad danced a jig around the bonfire inside the stockade. It could have been an Elizabethan jig, ironically enough, for the Boones were English. Daniel tossed his coonskin cap into the air again and again and let out a war whoop that brought the terrified Rebecca hurrying to the cabin door, a whoop that pierced the silence of the forest beyond.

By the time the Declaration was signed the mountain people constituted one sixth of the settlement of the United States.

As for Daniel Boone, twenty-five years had passed since he, a boy of sixteen, had left Pennsylvania with his father and brothers. He was forty-one years old when he set up 35
housekeeping at Boonesborough where the fort stood on the banks of the Kentucky. Never in all his life had he been quite so settled. Daniel had acquired title to lands from the Transylvania Company and things looked promising. Rebecca too must have been happy in their security. The children could safely play inside the stockade even if they did squabble with the neighbors' children. Rebecca must have sung a ballad betimes as she cooked venison or wild turkey at the hearth, or swept the floor with her rived oak broom. For Daniel could whittle a broom for her while he sat meditating aloud on his past adventures. Daniel was satisfied. Rebecca could see that. Now with the colony established in the wilderness Daniel Boone had realized the dream of his life.

In the thirteen years Boone lived in Kentucky he continued to hunt and trap and explore. He took others along with him on his various expeditions. In January, 1778, with a party of thirty men he went to make salt at Blue Lick. He knew the places to go for he had found them previously by following the path of buffalo, deer, and bear that had gone there to lick salt. Boone and his men threw up rough shelters for themselves. Soon the kettles were boiling, the salt was made. They were in the midst of preparations to pack up their belongings and load the salt into bags when Daniel's keen ears caught the sound of moccasined feet in the underbrush nearby. Suddenly as if they had popped up out of the ground a band of Indians pounced upon the white men. All but three of Boone's party were captured. They escaped and after hiding the kettles took the salt back to the stockade. Daniel and two of his companions were borne off to Detroit.

Boone was a wary fellow, so he pretended to be quite contented with his lot and the Indians were so pleased with him they adopted him as a son into their tribe. He would have looked a 36
fright to Rebecca for the Indians cropped his hair close to the scalp save a tuft on the top of his head which was bedecked with trinkets—shells, teeth of wild animals, feathers. The women dressed him up in this fashion, first taking him to the river and giving him a thorough scrubbing "to take out his white blood." Then they painted his face with colors as bright as those of any chieftain in the tribe. Daniel was a good actor. He pretended to be highly pleased, but he was only awaiting the chance to escape. One day there was quite a stir in the camp. Daniel observed many new faces among the warriors. They talked and gesticulated excitedly, and Boone soon gathered the purpose of the powwow. "They're going on the warpath," Daniel said to himself, "and to my notion they're headed toward our stockade." While they continued to harangue among themselves Daniel stealthily made his escape. He covered the intervening one hundred and sixty miles in five days.

The Indians didn't carry out their plan to attack the fort until some weeks later and when they did march into view they were led by Captain Duquesne of the English Army.

The siege lasted for nine days but the veteran riflemen of the fort, under Boone's skillful direction, gained the day with only a loss of three or four men, while many of the four hundred Indians fell.

There were many other battles with the Indians who crossed the Ohio into Kentucky, and though Boone was always in the thick of the fray he came out uninjured.

And then misfortune came in another way.

Things had looked fair enough in the beginning when the Transylvania Company sold boundaries of land to settlers, with Colonel Henderson, a bright lawyer who had once been 37
appointed Associate Chief Justice, to look after the legal side of the transactions. The company asked only thirteen and one third cents per acre for the land for one year and an added half cent per acre quitrent to begin in 1780. At such a low rate it was possible for a man to purchase a boundary of six hundred acres. When Daniel talked it over with Rebecca they concluded he would not be overreaching himself to invest in such an acreage.

The Transylvania Company did a land-office business. By December of the first year after Colonel Henderson opened up his office for business in Boonesborough 560,000 acres were sold. That was all right for the company, but what of the purchaser? What with the squabbles and disputes concerning title between Indian and settler, English and French, Boone like others soon found himself with not a leg to stand on. He had bought "wildcat" land. Land-sharks cleaned him out.

At the age of fifty-four, in 1788, Daniel had to start all over again. With Rebecca at his side and a larger family he moved on.

Boone had scouted through the West Virginia country long before, when he had passed a

solitary winter in a hut on the Big Sandy. So now once more he turned in that direction, pressing on until he reached the mouth of the Great Kanawha River. He lived from place to place in the Kanawha country, following his old pursuits of hunting and trapping, and as usual absented himself from his fireside for long days at a stretch. But Rebecca was used to his ways. She looked after the family, cooked and mended. When Daniel returned home Rebecca always cleaned him up again before he started on another hunting trip.

Eleven years passed without a word being said about land titles. Then one day Daniel found 38
himself facing the same situation that had robbed him of his acres in Kentucky. A man of sixty-five, and with a family of seven, three boys and four girls—two of their boys had been killed in battle with the Indians—Daniel, though still a fearless hunter, didn't want to be bothered with squabbles over land titles. He told Rebecca there was an easier way around. There were places outside of the jurisdiction of the United States altogether. "We don't have to be beholden to anyone," he said boastfully.

Pioneer women followed their men. So once more Rebecca made ready for the journey. She mended garments; she gathered up their few cooking utensils and the furry hides that were their blankets. She tied some of her choice things in her apron. That she'd carry right on her arm. The boys helped their father make ready the great cumbersome cart that was to carry their possessions. When all was in readiness Daniel pulled on his coonskin cap and whistling up his dogs he started off resolutely ahead of his family.

On and on they went until they reached Spanish territory beyond the Mississippi in Upper Louisiana. There at Charette (fifty miles west of St. Louis) Daniel Boone remained for a score of years, still hunting and trapping.

Even after Rebecca died he stayed on in the log cabin that had been their home for so long. An old man of seventy-eight he was, with many a sorrow to look back upon. For him the trail had been a "bloody one," Daniel often reflected. He had seen two of his boys fall under the tomahawk, and his brothers too. He had seen Rebecca's grief and terror at bloodshed; her anxiety in the lonely life of the wilderness. He had seen her despair when the very ground in 39
which they had taken root was torn from under their feet. He had known the suffering of winter winds, the desolation of the forest. He had suffered innumerable hardships. All these things he lived again as he sat alone in the house where Rebecca had died.

But the spirit of the hunter still burned in the old man's bosom at the age of eighty-five. Even then he was all for shouldering his gun once more and setting out with an Indian lad to explore the Rockies. His son persuaded him to give up the thought. "You're too old, Pa. If you fall over a cliff your bones would be broke to smithereens. Come and live with me. My house is safe. It's all built of stone. The Indians can't burn down a stone house." After much bickering Daniel finally heeded his son and went to live with him. He died there in 1822.

The fort which he so proudly built and valiantly defended continues to bear his name, being one of at least thirty localities in the United States which take their name from the first pioneer of the great valley of the Mississippi. His body lies in a little cemetery in Kentucky's capital. A humble grave, though as you stand beside it you feel the spirit of the great hunter hovering near. A courageous explorer in leather breeches and coonskin cap blazed the trail through an unbroken wilderness to help build America.

At length through Cumberland Gap following Boone's Wilderness Trail came the ancestors of David Crockett, Samuel Houston, John C. Calhoun, "Stonewall" Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln. The Boones and Lincolns had been neighbors back in Pennsylvania in one of the most German settlements. Yet both families themselves were English.

40

The Mountaineer

Difficulties of communication are enough to explain the isolation of mountaineers. For long years, even until yesterday, the only roads were the beds of tortuous and rockstrewn watercourses that were dry when you started at sunup and were suddenly transformed by a downpour to swollen, turbulent streams, perilous even to ford.

But for all that, in 1803 there were a million settlers in the southern highlands. Hardships of life there might have shaken a man's faith but not his love of the country. In Kentucky alone in 1834 there were 500 pensioners of the Revolution. And when the guns roared at the opening of the Civil War, the southern highlanders sent 180,000 riflemen to the Union Army.

An isolated people drops easily into illiteracy. Cut off as the mountain men were from the outside world, they knew little of what was going on beyond their mountain walls. Even if newspapers had found their way to the mountaineer's cabin they would have been of little use to men who could not read. On the other hand, had the mountain men known of the great westward movement toward the plains few of them could have joined the caravans. The mountaineer had no money because he had no way to produce money. For that reason he could not even reach the nearest lowlands. Even if he had moved down into the lowlands he could not

hope to own land but would only have fallen once more into the unbearable state of his forbears in Ulster—that of tenant, or menial, with proprietors and bosses to harass his life. This peril alone was enough, aside from the lack of money, to make the highlander shrink from the society of the lowlands. The few who straggled down were glad enough to return to the cloister of the mountains. Besides the mountaineer didn't like the climate or the water down there. The sparkling, cool mountain brook, the constant breeze and bracing air were much more to his liking. Indeed the climate has had its effect upon the mountaineer, not only upon his physical being—he is tall and stalwart; few mountain men are dwarfed—but the bracing air enables him to toil for long days in the open. He can walk—or hoe corn on an almost perpendicular corn patch—from daylight till dark. He is patient and is never in a hurry. Time means nothing to him. Down in the Unakas a mountaineer once had a cataract removed from the right eye. The surgeon told him to return in a couple months when it would be safe to operate upon the other eye. Twenty years elapsed before the fellow returned to the doctor's office; when he was chided for the delay he answered unconcernedly, "I 'lowed 'twas no use to be in a hurry about it."

Yet for all their seeming indifference the people of the Blue Ridge, who locked their offspring generation after generation in mountain fastnesses that have barred the world, have kept alive and fresh in memory the unwritten song, the speech, the tradition of their Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Celtic ancestors.

Down through the centuries the blood and traditions of the pioneers have carried, creating a stalwart, a fearless people. Hidden away in the high crannies of the Blue Ridge they have come to be known as Mountaineers, Southern Highlanders, Appalachian Mountaineers, and Southern Mountaineers. But if you should ask a name of any of the old folk of the Blue Ridge country they doubtless will tell you, "We are mountain people." Never hill-billies! A hill-billy, the true mountain man or woman would have you know, is one born of the mountains who has got above his raising, ashamed to own his origin, one who holds his own mountain people up for scorn and ridicule. To mountain folk the word hill-billy is a slur of the worst sort. A slur that has caused murder.

They recognize no caste in the Blue Ridge Country. They are hospitable beyond measure, I have come to know in my long years of roaming through the mountains, first as court stenographer in isolated courts, then as ballad collector. I have never entered a mountain home throughout the Blue Ridge, no matter how humble the fare, where man, woman, or child offered apology for anything, their surroundings or the food and hospitality given to the stranger under their roof. "You're welcome to what we've got," is the invariable greeting—though the bed be a crude shuck tick shared with the children of the family, the fare cornbread and sorghum.

As a child I used to go to the cabin home of one of my father's kinsmen, a man who could neither read nor write, though he knew his Bible from cover to cover and could cite accurately chapter and verse of any text from which he chose to preach. There was but one room in his house of logs with its lean-to kitchen of rough planks, but never did I hear father's kinsman or his wife offer any word of excuse for anything. When it was time for victuals his wife, with all the graciousness of nobility, would stand behind her guests, while her man, seated at the head of the table, head bowed reverently, offered thanks. Then, lifting his head, he would fling wide his open palms in hospitality, "Thar hit is afore you. Take holt and eat all you're a-mind to!" And turning to his wife, "Marthie! watch their plates!" My great-aunt kept a vigilant eye on us as she walked around the table inviting us to partake, "Hure, have more of the snaps. Holp yourself to the ham meat. Take another piece of cornbread. 'Pon my word, you're pickin' like a wren. Eat hearty!" she urged, while above our heads she swished the fly-brush, a branch from the lilac bush in summer, otherwise a fringed paper attached to a stick.

They learned through necessity to put to use the things at hand, made their own crude implements to clear and break the stubborn soil; they learned to do without.

Their poteen (whiskey) craft, handed down by their Scotch-Irish ancestors, survives today in what outlanders term moonshining. Resentment against taxation of homemade whiskey survives too. The mountaineer reasons—I've heard them frequently in court—that the land is his, that he "heired it from his Pa, same as him from hisn," that he plants him some bread without no tax. Why can't he make whiskey from his corn without paying tax?

As for killing in the Blue Ridge Country. In my profession of court stenographer I have reported many trials for killing and almost invariably my sympathy has been with the slayer. Usually he admits that he had it to do either for a real or fancied wrong, or for a slur to his womenfolks. I've never known of gangsters, fingermen, or paid killers in the Blue Ridge Country.

With an inherent love of music, handed down from the wandering minstrels of Shakespeare's time, and with a wealth of ballads stored up in their heads and hearts, they found in these a joyful expression. Even the children, like their elders, can turn a hand to fashion a make-believe whistle of beech or maple, although they may never know that in so doing they are making an imitation of the Recorder upon which Queen Elizabeth herself was a skilled performer. Little Chad at the head of Raccoon Hollow will cut two corn stalks about the length of his small arms and earnestly proceed to make music by sawing one across the other, singing happily:

Corn stalk fiddle and shoe-string bow,
Best old fiddle in the country, oh!

not knowing that Haydn, the child, likewise sawed one stick upon another in imitation of playing the fiddle. And there's Little Babe of Lonesome Creek who delights in a gourd banjo. His grandsir, finding a straight, long-necked gourd among those clustered on the vine over kitchen-

house door, fashioned it into a banjo for the least one. Cut it flat on one side, did the old man, scooped out the seed, then covered the opening with a bit of brown paper made fast with flour paste, strung it with cat gut. And there, bless you, as fine a banjo as ever a body would want to pick.

They are neighborly in the Blue Ridge Country. They ask no favor of any man. Yet the road is never too rough, the way too far, for one neighbor to go to the aid of another in time of sickness or death. I knew a little boy who was dangerously sick with a strange ailment that primitive home remedies could not heal. Neighbor boys made a slide, a quilt tied to two strong saplings, and carried their little friend some ten miles over a rough mountain footpath to the nearest wagon road. There, placing him in a jolt wagon, the bed of which had been filled with hay to ease his suffering in jolting over the rough creek-bed road, they continued the journey on for thirty miles to the wayside railroad station where the cars bore the afflicted child on to town and the hospital.

45

A feud is the name given to their family quarrels by the level-landers. Mountain people never use the word. They say war or troubles. Their clannishness was inherited from their Scotch ancestors, and the wild, rugged mountains lent themselves perfectly to warfare among the clans. They had lived apart so long, protected from invasion and interference by their high mountain walls, that they learned to settle their own differences in their own way. They knew no law but the gun. If John warned his neighbor Mark that Mark's dog was killing his sheep and the neighbor did nothing about it, John settled the matter forthwith by shooting the dog. Families took sides. The flame was fanned. The feud grew.

However, in time of disaster, with grim faces and willing hands, they come to the aid of an unfortunate neighbor. Once when a terrible flood caused Troublesome to overflow its banks, carrying everything in its raging course, I saw a team of mules, the only means of support of a widowed mother of a dozen children, swept away. She hired the team to neighbors and thus earned a meager living. I remember the despair of that white, drawn face as the widow looked on helplessly at the destruction. Not a word did she speak. But before darkness the next day neighbor men far and wide, and none of them were prosperous, chipped in from their small hoards and got another team for the woman.

46

2. Land Of Feuds And Stills

Hatfields and Mccoys

When Dr. Walker, the Englishman, the first white man in Cumberland Gap, followed the course of Russell Fork out of Virginia into Kentucky back in 1750, he came upon a wooded point of land shaped like a triangle which was skirted by two forks of tepid water. The one to the left, as he faced westward, this English explorer called Levisa after the wife of the Duke of Cumberland.

Generations later a lovely mountain girl wore the name he had given the stream and she became the wife of the leader of a blood feud in the country where he set up his hut. It was a blood feud and a war of revenge that lasted more than forty years, the gruesome details of which have echoed around the world, cost scores of lives, and struck terror to the hearts of women and innocent children for several decades.

Devil Anse Hatfield, the leader of his clan, himself told me much of the story when I lived on Main Island Creek in Logan County, West Virginia, and on Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River. His wife Levicy—she who had been Levicy Chafin—did not spell her name as the name of the stream was spelled though she pronounced it the same way. It was a story that began with the killing of Harmon McCoy in 1863 by Devil Anse, who was a fearless fighter, a captain in a body of the Rebel forces known as the Logan Wildcats. Later, when Jonse Hatfield, the leader's oldest boy, grew to young manhood, he set eyes upon Rosanna McCoy, old Randall's daughter, and loved her at sight. But Devil Anse, because of the hatred he bore Rosanna's father, wouldn't permit his son to marry a McCoy. Rosanna loved Jonse madly. And he, swept away with wild, youthful passion, determined to have her. He did, though not in lawful wedlock.

47

Quarrels and bickerings between the sides sprang up at the slightest provocation. Even a dispute over the ownership of a hog resulted in another killing. Old Randall grew more bitter as time went on, what with Rosanna the mother of an illegitimate child and Jonse, even though he lived with her under his father's own roof, being faithless to the girl. And when, after the McCoys stabbed Ellison Hatfield to death, Devil Anse avenged his brother's death by inciting his clan to slay Randall's three boys, Little Randall, Tolbert and Phemer, the leader of the McCoys

vowed he'd not rest until he wiped out the last one of the other clan.

There were killings from ambush, open killings, threats, house-burnings. Once the McCoys had outtricked Devil Anse and had stolen his favorite son Jonse away while he was courting Rosanna. They meant to riddle him with bullets. But the Hatfields got word of it. Rosanna had betrayed her own family, so the McCoys felt, for the love of Jonse. The Hatfields came galloping along the road by moonlight, surrounded the McCoys, demanded the release of the prisoner, young Jonse, and even made a McCoy dust young Hatfield's boots.

When the law tried to interfere, Devil Anse built a drawbridge to span the creek beside which his house stood, stationed a bevy of armed Hatfields around his place, and ruled his clan like a 48
czar, directing their every deed.

The bloody feud did not end until 1920, after Sid Hatfield on Tug Fork, which with Levisa forms Big Sandy, had shot to death some nine men led by Baldwin-Felts detectives. They had killed Mayor Testerman of the village of Matewan. And when they came to arrest Sid on what he termed a trumped-up charge he reached for his gun. Sid, then chief of police of Matewan, West Virginia, had been accused of opposing labor unions among the coal miners and the coming of the detectives was the result. Though Hatfields and McCoys were both miners and coal operators, the killing of the detectives by Sid had no direct bearing upon the early differences between the clans. But the wholesale killing on the streets of Matewan in 1920 marked the end of the Hatfield-McCoy feud.

Devil Anse lived to see peace between his family and the McCoys.

Through thick and thin Levicy Chafin Hatfield stood by her man, though she pleaded with him to give up the strife.

They waged their blood battles on Levisa Fork and Tug, on Blackberry and Grapevine, creeks that were tributaries to the waters that swelled the Big Sandy as they flowed down through the mountains of West Virginia and Kentucky, emptying at last into the Ohio.

Levicy bore her mate thirteen children and died a few years after 1921 when the old clansman had passed to the beyond. There was not even a bullet mark on the old clansman. He died a natural death, mountain kinsmen will tell you proudly. He was buried with much pomp, as pomp 49
goes in the mountains, on Main Island Creek of West Virginia, in the family burying ground.

I knew Devil Anse and "Aunt" Levicy quite well. For, long centuries after my illustrious kinsman had returned to Merrie England to report upon his expedition for the Loyal Land Company in the Blue Ridge, I followed the same course he had blazed out of Virginia into the mountains of Kentucky and West Virginia. I lived for a number of years on Levisa Fork and Tug Fork and on Main Island Creek in West Virginia, where my nearest neighbors and best friends were Hatfields and, strangely enough, McCoys.

One day Devil Anse stopped at my house out of a downpour of rain and as he sat looking out of the open door he fell to talking of another rainy day many years before. "This puts me in the mind of the time I had to go away on business down to the mouth of Big Sandy," he said in his slow, even tones. All the time his eagle eyes were fixed on me. "I had to go down to the mouth of Big Sandy," he repeated, "on some business of my own. A man has a right to protect his family," he interrupted himself and arched a brow. "Anyway there come an awful rainstorm and creeks busted over their banks till I couldn't ford 'em—not even on Queen, as high-spirited a nag as any man ever straddled. But she balked that day seeing the creeks full of trees pulled up by the roots and even carcasses of calves and fowls. Queen just nat'erly rared back on her haunches and wouldn't budge. Couldn't coax nor flog her to wade into the water. A feller come ridin' up on a shiny black mare. Black and shiny as I ever saw and its neck straight as a fiddle bow. He said the waters looked too treacherous and turned and rode off over the mountain, his black hair drippin' wet on his shoulders. Anyway there I was held back another day and night till that master tide swept on down to the Big Waters [the Ohio]. When I got home my little girls Rosie 50
and Nancy come runnin' down the road to meet me. 'Pappy, look! what a strange man give us!' Rosie held out her hand and there was a sil'er dollar in it and Nancy brought her hand from behind her and openin' her fist she had a sil'er dollar too and little Lizbeth she come runnin' to show me what she had. Another sil'er dollar, bless you. 'This strange man were most powerful free-hearted,' sez I, gettin' off of Queen. I throwed the bridle over the fence rail and went on up to the house, packin' my saddle pockets over my arm and my gun and cartridge belt over my shoulder. My little girls come troopin' behind. Their Ma stood waitin' in the door twistin' the end of her apron like she ever did when she was warned. 'Captain Anderson!' sez she, that were her pet name for me, 'I've been nigh in a franzy. I 'lowed sure you and Queen had been washed plum down in the flood. Here, let me have them soppin' clothes and them muddy boots.' Levicy was the workinest woman you ever saw. Washed and scoured till my garmints looked like new. And after I'd got on clean dry clothes such a feast she set before me. 'Pon my word, it made me feel right sheepish. 'A body would think, Levicy,' sez I, 'that I were the Prodigal Son come home.' She spoke right up. 'See here, Anderson Hatfield, I won't have you handlin' no such talk about the sire of my little girls,' sez she, spoonin' the sweet potatoes on my plate, and smilin' so tender and good on me. Then my little girls gathered round to see what I'd fetched them. There was store candy and a pretty hair ribbon for each one that I taken out of the saddle pockets. And a gold breast pin for Levicy. Never saw a woman so pleased in my life. 'I don't aim to hold it back just to wear to meetin',' sez she. And she didn't. From then on she wore that gold breast 51
pin every day of her life. Said she meant to be buried with it. Well, 'ginst my little girls had et their candy and plaited each other's hair and tied on their new ribbons they hovered around me again to show their sil'er the strange man had give them. 'Captain Anderson,' sez Levicy, 'he

was handsome built and set his saddle proud and fearless. But not half so proud and fearless as you. Nor were he half so handsome.' I could feel her hand on my shoulder a-quiverin' a little grain like Levicy's hand ever did when she was plum happy. Then she went on to tell as she washed the dishes and Nancy and Rosie dried them and Lizbeth packed them off to the cupboard, about the strange man. 'He laid powerful admiration on our little girls.' Levicy was wipin' off the oilcloth on the table with her soapy dish rag. 'He had them line up in a row to see which was tallest, whilst I set him a snack. "Shut your eyes," sez he, "and open your mouth." They did, and bless you, Captain Anderson, what did he do but put a sil'er dollar in their mouth —each one.' By this time Nancy and Rosie and Lizbeth had finished the dishes and they come hoverin' round my knee again whilst I cleaned and polished my gun. Each one holdin' proud their sil'er dollar, turnin' it this way and that, rubbin' it on their dress sleeve to make the eagle shine. Just then, Jonse, my oldest boy, come gallopin' up the road on Prince, his little sorrel. He never stopped till he got right to the kitchen-house door. The chickens made a scattermint before him. 'Pa!' he shouted out, throwin' Prince's bridle out of his hand and jumpin' down to the ground. 'They've caught him! Robbed the bank at Charleston!' Levicy was drying the tin dishpan. She starred at Jonse and so did I. 'Caught who?' sez I. 'Jesse James' brother, Frank! It was him that was here. Him that Ma fed t'other day. Him that give Nancy and Rosie and Lizbeth 52
a sil'er dollar!' Levicy dropped the dishpan and retched a hand to the table. 'Mistress Levicy Chafin Hatfield!' sez I, 'never again can I leave this house in peace. A man's family's not safe with such scalawags prowlin' the country!'"

Then Devil Anse went on with the rest of the story.

Devil Anse, the leader of the Hatfield clan whose very name struck terror to the hearts of people, and Jesse James' brother Frank, highwayman and bank robber, had met on a mountain road, each unaware of the other's identity, each intent on his own business. Captain Anderson had gone down to the mouth of Big Sandy, the county seat, Catlettsburg, Kentucky, to buy ammunition with which to annihilate the McCoys. That story too the outside world heard afterward, for the clans met on Blackberry Creek and engaged in battle for several hours with dead and dying from both sides on the field—or rather in the bushes.

Whatever else has been attributed to Devil Anse he liked to prank as well as anyone. He took particular glee in telling the following story to me, his eagle eyes twinkling:

"One day a tin peddler come with his pack of shiny cook vessels in a shiny black oilcloth poke on his back. The fellow wore red-topped boots and a red flannel shirt, for all it was summer. His breeches had more patches than a scarecrow and his big felt hat had seen its best days too. He kept at Levicy to buy his wares but she was one that didn't favor shiny tinware. 'It rustes out,' she told the peddler. 'Nohow I've got plenty of iron cook vessels.' All the time the old peddler was trying to wheedle and coax her into buying something, a quart cup, a milk bucket, a dishpan, a washpan. I was inside in the sitting room resting myself on the sofa. I could hear the peddler outside on the stoop, bickering and haranguing at Levicy to buy. Finally I got my fill of 53
it and I tiptoed out through the kitchen-house, my gun over my shoulder. I went to the barn lot and turned loose Buck, a young bull we had that I'd been aimin' to swop Jim Vance. I give Buck one good wollop across the rump with the pam of my hand. He kicked up his heels and rushed forward, me close behind with my gun. The peddler took one look at Buck, so it peered to me, and Buck took one look at the peddler, lowered his head and charged. The peddler let out a war whoop and flew down the hillside like a thousand hornets had lit on him. The pack fell from his back and there was a scattermint of tinware from top to bottom of that hill. Buck shook his head and snorted. His eyes bugged outten the sockets. I couldn't tell if he was ragin' mad at the shiny tin cook vessels that was tanglin' his hoofs, or if it was the red shirt and red-topped boots of the peddler that riled Buck. Nohow Buck ducked his head again and bellowed, caught a shiny quart cup on each horn and a couple washpans on his forefeet and kept right on down the hill. By this time the tin peddler had scooted up a tall tree quick as a squirrel and there he set on a limb. Buck was ragin' and chargin' in circles around that tree. That bull was riled plum to a franzy and that tin peddler was yaller as a punkin. Skeert out of his wits. 'Come on down, you pore critter!' sez I. But he just opened his mouth and couldn't say a word, just a dry croak like a frog bein' swallored in sudden quicksand. 'Come on down,' I coaxed, 'I'll quile Buck down till he's peaceable as a kitten.'

"But the peddler just starred at me and shivered on the limb like a sparrow bird freezin' of a winter time in the snow. 'I'll tend to Buck!' I promised him. 'Come on down!' And to put his mind at ease I up with my rifle-gun, shot the quart tin cups offen Buck's horns and the 54
washpans offen his front hoofs. 'Now get back to the barn where you belong and behave yourself!' I sez to Buck and he scampered back up the hill as frolicsome as a lamb, pickin' his way careful like as a Jenny Wren through that scattermint of tinware.

"The peddler was still shiverin' on the tree limb overhead and his eyes buggin' out worser'n Buck's had when he ketched first sight of the feller's red shirt and the shiny tinware. 'Buck's gone,' I sez to him coaxin' like. 'You don't need to be skeert of him no more!' 'T-t-tain't B-b-buck!' the feller's teeth chattered. 'It's you, D-d-evil A-a-nse!' With that he drapped off the limb down to the ground at my feet. Swoonded dead away!"

Devil Anse Hatfield chuckled heartily. "'T-t-ain't Buck! B-b-uck,' sez he when he ketched his wind and revived up. 'It's you—D-d-evil Anse!'"

The rest of the story Captain Anderson himself would never tell but Aunt Levicy told me how he packed the tin peddler back up the hill to the house on his shoulder and had her cook him a big dinner of fried chicken and cornbread; how he gave the peddler a couple greenbacks that made

him plum paralyzed with pleasure and surprise; and how he had Jonse take the peddler back to the county seat, the peddler riding behind Jonse on Queen, where he bought a new supply of tinware and went on his way.

Except for such interludes of pranking, doubtless Aunt Levicy and old Randall's wife, Sarah McCoy, could never have survived the ordeal of the Hatfield-McCoy feud.

The women of both households lived days of torture, ever watchful of the approaching enemy. They spent sleepless nights of anguish, knowing too well the sound of gunshot, the cry of terror that meant another outbreak of the clans. And when the cross grew too heavy even for their 55
stoic shoulders to bear they ventured unbeknownst to their menfolks to the Good Shepherd of the Hills to beg his intercession, his prayers for peace.

Peacemaker

Autumn had painted the wooded hillside bright scarlet, golden brown, vivid orange, and yellow that shone in the late September sunlight like a giant canvas beyond the rambling farmhouse at the head of Garrett's Fork of Big Creek where dwelt the Good Shepherd of the Hills, William Dyke Garrett and his gentle wife. Here in Logan County in the heart of the rugged West Virginia country, Uncle Dyke and Aunt Sallie lived in the selfsame place for all of seventy years. Sallie Smith, she was, of Crawley's Creek, a few miles away, before she wed the young rebel of the Logan Wildcats. That was away back in 1867, February 19th, to be exact. He was twenty, she in her teens. He had been born and grew to young manhood in a cabin only a stone's throw from where he and Miss Sallie, as he always called her, went to housekeeping. As for their neighbors, there wasn't a person in the whole countryside that didn't love Sallie Garrett, nor one that didn't revere the kindly Apostle of the Book. So long had Dyke Garrett traveled up and down the valley comforting the sick, praying with the dying, funeralizing the dead.

I had heard him preach in various places through the West Virginia hills.

"Hello, Uncle Dyke!" I called from the roadside one autumn day in 1936.

"Howdy! and welcome!" he replied cheerily, rising at once from his straight chair and taking his place in the door. His wife stepped nimbly to his side, for all her ninety-odd years, and echoed 56
the husband's greeting.

It is the way of the mountains.

I lifted the wood latch on the gate and went up the white-pebbled path. Flower-bordered it was, with brilliant scarlet sage, purple bachelor buttons, golden glow. There was pretty-by-night, too, though their snow-white blossoms were closed tight in the bud for it was not yet sundown; only in the twilight and by night did the buds bloom out. "That's why they wear the name Pretty-by-Night," mountain folk will tell you. There were clusters of varicolored seven sisters lifting up their bright petals. Moss, some call it in the mountains. There were bright cockscomb and in a swamp corner of the foreyard a great bunch of cat-o'-nine tails straight as corn stalks.

Tall, erect stood the Good Shepherd of the Hills, fully six feet three in his boots, his white patriarchal beard pillowed on his breast. The blue-veined hands rested upon the back of his chair as he gazed at me from friendly eyes. Aunt Sallie, a slight bird-like little creature, reached scarcely to his shoulder. Her black sateen dress with fitted basque and full skirt was set off with a white apron edged with crocheted lace. The small knot of silver hair atop her head was held in place with an old-fashioned tucking comb. About her stooped shoulders was a knitted cape of black yarn.

"Take a chair," invited Uncle Dyke when I reached the porch, waving me to a low stool. "Miss Sallie al'lus favors the rocker yonder on account the high back eases her shoulders. She's not quite as peert as she was back in 1867."

"It took a bit of strength to tame Dyke and I had it to do." She addressed me rather than her husband. "He was give up to be the wildest young man in the country when he came back from 57
the Home War."

The Civil War having been ended for some two years and the young private of the Logan Wildcats having been tamed, he became converted to religion. Thereupon he began to preach the Gospel.

But never in all the years of his ministry from 1867 to 1938, when failing health took him from the pulpit, did Uncle Dyke Garrett receive a penny for preaching. He never had a salary. William Dyke Garrett got his living from the rugged little hillside farm that he tended with his own hands.

"Before I was converted to religion," he said, straightening in his chair, "I played the fiddle and many a time went to square dances. But once I got the Spirit in here,"—placing a wrinkled hand upon his breast—"I gave up frolic tunes and played only religious music. There are other ways for folks to get together and enjoy themselves without dancing. Now there's the Big Meeting! Every year on the first Sunday of September folks come from far and near here to Big Creek and

bring their basket dinner."

"Dyke started it many a year ago," Aunt Sallie interposed with prideful glance at her mate.

Again he took up the story. "After we've spread our basket dinner out on the grass all under the trees we have hymn-singing and—"

"Dyke reads from the Scripture and preaches a spell." Aunt Sallie meant that nothing should be left out. Nor did the old man chide her.

"Many a one has been converted at the Big Meeting"—his eyes glowed—"and nothing will stop it but the end of time. They'll have the Big Meeting every year long after I'm gone. I'm certain of that." 58

Presently his thoughts looped back to his wedding to Sallie Smith. "Our infare-wedding lasted three days. The first day at Sallie's, the second day at Pa's house, and the third right here in our own home. That was the way in those times. And I got so gleeful I fiddled and danced at the same time! That'll be seventy-one year come February of the year nineteen thirty-seven." Slowly he rolled his thumbs one around the other, then he stroked his long beard, eyes turned inward upon his thoughts. "Well, sir, if I should get married one hundred times I'd marry Miss Sallie Smith every time. We've traveled a long way together and we've had but few harsh words."

His mate lifted faded eyes to his. "Dyke, it was generally my fault," she said contritely, "but I was bound to scold when you'd get careless about your own self. I vow," the little old lady turned to me, "he took no thought of his health nor his life nor limb. There was nothing he feared—man nor beast nor weather. In the early days there were no roads in this country and he rode horseback from one church to another through the wilderness. In the dead of night I've known him to get up out of bed and go with a troubled neighbor who had come for him to pray with the dying."

Uncle Dyke chuckled softly. "Sometimes they were not as near death as I thought. Once I remember John Lawton came from way over in Hart County. His wife was at the point of death, he said. She had lived a mighty sorry life had Dessie Lawton."

"Parted John and his wife!" piped Aunt Sallie, "and that poor girl went to her grave worshiping the ground John Lawton walked on; hoping he'd come back to her. Dyke claims there's ever hope for them that repent, so when John brought word that Dessie wanted to make her peace 59
with the Lord before she died, Dyke said nothin' could stay him. So off he rode behind John to pray over that trollop!" Aunt Sallie's eyes blazed. "They forded the creek no tellin' how many times. They got chilled to the bone. When they got there Dyke stumbled into the house as fast as his cold, stiff legs could pack him, fell on his knees 'longside Dessie's bed and begun to pray with all his might. Then he tried to sing a hymn, but still never a word nor a moan out of Dessie, covered over from head to foot in the bed. Directly John reached over to lay a hand on her shoulder. 'Dessie, honey,' he coaxed, 'Brother Dyke Garrett's come to pray with you!' He shook the heap of covers. And bless you, what they thought was Dessie turned out to be a feather bolster. John snatched back the covers. The bed was empty except for that long feather bolster that strumpet had covered over lengthwise of the bed. Come to find out Dessie had sent John snipe huntin', so to speak, and she skipped out with a timber cruiser. Dyke was laid up for all of a week; took a deep cold on his chest from riding home in his wet clothes."

The old preacher smiled at the memory. "Could have been worse, like John Lawton said that night. 'Dessie's got principle!' said he. 'She could a-took my poke of seed corn, but there it is a-hangin' from the rafters. And she could a-took my savin's.' With that John Lawton pried a stone out of the hearth with the toe of his boot. Underneath it lay a little heap of silver coins. John blinked at it a moment. 'There it is. Dessie's shorely got principle. No two ways about it.' He shifted the stone back to place, tilted back in his chair, and patting his foot began to whistle a rakish tune. He was still whistling as I rode off into the bitter night."

There was another time Dyke recalled when old Granny Partlow sent word that she couldn't 60
hold out against the Lord no longer. Granny was nearing eighty and for thirty of her years she had sat a helpless cripple in a chair. At the birth of her seventeenth child, paralysis had overtaken Deborah, wife of Obadiah Partlow, rendering her useless to her spouse and their numerous offspring. She had protested bitterly, saying right out that it wasn't fair and that so long as the affliction was upon her she meant to ask no favor of the Lord. Deborah Partlow was through with prayer and Scripture and Meeting, though in health never had been there a more pious creature than Obadiah Partlow's wife. Neighbor folk saw her wither and pine through the years. A grim figure, she sat day in and day out in her chair wherever it was placed. Lifeless from the waist down, using her hands a little to peel potatoes or string beans, though so slow and laborious were the movements of the stiff fingers her children and Obadiah said they'd rather do any task themselves than to give it to her. At last she had become an old woman, shriveled, grim, still bitter about her fate.

No one was more surprised than Uncle Dyke Garrett when she sent for him.

"Granny Partlow craved baptism," Uncle Dyke remembered the story as clearly as though it had happened but yesterday. "The ice was all of a foot thick in the creek but men cut it with ax and maddock, spade and saw. It had to be a big opening to make room for Deborah Partlow and her chair. Though her children and grandchildren and old Obadiah protested—'It'll kill you!' 'You'll be stone dead before night!'—Granny had her way. Nor would she put on her bonnet or shawl. Resolute, she sat straight in her chair as neighbor men packed her through the snow to the creek. The women standing on the bank wept and wailed till they couldn't sing a hymn. 'It'll kill 61
Granny Partlow!' they cried."

Uncle Dyke was silent a long moment. “No one could ever rightly say how it come about. But the minute my two helpers brought the old woman up out of the icy waters she leaped out of her chair and took off up the bank for home, fleet as a partridge, through snow up to her knees, holding up her petticoats with both hands as she flew along. Lived to be a hundred and three. Hoed corn the day she died of sunstroke.” The Good Shepherd of the Hills sighed contentedly. “Deborah Partlow bein’ baptized under ice brought a heap of converts to religion.”

“But that baptizin’ caused me no end of anxiety,” Aunt Sallie took up the story. “That day when Dyke went out to saddle old Beck the snow was plum up to his boot tops. The mountains were white all around and the creek froze in a sheet of ice. But go Dyke would. I wropt his muffler twice around his neck, got his yarn mittens and pulse warmers too and throwed a sheep hide over the top of his wood saddle and one under it—to ease the nag’s back. He had wooden stirrups too. Made the whole thing himself. I dreaded to see Dyke ride off that winter’s day for there was a sharp wind that come down out of the hollow and froze even the breath of him on his long black beard till it looked white—white as it is today. I watched him ride off. Heard the nag’s feet crunching in the snow. All of three full days and nights he was gone, for at best the road to Hart County was rough and hard to travel. In the meantime come a blizzard. Not a soul passed this way, so I got no word of Dyke. I conjured a thousand thoughts in my mind. Maybe he’d met the same fate of old man Frasher who fell over a cliff in a blinding snowstorm. Maybe the nag had stumbled and sent Dyke headlong over some steep ridge. The children, we had several then, could see I was troubled, though I tried to hide it. Finally on the third night I had put our babes to bed and was sitting by the fire too troubled to sleep. I had about give up hope of seeing Dyke alive again. It was in the dead of night I heard a voice. It sounded strange and far off, calling ‘Hallo! Hallo!’, more like a pitiful moan it was. I lighted a pine stick at the hearth and hurried as best I could through the snow to where the voice was coming from. I stumbled once and fell over a stump and the pine torch fell from my hand. It sputtered in the snow and nearly went out before I could pull myself up to my feet. And all the time the voice seemed to be getting farther away. But it wasn’t. It was just getting weaker. In a few more steps I come on the nag deep in a snowdrift up to its shanks and there slumped over in the saddle was Dyke. His feet were froze fast in the stirrups. He was numb and nigh speechless. I wropt my shawl around him and hurried, back to the house, heated the fire poker red hot and with it I thawed Dyke Garrett’s boots loose from them wooden stirrups.” Aunt Sallie sighed. “Of course no mortal can tell when salvation will take holt on their heart but after Granny Partlow’s baptizing and Dyke having to be thawed out of his stirrups I was powerful thankful when the Spirit descended on a sinner in fair weather.”

62

“It’s not always womenfolks like Granny Partlow who are slow to open their heart to the Spirit. Now take Captain Anderson!

“In his home there never lived a more free-hearted man. Loved to have folks come and stay as long as they liked. Once I recall a man came to the county seat in court week. He was making tintypes and charged a few cents for them. Captain Anderson had his picture made and was so pleased with it he coaxed the fellow to go home with him so that he could get a tintype of Levicy and the children. He never stopped until he had ten dollars’ worth of tintypes and then he didn’t want the fellow to leave. But he did. Finally settled over on Beaver. His name was Jerome Bailey and he died a rich man and always said he got his start with the ten dollars he earned making tintypes for Captain Anderson Hatfield.”

63

Uncle Dyke reflected a long moment. “There’s good in all of us no matter how wicked we may seem to others. And down deep in the heart of me I knew my Captain would one day open his heart to salvation.”

Anyone could tell you how the Good Shepherd of the Hills through the long years had pleaded and prayed with Devil Anse to forsake the thorny path, even far back when they returned from the Home War. Already the Captain of the Wildcats had made a notch on his gunstock by killing Harmon McCoy in 1863. He was already the leader of his clan. And all the time Uncle Dyke kept pleading with his comrade to give up sin. But not until Uncle Dyke Garrett had preached and prayed for nearly fifty years and Devil Anse too had become an old man did he admit the error of his way. Not until then were the patience, faith, and hope of Uncle Dyke rewarded.

“It was one of the happiest days of my life,” he told me, “when Captain Anderson took my hand. Sitting right here we were together. It was in the falling weather. These hills all around about were a blaze of glory, like they are today. And here sat Captain Anderson, in this very rocking chair where Miss Sallie is sitting now. We were alone. Miss Sallie was busy with her posies down yonder near the gate. ‘Dyke,’ says the Captain of the Logan Wildcats, in a voice so soft I could scarce hear, ‘I’ve come into the light! I crave to own my God and Redeemer. I long to go down into the waters of baptism and be washed spotless of my transgressions.’ I could not move hand or foot. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. Captain Anderson gripped the arms of the rocker there as if to steady himself. A man who had tracked mountain lion and bear, panther and catamount. I could see the face of him, that old daredeviltry vanish away and on his countenance a childlike look of repentance. It took a heap o’ courage for Captain Anderson to admit his transgressions even to me, his lifelong friend. But I always knew that down deep in the heart of him there was good and that his hour would come when he’d fall upon his knees before the Master and say, ‘Here I am, forgive me Lord, a poor sinner!’ But when the words fell from his trembling lips I could not even cry out in rejoicing, ‘Thank God!’, like I always aimed to do when my comrade should come within the fold. I sat with my jaws locked, my tongue stilled. Captain Anderson spoke again. ‘Dyke,’ sez he, ‘brother Dyke ...’ I could feel my heart pounding like it would burst out of my breast. ‘Brother Dyke,’ he repeated the words slowly, pleadingly,

64

‘ain’t you aimin’ to give me the hand of fellowship?’ Then, still unable to utter a word, I reached out my hand and my comrade seized it, gripped it tight. There we sat looking at each other and so Miss Sallie found us as she came up the path there with her arms filled with posies, golden glow, and scarlet sage, and snow-white pretty-by-night just burst into bloom for it was sundown. ‘Men!’ said she, ‘at last you’re brothers in the faith! I know it. Ah! I’d know it from the look of peace on the faces of the two of you, even if I did not witness the sign of your hands clasped in fellowship!’ The next Sabbath day, it fell like on the third Sunday of the month, we witnessed the baptism of a once proud and desperate rebel. A rebel against the Master! The baptism of him and six of his sons as well who had not before received salvation.” 65

Swiftly the word passed along the creeks and through the quiet hollows. “Devil Anse has come through!” There was great rejoicing throughout the West Virginia hills, indeed throughout the southern mountains. Not only the leader of the Hatfields, but six of his sons, had “got religion” and “craved baptism.” Hundreds flocked from out the hollows of West Virginia and Kentucky to witness the Hatfield baptizing.

That was another autumn day only a few years ago as time goes.

The sun was sinking behind the mountain, casting long shadows on the waters of Island Creek when the Good Shepherd of the Hills moved slowly down the bank to the water’s edge. Behind him followed his old friend, no longer the emboldened Devil Anse with fire in his eagle eye, but a meek, a silent, penitent figure. The autumn breeze stirred his snow-white hair, his scant gray beard. Upon his breast the old clansman held respectfully his wide-brimmed felt as he walked with head uplifted in supplication. Behind him followed his six sons. Jonse came first, Jonse, who had loved pretty Rosanna McCoy, reckless Jonse, who like his father had slain he alone knew how many of the other side. Then came Cap, Elias, Joseph, Troy, Robert.

Slowly and with steady stride Uncle Dyke walked into the water. Up to the waist he stood holding the frayed Bible in his extended right hand. “Except ye shall repent and go into the waters of baptism ye shall perish. But if ye repent and accept salvation, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be washed whiter than snow,” the voice of the Good Shepherd of the Hills drifted down the valley. 66

“Amen!” intoned the trembling voice of Devil Anse.

“Amen!” echoed the six sons grouped about their aged sire.

Then Aunt Levicy, wife of the grim clansman, began singing in a quavering voice:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now I’m found,
Was blind, but now I see.

The wives and daughters, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of McCoys took up the doleful strain:

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

“Hit’s our sign of peace!” shouted old Aunt Emmie McCoy clapping her palsied hands high above her head, “the sign of peace ’twixt us and t’other side!” Whereupon Young Emmie McCoy, still in her teens, who had loved Little Sid Hatfield since their first day at school on Mate Creek, threw her arms about his sister and cried, “Can’t no one keep me and Little Sid apart from this day on.”

“Amen!” the voice of Devil Anse led the solemn chant. “Amen! God be praised!”

Jonse, the first-born of the Hatfields, bowed his head and his deep-throated “Amen! God be praised!” echoed down the valley. Then Cap and Troy, Tennis, Elias, Joe, Willis, and the rest joined in. All eyes turned toward Jonse. He who had loved pretty Rosanna McCoy when he was a lad, she a shy little miss. 67

Many at the baptizing remembered the first meeting of the two star-crossed lovers one autumn day long ago on Blackberry Creek. The day when young Randall and Tolbert, her brothers, were there. Old folks remembered too the time when Devil Anse had slain Harmon McCoy. But that was long ago and forgiven. “Let bygones be bygones,” Levicy had pleaded with her mate, and Sarah, wife of Old Randall, did likewise with her spouse. But only Levicy, of the two sorely tried women, had survived to witness the answer to her prayers—peace between the households with the baptism of Devil Anse and his six sons.

As one by one they went down into the waters of baptism, it was the voice of Levicy Chafin Hatfield that led in that best-loved hymn tune of the mountains:

On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand and cast a wistful eye
Toward Canaan’s fair and happy land where my possessions lie.
I’m bound for the Promised Land, I’m bound for the Promised Land.
Oh! who will come and go with me, I’m bound for the Promised Land.

The hills gave back the echo of their song.

It was a day of rejoicing.

As for Uncle Dyke Garrett he continued to journey up and down the broad valley and through the hills, preaching the Gospel of repentance, forgiveness, salvation. Above all he told of the baptism of Captain Anderson and his six boys.

From the very first Dyke Garrett was more than a preacher. 68

Along lonely creeks into quiet hollows he went to pray at the bedside of the dying, to comfort the bereft, to rejoice with the penitent. In the early days he was the only visitor beyond the family's own blood kin, so remote were the homes of the settlers one from the other. Like a breath from the outside world were Uncle Dyke's words of cheer, while to him they in the lonely cabins were indeed voices crying out in the wilderness. Nor did flood nor storm, his own discomfort and hardship deter him. Winter and summer, through storm and wind, he rode bearing the good tidings to the people of the West Virginia ruggeds.

And now here he sat this autumn day in 1937, alert and happy for all his ninety-six years. Bless you, he even talked of fighting!

"If anyone jumped on these United States without a good cause," he declared vehemently, "I'd fight for my country—" Uncle Dyke didn't quibble his words. "That is to say if Uncle Sam would take me. Me and my sword!" Again he faltered, adding reflectively, "But after all the Bible is the better weapon. With it I can conquer all things."

Slowly he arose from his chair and Aunt Sallie and I did likewise.

"Come," he invited, "I want you to see for yourself where I've baptized many a one that has come to me." He pointed to a pool in the creek beyond the house where he had made a small dam. As we stood together it was on the tip of my tongue to ask how many couples he had baptized, how many he had married. Abruptly with the uncanny sense of the mountaineer he lifted the questions out of my mind, though it could have been because so many others had asked the same things. "I've never kept count of the wedding ceremonies I have performed, nor of the baptisms," he said thoughtfully. "I have always felt that if it was the Lord's work I was doing, He would keep the count." 69

You didn't have to ask Uncle Dyke Garrett either which were the happiest days of his long life. You'd know from the look he bestowed upon his frail mate that his supreme happy hour was when he married Miss Sallie Smith. "My wedding day," he was saying as if the question had been asked, "that was the happiest day of my whole life. And next to that comes the day when the Lord chose me to administer baptism to Captain Anderson and his six boys. Such hours as these are a taste of heaven upon earth." His voice was hushed with solemnity. His brimming eyes were lifted to the hills. "Though it was a day of sorrow I am grateful that it also fell to my lot to preach the funeral of my lifelong friend Captain Anderson. Most of all though, my heart rejoiced because Captain Anderson had become like a little child, meek and penitent, worthy to enter the fold."

Uncle Dyke sat silent a long time. His wrinkled hands cupped bony knees. "It brought peace to Levicy's troubled heart." His eyes grew misty with unshed tears. "I see her now as she lay so peaceful in her shroud and on her bosom the gold breast pin she prized so much that Captain Anderson brought her the time he was stormbound, when he met that scalawag brother of Jesse James. She loved posies did Levicy and every springtime we take some to her grave, me and Miss Sallie."

At this, Miss Sallie, slipping her small hand through the bend of his arm, led the way down the flower-bordered path. "Posies are the brightness of a body's days," she said softly. "You can't just set them out and they'll bloom big. You have to work with them. Posies and human creatures are a heap alike. Sometimes they have to be pampered. Like Dyke here," she smiled 70 up at her aged mate. "I had to understand his ways, else I'd never have tamed him," she persisted. "He's the last surviving one of his company—the Logan Wildcats." Aunt Sallie's blue eyes lighted with pride. "I like to think of him outlasting me too."

I'd remember them always as they stood there in the sunset with the golden glow and scarlet sage and the snow-white pretty-by-night all about them, the two smiling contentedly as I waved them good-by far down at the bend of the road.

It was the last time I ever saw Uncle Dyke alive. The next May—1938—he died. I was gratified that it fell to my lot to attend his funeral. And what a worthy eulogy the Reverend John McNeely, whom Uncle Dyke always referred to as "my son in the Gospel," preached, taking for his text "My servant, Moses, is dead," a text that the two had agreed upon long before the Good Shepherd of the Hills passed away.

That day when the sermon was ended the great throng that filled the valley and the hillsides, gathering about the baptismal pool he himself had fashioned, sang Uncle Dyke's favorite hymn. Their voices blending like the notes of a giant organ swelled and filled the deep valley:

Like a star in the morning in its beauty,
Like the sun is the Bible to my soul,
Shining clear on the way of life and beauty,
As I hasten on my journey to the goal.

'Tis a lamp in the wilderness of sorrow,
'Tis a light on the weary pilgrim's way,
It will guide to the bright eternal morrow,
Shining more and more unto the Perfect Day.

'Tis the voice of a friend forever near me,
In the toil and the battle here below,
In the gloom of the valley, it shall cheer me,
Till the glory of the kingdom I shall know.

I shall stand in its glory and its beauty,
Till the earth and the heavens pass away,
Ever telling the wondrous, blessed story
Of the loving Lamb, the only living way.

Uncle Dyke chose also his own grave site in the family burying ground overlooking the house where he'd lived seventy-one years. Often he had visited the spot and picked out the place beside him where Miss Sallie should be laid to rest. His life had ended almost where it began. The house in which he was born stands only a few miles from that in which he died.

"He built this house his own self," Aunt Sallie quietly reiterated that evening as some of us lingered to comfort her. "We came here to Big Creek soon as we married. We've lived here seventy-one year." Through brimming eyes she gazed toward the new-made grave. "We traveled a long way together, me and Dyke—" a sob shook the frail little body—"and now, I'm goin' to be mighty lonesome."

Big Meeting is still carried on just as Uncle Dyke wished it.

In September, 1940, I went again to mingle with the hundreds who show their reverence for the Good Shepherd of the Hills by keeping fresh in memory his teaching through their prayers and hymns at the Big Meeting each autumn. And here again a worthy follower of Uncle Dyke Garrett eulogized his deeds and mourned his loss. And close by, for all her ninety-two years, his beloved Miss Sallie, with a trembling hand on the arm of a kinsman, listened intently while those who knew and loved him extolled her lost mate.

And now Miss Sallie is gone too. She died on July 28, 1941, at the age of ninety-three and loving hands place mountain flowers on her grave and that of Levicy Hatfield far across the mountain.

Taking Sides

Some took sides in the feuds that have been carried on throughout the Blue Ridge Country and thereby got themselves enthralled, while others, more tactful, managed to keep aloof and remain friends with the belligerents.

There's Uncle Chunk Craft on Millstone Creek in Letcher County. Enoch is his real name. There's nothing he likes better than to tell of the days when he was one of Morgan's raiders. Then, when he was only twenty-two, that was in 1864, Uncle Chunk slept in a cornfield near Greenville, Tennessee, the very night General John Hunt Morgan, who had taken shelter in a house a couple of miles away, was betrayed by the woman of the house and shot to death by Unionists.

"We were tuckered out," he said, "had tramped through rain and mud and finally rolled in our blankets, if we were lucky enough to have one, and fell asleep wherever it was. I burrowed in with a comrade. But we didn't get much rest. For, first thing you know, seemed I'd just dozed off, someone come shoutin' through the cornfield that the General had been killed. We shouldered our muskets and stumbled off through the field, grumbling and growling that we'd 'tend to the ones that had betrayed him. But even if the woman had been found I reckon we'd a-shunned killin' her. There's a heap that goes on in war that a man don't like to think on."

Uncle Chunk was proud to own, however, that he saw hard fighting through Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky and was glad enough when the war was ended. He came back, married Polly Ann Caudill, and settled down in Letcher. It wasn't long until another war started. This time between his neighbors. But with all the carryings-on between John Wright and Clabe Jones in the adjoining counties of Floyd and Knott, Enoch Craft managed to stay friends with both sides. Whichever side happened to round in at his home, hungry and footsore from scouting in the woods for the other faction, found a welcome at Uncle Chunk's and plenty to eat. "Fill up the kittle, Polly Ann," he'd call to his wife, as he went on digging potatoes. "Here comes some of John Wright's crew." Or, "Put on the beans, I see Clabe Jones's men comin'!"

And fill up the kettle Polly Ann did.

After the belligerents had eaten their fill, Uncle Chunk would try to reason with them to let the troubles drop. "A man thinks better on a full gut than a empty one," he argued. And at last, through his help, the Clabe Jones-John Wright feud ended.

In Bloody Breathitt in 1886, Willie Sewell was shot from ambush while making molasses on Frozen Creek. That started feeling, for Willie had lots of kinfolks. He himself was not without sin, for he had killed Jerry South. The Souths were related to the Cockrells. But when Willie

Sewell, who was a half-brother of Jim and Elbert Hargis, was shot the trouble, which became the Hargis-Cockrell feud, really began.

A quarter of a century after one of the most famous of Kentucky mountain trials—when Curt Jett was tried for the assassination of James B. Marcum and James Cockrell—the trouble was revived with the killing of Clay Watkins by Chester Fugate. This uprising, it was said, started when Sewell Fugate was defeated by Clay Watkins for the office of chairman of the county Board of Education. Chester quarreled with Clay over a petty debt. Three years before that time Amos, cousin of Chester, had shot and killed Deputy Sheriff Green Watkins, brother of Clay. When an enraged posse found Amos they filled him with bullets. Sixty years before, Hen Kilburn, grandfather of Chester Fugate, was taken from the county jail in Jackson and lynched for killing a man. It was the first time such a lynching had occurred at the county seat.

On Christmas morning in 1929, Chester Fugate was taken from the same jail and shot to death, but not in the courthouse yard. The posse took him out to a farm some miles away. That was the second lynching in Bloody Breathitt. There was a heavy snow on the ground, making a soft carpet for the swiftly moving feet of the mob numbering more than a score, as they hurried their victim away. Before entering Fugate's cell, they had bound the jailer, S. L. Combs, to make sure of no interference from that source.

Some miles from the county seat they stopped in a thicket on a farm.

That morning farmer Jones got up before daylight and with lantern on arm went out to milk the cows and feed the stock. He halted suddenly in the unbeaten snow for from a nearby thicket came a strange sound. At first the farmer thought it the moaning of a trapped animal. Holding the lantern overhead he stumbled on a few yards to find Chester Fugate in a pool of blood that stained the snow all about the crumpled figure. Bleeding profusely from thirteen gunshot wounds, Chester survived long enough to give the names of at least six of his assailants.

It was another outbreak in the Hargis-Cockrell feud.

Five of the men in the mob surrendered. They were bound over and released on bail. All were kin of Clay Watkins: Samuel J. was his brother, L. K. Rice his son-in-law, Allie Watkins his son, and Earl and Bent Howard were his nephews. The men signed their own bonds together with Jack Howard, uncle of Bent and Earl. The name of Elbert Hargis was also affixed to the bonds. The sixth man named by Chester Fugate before he died was Lee Watkins, a cousin of Clay, who said he would surrender.

The trouble went back more than a quarter of a century when Curtis Jett—his friends called him Curt—and others assassinated James B. Marcum and James Cockrell. Curt was a nephew of county Judge James Hargis, who was said by some to be the master mind behind the murders.

The state militia was called out to preserve order during the trial.

Things had been turbulent in Breathitt before. Back in 1878 Judge William Randall fled the bench after the slaying of county Judge John Burnett and his wife. However, the commencement of the Hargis-Cockrell feud in 1899 was over a contested election of county officers. The Fusionists or Republicans declared their men the winners, while the Democrats were equally certain of triumph. James Hargis was the Democrats' candidate for county judge, Ed Callahan for sheriff.

The leading law firm in all of eastern Kentucky at the time was that of James B. Marcum and O. H. Pollard, but when the election contest arose, the men dissolved partnership. Marcum represented the Republican contestants, his former partner looked to the affairs of the Democrats. Until this time Marcum had been a close personal friend as well as legal adviser to James Hargis.

Depositions for the contestants were being taken in Marcum's office when the two lawyers almost came to blows over Pollard's cross-examination of a witness, with Hargis and Callahan sitting close by. Harsh words were uttered and pistols drawn, and Hargis, Callahan, and Pollard were ordered from Marcum's office. When warrants were issued for them and Marcum also by police Judge T. P. Cardwell, Marcum appeared in court and paid a fine of twenty dollars. But Jim Hargis refused to be tried by Cardwell—the two men had been bad friends for some time. Then, instead of attempting alone the arrest of Hargis, the town marshal of Jackson, Tom Cockrell, called on his brother Jim to lend a hand.

It is said that when Tom went to arrest Hargis the latter refused to surrender, drawing his gun. But Tom covered Jim Hargis first. Whereupon Hargis's friend, Ed Callahan, who was close, covered Tom Cockrell and in the bat of an eye Jim Cockrell, his brother, covered Callahan. Seeing that the Cockrells had the best of them, both Jim Hargis and Ed Callahan surrendered. That incident passed without bloodshed and Marcum himself sent word to police Judge Cardwell that he didn't want to prosecute Hargis and asked that the case be dismissed, as it was.

That same year there was a school election.

"Marcum flew in a rage," said Hargis, "when I accused him of trying to vote a minor and he pulled his pistol on me but did not shoot."

Though that difference was also patched up, the families began taking sides in the many quarrels that followed. Accusations were made first by one side, then the other. Marcum accused Callahan of killing his uncle, and Callahan in turn charged that his father had been slain by Marcum's uncle.

In July, 1902, the flames of the feud were fanned to white heat.

Tom Cockrell, a minor, fought a pistol duel with Ben Hargis, Jim's brother, in a blind tiger, leaving Ben dead upon the floor. Tom was defended by his kinsman, J. B. Marcum, without fee. Tom's guardian, Dr. B. D. Cox, one of the leading physicians in Jackson, was married to a Cardwell whose family belonged to the Cockrell clan.

It was not long after Ben Hargis's death that his brother John, "Tige," was slain by Jerry Cardwell. Jerry claimed that it was in the exercise of his duty as train detective.

"Tige was disorderly," Jerry said, "when I tried to arrest him."

Anyway pistols were fired; Jerry was only wounded but Tige was killed. His death was followed shortly by that of Jim Hargis's half-brother. The shot came from ambush one night while he was making sorghum at his home, and no one knew who fired it.

On another night not long thereafter, Dr. Cox, who was guardian of the minor Tom Cockrell and the other Cockrell children, was hurrying along the streets of Jackson to the bedside of a patient.

When the doctor reached the corner across from the courthouse and in almost direct line with Judge Hargis's stable, he dropped with a bullet through the heart. Another shot was fired at close range and lodged in the doctor's body.

The evidence disclosed that at the time of the shooting Judge Hargis and Ed Callahan were 78
standing together in the rear of Hargis's stable from which direction the shots came. The Cockrells stated that Dr. Cox had been slain because of his family relationship with them and because of his participation in the defense of young Tom Cockrell, his ward.

The story of Dr. Cox's death was still on many lips when Curt Jett, who was Sheriff Ed Callahan's deputy, met Jim Cockrell in the dining room of the Arlington Hotel where they engaged in a quarrel and exchange of bullets. Neither was injured, but bad feeling continued between them.

Sometime during the morning of July 28, 1902, Curt and a couple of friends concealed themselves in the courthouse. At noon that day, in broad daylight, Jim Cockrell was shot dead on the street from a second-story window of the building. Across the way, from a second-story window of Hargis's store, Judge Jim Hargis and Sheriff Ed Callahan saw the shooting.

Jim Cockrell had assisted his brother, the town marshal, in arresting Jim Hargis and was the recognized leader of the Cockrell faction. He had spared no effort in obtaining evidence in his brother's behalf when young Tom was tried for killing Ben Hargis in the blind tiger.

Under cover of darkness Curt Jett and his companions were spirited away from the courthouse on horseback and no arrests were made.

In the meantime the trial of young Tom Cockrell for killing Ben Hargis was moved to Campton, but Judge Jim Hargis and his brother, Senator Alex Hargis, declared that they'd never reach Campton alive if they should go there to prosecute young Tom. So the case was dismissed. "Our enemies would kill us somewhere along the mountain road," the Hargises declared. 79

Jim Hargis loved his wife and children. He idolized his son Beach, who spent his days hanging around his father's store and squandering money that the doting parent supplied.

Up to November 9, 1902, according to information supplied by J. B. Marcum, there had been thirty persons killed in Breathitt County as a result of the feeling between the factions and to quote Marcum's own words, "the Lord only knows how many wounded."

After Marcum's assassination on May 4, 1903, his widow wrote the *Lexington Herald* that there had been thirty-eight homicides in Breathitt County during the time James Hargis presided as county judge. J. B. Marcum and his wife both had known for a long time that he was a marked man. Indeed, ever since he had represented the Fusionists in contesting the election of Jim Hargis as county judge, it was an open secret that Marcum would meet his doom sooner or later. Added to this was the animosity aroused on the Hargis side by Marcum's defense of young Tom Cockrell for killing Jim Hargis's brother Ben.

Marcum made an affidavit which he filed in the Breathitt Circuit Court declaring that he was marked for death. Others substantiated his statement by swearing to various plots that had been concocted to assassinate him. As a matter of fact while the feeling was raging high in the contest case he was a prisoner in his own home for seventy-two days, afraid to step out on his own porch. To protect himself against bullets he had a barricade built joining the rear of his house with a small yard. Whenever he left his home, which was seldom, he was accompanied by his wife and he carried one of his small children.

Once he went to Washington and stayed a month. It was during that time that his friend Dr. Cox 80
was assassinated. A client of Marcum's by the name of Mose Feltner came to his home to acquaint the lawyer with a plot against his life. Mose told how he had been given thirty-five dollars to commit the deed and a shotgun for the purpose. He also took Marcum to a woods and showed where four Winchester rifles had been concealed by him and his three companions. The guns, Mose said, were kept there during the day but were carried at night so that if he or his companions met Marcum they were prepared to kill him. The plot, so Mose declared, was to entice Marcum to his office on some pretext or other. Mose was to waylay him and pull the trigger. Mose went further. He told Marcum that the county officials had promised him immunity from punishment if he would carry out the plot and kill Marcum. When at last the election contest furore had quieted down Marcum concluded it was safe to venture forth to his law office and resume his practice.

On the morning of May 4th he had gone to the courthouse to file some papers in the case. He lingered for a while in the corridor to greet this one and that, then walked slowly through the corridor toward the front door. From where he stood talking with a friend, Benjamin Ewen, Marcum could see across the street Judge James Hargis and Sheriff Ed Callahan sitting in rocking chairs in front of Hargis's store. When the shots were fired that killed Marcum neither Hargis nor Callahan stirred. Their view was uninterrupted when the lifeless body plunged forward. They remained seated in their rocking chairs, looking neither to right nor to left. They made no effort to find out who did the shooting.

"My God! they have killed me!" cried Marcum as bullets struck through the spine and skull and he lunged forward dead.

Curt Jett, tall and angular with red hair and deep-set blue eyes, a man of many escapades, was convicted of the murder and sent to the penitentiary for life. The evidence of Captain B. J. Ewen, with whom Marcum was talking when shot, disclosed that Tom White, one of the conspirators, walked past Marcum glaring at him to attract his attention. As he did so Curt in the rear of the hallway of the courthouse fired the shots. Curt Jett's mother was a sister to Judge Hargis, and Curt, though only twenty-four at the time, was a deputy under Ed Callahan.

Nine years later on the morning of May 4, 1912, Ed Callahan, while sitting in his store at Crockettsville, a village some twenty-five miles from Jackson, the county seat, was killed. Callahan too was a marked man and knew it. Connecting his house and the store he had built a stockade to insure his safety as he passed from one to the other. There was a telephone on the wall near the back window of the store and he had just hung up the receiver after talking to a neighbor when two bullets in quick succession whizzed through the window from somewhere across the creek. One entered Callahan's breast, the other his thigh. Members of his family rushed to his side and carried him, sheltered by the stockade, to his home where he died.

The old law of Moses, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" still prevailed.

It is estimated that from 1902, when the Hargis-Cockrell feud started over an election contest, to 1912, more than one hundred men had lost their lives.

Like the feuds of Scotland, those of the southern mountains usually found kin standing by kin, but sometimes they quarreled and killed each other. In the Hargis-Cockrell feud, Marcum's sister was the wife of Alex Hargis. Curt Jett's mother was a half-sister to Alex and Jim Hargis. His father was a brother of the mother of the Cockrells, Tom and Jim. Yet Curt was openly accused of killing Jim Cockrell. Dr. Cox, who was slain early in the fray, was the guardian of young Tom Cockrell and Mrs. Cox was a sister of the police judge of Jackson, T. P. Cardwell, Jr., who was in office when he issued warrants for Marcum, Jim Hargis, and Ed Callahan when they had quarreled in Pollard's law office at the time depositions were being taken in the election contest.

Though Curt Jett, Mose Feltner, John Abner, and John Smith confessed to the assassination of J. B. Marcum, saying Jim Hargis and Ed Callahan planned the crime, Hargis and Callahan protested innocence. Even so Marcum's widow got a judgment for $8000 against the two for killing her husband. After John Smith confessed and was dismissed he turned bitterly against Hargis and Callahan and their faction and was suspected of attempting to assassinate Callahan a year before the deed was accomplished.

Around the store of Judge James Hargis conversation turned often to the troubles. If a woman came in to buy a can of baking powder she looked stealthily about before gossiping with another. If a man entered to buy a plug of tobacco or a poke of nails to mend a barn or fence, his swift eye swept the faces of customers and loiterers and presently he'd sidle off to one side and talk with some of his friends.

Young Beach Hargis, upon whom his father doted, heard this talk. He knew of the feeling of the different ones connected with the trouble. It was talked not only around the store but in the Hargis home. When the father wasn't about Beach and his mother mulled it over. Beach never was a lad to work. "Why should I?" he argued. "Pa's got plenty. And I aim to get what's coming to me while the old man's living."

If the father protested that Beach was squandering too much money, the mother shielded her son and wheedled Jim Hargis into giving him more.

"He's been pampered too much, Louellen," Judge Hargis often remonstrated with his wife. "Should we spare the rod and spoil the child?" And sometimes Evylee, Beach's sister, would plead with her father to forgive Beach once again for drunkenness and waywardness. Evylee had been away to school at Oxford University in Ohio near Cincinnati. She loved the nice things of life, particularly learning. Judge Hargis was an indulgent father. He wanted his children to have the best, both in education and dress. He wanted his boy Beach to go through college. But Beach had no fondness for book-learning or fine clothes.

"I've give up trying to do anything with him, Louellen," said Jim Hargis to his wife one day when they were together in the sitting room of their home. "Look yonder there he goes." He pointed a condemning finger at Beach reeling drunk along the sidewalk.

"Don't fret, Pa," Mrs. Hargis pleaded with her husband. "He's young. He'll mend his ways. Don't forsake him."

That was the day before the homicide.

Next day Beach was still drunk. He swaggered into the store, leered about for his father, and

not seeing him stumbled on past the racks where the guns lay, past the shelves laden with cartridges and shells, on into the rear room where coffins were lined in a somber row. Judge Hargis kept a general store that carried in stock most anything you could call for from baking soda and beeswax to plows, guns and coffins. Beach didn't notice the black-covered coffins or the guns. He stumbled along to a corner of the wareroom where he slumped on a keg of nails. There he sat a while mumbling to himself. His eyes were bloodshot, his face swollen from a fall or a fight. "The old man punched me in the jaw," he kept repeating, "and I'll—I'll—" 84

Frightened clerks hurried past him in waiting upon customers. No one tried to listen or understand. Beach kept on mumbling. After awhile he staggered out again. Later that same day he went to a barber shop for a shave and haircut. Suddenly he raised up from the chair and leering toward the street muttered at a man passing, "I thought that was the old man going yonder." It was not Judge Hargis, the barber assured Beach, so the drunken fellow settled back in the chair and the barber proceeded to lather his face.

Beach's sister, who was married to Dr. Hogg, often took her drunken brother in.

"Evylee's got no right to harbor Beach," Judge Hargis complained to his wife. "He's tore up our home and he will do the same for Evylee and her husband and for Dr. Hogg's business too. He's a plum vagabond and spoiled. And put on top of that whiskey, and a gun in his hand, the Lord only knows what that boy will do."

Out of one scrape into another, in jail and out, Beach Hargis went his way. The mother pleading with the father to forgive him and let him have another chance. The sister pleaded with Beach to quit drinking and carousing.

On the 17th day of February, 1908, Beach, still maudlin drunk, went again into his father's store. He didn't look at the guns in the racks this time. He glanced toward the wareroom where the black coffins stood in a row on wooden horses. "I'm looking for the old man," he muttered to a clerk. Then he reeled toward the counter and asked the clerk to give him a pistol. The clerk refused, saying he could not take a pistol out of stock, but added, "Your Pa's pistol is yonder in his desk drawer. You can take that." 85

Beach helped himself.

In the meantime Judge Hargis had come into the store just as Beach, with the pistol concealed in his shirt, went out.

In the drugstore of his brother-in-law, Dr. Hogg, Beach terrorized customers and the proprietor by pointing his pistol around promiscuously. He reeled out of the place without firing, however, and went back to his father's store. Someone later said all he had been drinking was a bottle of Brown's Bitters.

From where Judge Hargis stood in one part of the double storeroom he could see Beach sitting cross-legged in a chair near the front door. Beach spat on his shoe and slowly whetted his pocket knife, scowling sullenly now and then in his father's direction. He clicked the blade of his knife shut and slipped it into his pocket and sat with his arms dangling at his sides, head slumped on his breast.

A customer came in and asked Judge Hargis, "Where's Beach?"

The father pointed to the son. "There he is. I have done all I can for him and I cannot go about him or have anything to do with him." Then Judge Hargis repeated that Beach was destroying his business and would do the same with Dr. Hogg's business if Evylee kept on harboring him. 86

Not a word was spoken between father and son. But as Jim Hargis walked in his direction, Beach pulled himself up out of his chair, stepped around behind the spool case that stood on the end of the counter, leered at his father and moved toward him. Beach came within three feet of his father. The next thing they were grappling.

Terrified bystanders and clerks heard the report of five pistol shots. All five of the shots lodged in Jim Hargis's body. By this time the two men were on the floor. The father holding the son down with one arm, lifted in his right the smoking pistol. "He has shot me all to pieces," gasped Judge Hargis as he handed the pistol to a bystander. He died in a few minutes.

Loyal to her unfortunate son, Louellen, the widow of Judge Hargis, set about to get the ablest lawyers in the state to defend him. Will Young, matchless orator of Rowan County, was not able to clear Beach on the first trial. On the second, however, aided by the legal skill of Governor William O. Bradley, D. B. Redwine, J. J. C. Bach, Sam H. Kash, and Thomas L. Cope, Beach was sentenced to the penitentiary for life instead of the gallows.

As the years went by the mother continued to plead for her son's freedom. Time and again she made the journey to Frankfort to beg mercy of the governor. Weary and sad she lingered outside the door of the mansion. She hovered close to the entrance of the chief executive's suite in the capitol, pleading by look, if word was denied her. Finally the governor pardoned Beach Hargis, because, it was said, His Excellency could no longer bear the sight of the heartbroken mother. Beach was pardoned on promise of good behavior. 87

But scarcely was he back in Breathitt County when pistol shots were heard again. He rode out to the farm of relatives a few miles from Jackson and when the womenfolk spied him galloping up the lane they took to the attic in terror. Beach, reeling drunk, staggered into the dining room where the table was set for dinner. There was a platter of fried chicken, another of hot biscuits. He shot all the biscuits off the plate, threw the chicken out the door and didn't stop till he had riddled every dish on the table.

The womenfolk up in the attic, with fingers to ears, stared white and trembling at each other. Finally one of the girls reached out of the small window up under the eaves and, with the aid of a branch from the cherry tree close by, caught hold of the rope on the farm bell. Once the rope was in her hand she pulled it quickly again and again. The clanging of the bell brought the men from the fields but as they approached on the run through the cornfield and potato patch, Beach threw a leg over his horse and galloped away, shooting into the air.

He continued on the rampage. Out of one scrape into another.

His mother died of a broken heart. She had done all she could for her son but Beach Hargis went his reckless way.

He was sent to prison a second time, for the safety of all concerned, but he escaped about the time of the World War. No one has seen hide or hair of him since then. There have been many conjectures as to his whereabouts but no one really knows what has come of Judge Jim Hargis's slayer.

There is a fine State College in Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky, where Judge Will Young, whose eloquence saved Beach from the gallows, lived and died. On the college campus there is a Hargis Hall, named for Thomas F. Hargis, a Democrat and captain in the Confederate Army, and a relative of the reckless Beach.

As for Beach's cousin, Curt Jett, accused of murder, rape, and even the betrayal of a pretty mountain girl, convicted of the slaying of J. B. Marcum, he was pardoned from the penitentiary, got religion, and was, the last heard from, preaching the gospel through the mountains of Kentucky.

For all the shedding of blood of kith and kin in the Hargis-Cockrell feud, when our country was plunged into the World War, Bloody Breathitt had no draft quota because so many of her valiant sons hastened to volunteer.

Although many of the feuds in the Blue Ridge grew out of elections, they were not prompted by ambition, for the offices contested were not high ones like that of senator or congressman. Frequently they were lesser posts such as that of sheriff or jailer or school-board trustee. When the strife finally led to assassination the motive usually was the desire for safety. The one feared had to be removed by death.

One famous feud, however, was started over the possession of a wife's kitchen apron.

Tom Dillam's wife left him and one day passing his farm she spied a woman working in the field wearing one of her aprons. Mrs. Dillam flew into a rage, climbed the rail fence, and deliberately snatched the apron off the other woman. Tom went after her to the home of his father-in-law, John Bohn, to recover the apron. He quarreled with his wife and instantly killed Bohn who tried to interfere.

As the quarrels continued and the years went by, Dillam incited his relatives and friends and armed them as well. He finally had behind him a band of outlaws. In 1885, about the time the Martin-Tolliver feud in Rowan County was at its height, Mrs. Dillam's brother William had a dispute over timber with her estranged husband's brother George. Bohn killed Dillam but as he ran for shelter he himself was slain by two other brothers of Dillam, Sam and Curt.

As the feeling grew others were drawn into the fray. Brothers opposed brothers. The Dillams' sister was married to Lem Buffum, and because of Buffum's friendship with the Bohns he was hated by the Dillams.

There was a dance one Christmas night at which two of the Dillam band were slain by Buffum. From then on Sam Dillam dogged the steps of Lem Buffum who finally killed his tormentor. This so enraged the Dillam band they started a reign of terror. They were openly out to get any Buffum sympathizer. They riddled their homes with bullets, burned barns, waylaid the sympathizers and shot them to death without warning. Once a friend of the Buffums', Jack Smith, when the Buffum home was besieged, rushed in and carried out the aged mother of Lem. He bore her down to the river and leaping into a skiff rowed the old woman safely to the other side. On his return the Dillams shot him to death from ambush.

In such a high-handed fashion did they carry on their warfare that they made bold to seize Jake Kimbrell, a Buffum friend, at a dance. While some of the Dillam band held their prisoner fast other members of the crew shot him to death.

Their utter cruelty finally caused even some of their own faction to withdraw from the feud. Tom Dillam's brother Ab said outright that if they wanted to go on hunting Lem Buffum and terrorizing the country they'd have to do it without him. Lem's sister was married to Ab's son Jesse. One day in his absence they set upon Ab's house and shot it as full of holes as a sieve.

Women and children were no longer safe and the citizens decided something had to be done for protection. They asked the governor for troops. His refusal was bolstered by the alibi that first it was the duty of the sheriff of the county to attempt to capture the murderers. Then the judge of the county called for fifty militiamen. Instead of that number only fifteen came to restore law and order. But even before they arrived on the scene a lad on horseback saw them coming and galloped off to inform the outlaws who took to the woods.

With seven of the sheriff's men left to guard the home and family of Jesse Dillam, Jesse and several others sought safety in a log house some distance away. However, before they could reach the log house one of their number was killed, one fled and the rest managed to escape

into a nearby thicket.

When circuit court convened soon afterward the Dillam brothers, Tom and Curt, were arrested. Tom, having been released on a $5000 bail, was going toward the courthouse one day with his lawyer. Following close behind was Tom's lieutenant and another friend. On the way they passed the house where their wounded victims were staying and when within range of the place the outlaws drew their pistols. They did not know that Lem Buffum and his friends had been warned and were waiting for this moment. Suddenly a volley of bullets was poured upon the outlaws. Sixteen of the well-aimed shots had pierced Tom Dillam's body.

Hatred and lust for murder had by this time gone deep into the heart of Tom's son who became the leader of the band. If anyone opposed him in anything, he knew but one way to take care of the opposition and that by the gun. He gave one of the Dillam band twenty dollars and a gun to slay a rival. Tom's brother Curt was finally released on bail but it was not long until his bullet-torn body was found in the woods.

Fear on the part of those who had testified against the outlaw in his trial impelled the removal for all time of the cause of fear. The universe breathed easier after Tom's brother Curt was under the sod.

Martin-Tolliver Troubles

Troubles brewed around elections and courts.

Some years previously when the Talliaferro families changed their abode from Old Virginia to settle in Morgan County, Kentucky, it wasn't long until their name also was changed. Their neighbors found the name Talliaferro difficult to speak and they began to shorten the syllables to something that sounded like Tolliver. So Tolliver it was from then on.

Craig Tolliver's father became a prosperous farmer but with his prosperity came quarrels with a neighbor and finally a lawsuit. Tolliver was successful in the litigation, which incensed his neighbors. One night as he lay asleep in his bed the irate neighbors stealthily entered the house and shot him dead before the eyes of his fourteen-year-old son, Craig.

This early sight of high-handed murder embittered the boy who at once began to carry a gun and drink and lead a life of lawlessness.

In about 1880 he moved to Rowan County which became the scene of one of the bloodiest of Kentucky feuds, that of the Martins and Tollivers. Craig was the leader of his side. Gaunt and wiry, he stood six feet in his boots. His long drooping mustache was a sandy color like his goatee. His eyes, a light blue, were shifty and piercing, eyes that had the look of a snake charming a bird. In appearance Craig was a typical desperado. He swaggered about with gun at belt, a whiskey bottle on his hip.

At this time the secret ballot had not yet been instituted. Not only was the name of the voter called out but his choice as well. With the open ballot a man who bought votes knew how they were cast. Bribery and whiskey, both of which were plentiful and freely dispensed at voting time, went hand-in-hand with fights and corruption.

The stage was set for bloody feud in Rowan County by the time Cook Humphrey in 1884 ran for sheriff of the county on the Republican ticket against S. B. Gooden, Democrat.

That election day in August a group of men gathered in the courthouse yard at Morehead, the county seat, discussing the returns in heated tones.

Gooden lived in the town while his opponent lived about seven miles away on his father's farm.

"Cook Humphrey won by twelve votes," someone called out. At that a quarrel started. Fists were flying in the air. William Trumbo, kin of John Martin's wife who was Lucy Trumbo, made a remark to a man by the name of Price. And the next thing they were in a wrangle. There were Tollivers and Martins present as well as friends of both families and soon all of them were engaged in the controversy. Someone struck John Martin, supposedly with the butt of a gun, knocking out a front tooth and badly cutting his head. His blood stained the courthouse steps. As he scrambled to his feet cursing vengeance against John Day and Floyd Tolliver for wounding him, he drew his pistol and others did likewise.

The next moment Sol Bradley, the father of seven children, lay dead with a bullet through his brain. Young Ad Sizemore caught a bullet in the neck.

There was a dispute as to whether John Martin or Floyd Tolliver had killed Sol Bradley, who was a friend and partisan of Cook Humphrey. It was never decided who did the killing. But it started the Martin-Tolliver troubles.

The wounding of Ad Sizemore was generally laid to Sheriff John Day.

Forthwith the factions organized and armed themselves. There were Martins, Sizemores, and Humphrey on one side, Days and Tollivers on the other side.

John Martin, the son of Ben, lived not far from his father on Christy Creek, a few miles from Morehead. His brothers, Will and Dave, resided nearby. They had a sister, Sue, who was as fearless as the menfolks of her family. She resented bitterly the treatment of the Martins by the other side. Sue lived at home with her father and mother.

The Tollivers were more widely scattered. Floyd lived in Rowan, Marion and Craig in Morgan County, their cousins Bud, Jay, and Wiley lived in Elliott County.

Their clansmen, all Democrats, including Tom Allen Day and his brothers Mitch, Boone, and John, also Mace Keeton, Jeff and Alvin Bowling, James Oxley, and Bob Messer lived in Rowan County.

The Martins, Logans, and Matt Carey, the county clerk, all Republicans and friends of Cook Humphrey, newly elected sheriff, resented the killing of Sol Bradley, an innocent bystander. 94

There had been whisperings of threats laid to both sides. “As soon as the leaves put out good, I aim to get Floyd,” Martin is reported to have said. Similar mutterings were reported to have been uttered by Tolliver. “I’ll bide my time till the brush gets green; then I aim to have a reckoning. That Logan outfit, well-wishers of the Martins, are getting too uppity.”

It was Fentley Muse who told a tale-bearer that no good could come of such things and urged that all keep peace. But peace bonds were violated as fast as they were made. Pledges by Craig Tolliver to leave the county for good and all were broken.

There was more tale-bearing. There were those who, according to John Martin’s son Ben, later a World War hero, made the bullets for others to shoot, including one, a doctor, whom I knew well in later years. Ben Martin said of him angrily, “He filled more graves than any other man in Rowan County and yet he himself never fired a shot.” Ben’s aged mother, Mrs. Lucy Trumbo Martin, reiterated this often to me when I sat beside her on the porch of the old Cottage Hotel on Railroad Street in Morehead where much of the shooting took place. Indeed the old hostelry had been the scene of one of the fiercest gun battles between the Martins and Tollivers. It faced the Central Hotel across the tracks. The Galt House, the name by which the Carey combined boarding house and grocery-saloon was known during the Rowan County troubles, stood some distance away across the road from the courthouse.

It was a bleak day in December, 1884, following the August election in Rowan County when John Martin was struck on the head, that he and his wife Lucy and two of their small children 95 climbed into their jolt wagon out on Christy Creek and rode into town. While his wife and the children went to do some trading at a general store down the road, John met Sam Gooden, John Day, and Floyd Tolliver. Words passed between Martin and Tolliver after which John went into Carey’s saloon. As he stood at the bar Floyd Tolliver came up and repeated what he had said to Martin outside—something to the effect that Martin had been wanting to bulldoze him. Martin denied the charge but Tolliver repeated, “Yes, by God, you have, and I am not going to permit it.” To which Martin answered, “If you must have a fight, I am ready for you.” At this Floyd put his hand in his pocket. Martin, thinking, so his wife and son told me, that Floyd Tolliver was about to draw his gun, drew his own in self-defense. Though Martin was quicker on the trigger than Tolliver, who now had his gun out of the holster, Martin did not have time to get his weapon completely out of his pocket. He shot through it, killing Floyd Tolliver almost instantly. “Boys,” Floyd managed to gasp, turning his eyes toward friends who rushed into the bar, “remember what you swore to do. You said you would kill him and you must keep your word.”

Martin gave himself up to the law. By this time a mob, friends of both sides, had gathered around and Martin was hurried, half dragged, across the road to the jail behind the courthouse.

In order to protect the prisoner from violence he was taken to the Winchester, Kentucky, jail next day. But he had been there only six days when a band of five men presented themselves to the jailer with an order, apparently signed by the proper authorities, commanding Martin’s return to Rowan County. He pleaded with the jailer not to surrender him. “It is only a plot to kill 96 me,” he cried.

That day Martin’s wife had been to see him in his cell. She took him some cornbread and a clean shirt and socks. Little did she dream when she got on the train to return to Morehead that night that her husband sat handcuffed in the baggage coach ahead. Around the prisoner stood his five captors: Alvin Bowling, Edward and Milt Evans, a man named Hall, and another by the name of Eastman.

When the train was within five miles of the county seat of Rowan, at a village called Farmers, it was boarded by several masked men who rushed into the baggage car and shot John Martin, helpless and handcuffed, to death.

“They’ve killed him!” Lucy Trumbo Martin screamed at the sound of the first shot, though until that moment she had not known her husband was on the train. “I knew they had killed John,” she told her friends at the time and often afterward.

When the train bearing John Martin’s bullet-torn body reached Morehead he was carried, still breathing, into the old Central Hotel where he died that night. In the meantime his distracted wife had sent for their children and her mother who was staying with the family on the farm on Christy Creek. An old darky who had long lived at the county seat mounted his half-blind mule and rode out along the lonely creek that cold winter night to carry the sad tidings to the Martin household. He also rode ahead of them on the journey back with the corpse of John Martin later that same night.

“Hesh!” Granny Trumbo warned the children huddled in the bed of the wagon as it rumbled

along the creek bed road, “Hesh! no telling who’s hid in the bresh to kill us.” The children sobbed fearfully. Ben, the older of the two small boys, sat dry-eyed. His small hands sought 97
those of his father cold in death and still in irons. “Pa, they didn’t give you no chance,” he murmured bitterly. “You were helpless as a trapped deer. They didn’t give you no chance.”

It wasn’t a cry of revenge but of heartbreak, one that the mother and the other children would remember always. And Granny Trumbo, sitting bravely erect on the board seat of the wagon beside her widowed daughter, gripped the reins and urged the weary team onward along the frozen road, keeping close behind the silent horseman ahead.

In March of the following year another of the Martin side, Stewart Bumgartner, a deputy sheriff of Cook Humphrey, was shot from ambush as he rode along the road some six miles from Morehead.

A month later Taylor Young, county attorney of Rowan, was shot in the shoulder as he rode along another lonely road in the county. Though Young heartily disclaimed any connection with either side, he was accused by the Martins of being a well-wisher of the Tollivers. Again, as in the Bumgartner case, no arrests were made. However, when Ed Pierce was convicted some time later of highway robbery and jailed in Montgomery County, he confessed to waylaying Taylor Young but put the blame of the actual shooting on Ben Rayburn. Pierce said it was plotted by Sheriff Humphrey who assured him and Rayburn of all the whiskey they could drink and two dollars a day while they were watching for Young; when they had killed him they were to receive two hundred and fifty dollars.

After that, one Sunday morning, Craig Tolliver, who was town marshal of Morehead, accompanied by a half dozen men, went to the home of old Ben Martin, father of John. Craig 98
told Mrs. Martin that he had warrants for the arrest of Cook Humphrey and Ben Rayburn. At first she said the two were not there, that only her daughters, Sue, Annie, little Rena, and a married daughter, Mrs. Richmond Tussey, were in the house. It was a fact; her husband and her two sons, Will and Dave, whose lives had been threatened, had gone to Kansas.

The Tollivers, however, were not to be deceived. They had seen Cook Humphrey, carrying his gun, enter the Martin house the evening before. The house, a two-story frame with the old part of logs stood at the foot of a hill about thirty feet from the road. Tolliver’s band, including Mark Keeton, Jeff Bowling, Tom Allen Day, John and Boone Day, Mitch and Jim Oxley, and Bob Messer, were well armed. They demanded that Humphrey and Rayburn surrender, saying they had warrants for their arrest for the attempted assassination of Taylor Young. The two men asked to see the warrants and when the documents of arrest were not forthcoming they flatly refused to surrender. Then Craig Tolliver stationed his crew in the bushes all around the Martin house. Watching his chance he finally slipped inside and up the narrow stairway. Humphrey spied him, rushed forward and striking his gun discharged it in Craig’s face. Craig fell backward. Wiping the blood from forehead and cheeks he hurried out into the yard.

Sue Martin dashed past him headed toward town for help. But no sooner did she reach the county seat than she was arrested and put in jail. Craig and his crew were still surrounding the Martin house, and finally one of them called out that if Rayburn and Humphrey did not surrender they would burn the place down. It was known that Tom Allen Day was one of the 99
best marksmen in the county, so Mrs. Martin, in an effort to help Rayburn and Humphrey escape, ran toward the barn where Day was ambushed. He had his gun uplifted and leveled at the fleeing men. Mrs. Martin struck the gun upward and the shots went wild. But the rest of the Tolliver crew poured lead toward the two men. Rayburn was slain but Humphrey escaped. Knowing he still held on to his Winchester the Tollivers feared to go into the brush after him.

The body of Rayburn lay all night where it fell. Friends feared to approach it. The next day, however, they piled fence rails about the corpse to keep hogs from destroying it.

At dusk that day the Tolliver crew set fire to the Martin house and burned it to the ground. The women escaped, seeking shelter under a tree. Mrs. Martin’s married daughter, Mrs. Tussey, was carried out with her young babe. Another of the Martin girls went to Morehead to see Sue, and she too was arrested and put in jail.

The militia was called out, arriving on the following day. The Martin girls were promptly released. Sue had revenge in her heart for the insult and humiliation of false arrest.

Later while the Tollivers were barricaded in a hotel down near the railroad tracks in Morehead a plump roast turkey was sent in for their dinner. They wondered whose generosity had prompted the act. But on sniffing the well-roasted fowl they began to suspect a trick. Upon examination it was found that the turkey contained enough arsenic to kill a dozen men. Sue Martin was suspected but nothing was done about it. There was not sufficient evidence to warrant arrest.

No sooner had the militia been removed from Morehead than the Tollivers set upon the Galt 100
House where Cook Humphrey, Howard Logan, Mat Carey, and others were staying. There wasn’t a windowpane left in the place when they finished. The doors were splintered to smithereens. In the midst of the fusillade of bullets Cook Humphrey grabbed up a hymn book from the organ in the musty parlor, held it over his heart, and thereby saved his life. A bullet lodged in the thick leather cover of the book.

Things quieted down for some months and Craig Tolliver vowed he was through with the trouble. “I’m a quiet, peaceable man,” he went about saying, “and the citizens ought to encourage my good behavior by electing me police judge.” But when he set out canvassing for votes he carried a Winchester. The other candidates forthwith dropped out of the race, leaving

Craig the only one on the ticket.

When Boone Logan stepped up to the voting booth Craig was close enough to hear what was said. The election officer told Boone who was running and the latter expressed himself in no uncertain terms. He said he'd rather vote for the worst man in the county than for Craig Tolliver.

Boone Logan was a well-educated, peaceable citizen and practiced law in Morehead.

Not long after Craig Tolliver was elected police judge he contrived to have two younger brothers of Boone Logan arrested on a charge of kukluxing. Marshal Manning and twelve men repaired to the Logan home two miles from Morehead. The father, Dr. Logan, prevailed upon his young sons to surrender and Tolliver agreed that the boys would be taken to town and given a fair trial. But they had walked scarcely ten feet from the house when the Tolliver posse shot the boys to death and trampled the bullet-torn faces into the earth and rode on to town.

The motive behind the murder of the innocent Logan boys was that Craig Tolliver knew they would be chief witnesses for their father, who was charged by Tolliver with having conspired to kill Judge Cole. Craig decided that the best way out was to end the lives of Dr. Logan's sons. No sooner had this been accomplished than Tolliver sent word to Boone Logan to get out of the county.

Boone got out of the county. He went to Frankfort to seek aid and counsel of the governor. But Governor Knott said that the state had done all it could for the relief of the citizens of Rowan County. Logan then turned to Hiram Pigman, who had had trouble with Craig Tolliver, and together they solicited the support of Sheriff Hogg in securing the aid of one hundred and fifty of the county's best citizens in bringing the Tollivers to justice. As a means to that end Boone Logan went to Cincinnati where he purchased a supply of Winchester rifles.

Those who didn't have a Winchester shouldered muskets, shotguns, and other firearms. Warrants of arrest against the Tollivers on charges of murder, arson, and various other crimes and misdemeanors were issued and the date set for the arrest of the men was June 22, 1887.

Early that morning before daybreak more than one hundred armed men in the posse were stationed in groups at seven different points outside of Morehead.

Craig Tolliver was apprehensive so he walked out of his saloon—he operated two at the time—and called his clan together at the American Hotel. There they lay in wait and presently one of the crew saw a man named Byron going down the street. They knew Byron to be a member of the posse. They fired on him and he took to his heels with the Tollivers in pursuit. One of their number, Bud Tolliver, fell with a bullet in his knee. He crept off in the weeds for safety.

The Logan posse, in order to identify themselves and avoid their own bullets, were fighting bareheaded. The Tollivers seeing this threw away their hats which helped a couple of their number to escape. "The two Mannings never did stop running until they got entirely out of the state," so the story went. So quickly did the posse increase they seemed fairly to spring out of the ground.

The Tollivers now retreated to the Central Hotel but they soon fled the place when the posse pelted the old hostelry with bullets.

Jay Tolliver was killed a short distance away, on the hill beyond Triplett Creek, and Craig was dropped by a bullet in the leg when he was crossing the railroad. The tracks separated the Cottage Hotel and the Central Hotel both of which were in sight of the Galt House, also known as the Carey House, where Floyd Tolliver had been killed by John Martin during the preceding December.

As marksmen the posse surpassed the Tollivers in this street battle for only one of their number was wounded and that was Bud Madden. He was shot by "Kate" Tolliver, a boy scarcely fourteen years old. Young "Kate," or Cal, as he was sometimes called, was as fearless as a mountain lion. Never once did he run for shelter during the shooting. And when his uncle Craig lay dying of seventeen bullet wounds the boy went to him, removed his watch and pocketbook, then crawled away under the Central Hotel where he remained until darkness when he made his way to the woods.

The battle was waged for more than two hours. The posse was determined to clear the scene of Tollivers.

They found Bud unable to crawl out from his hiding place in the weeds. He asked no mercy, nor was mercy granted. A gun was placed close to Bud's head. His brains were blown out. Another of the Tolliver clan, Hiram Cooper, thought to conceal himself in a wardrobe in Allie Young's room in the Central Hotel. (Allie was the son of Taylor Young whose life had been attempted.) But Cooper, like Bud, was shown no mercy. He was dragged out into the middle of the floor to meet Bud's fate.

The bodies of the Tollivers were gathered up, Jay's from the hillside beyond Triplett Creek, Bud's from the weeds where he had crawled to hide, Craig's from where it lay near the railroad tracks, and that of their confederate, Hiram Cooper, from beside the wardrobe wherein he had tried to hide. The bullet-riddled bodies were washed and laid out in a row in the musty sitting room of the old American House. This last office for the dead was performed by members of the posse.

While the corpses still lay cold in the quiet sitting room, a short distance away in the courthouse there was a spirited gathering of stern and earnest men. Their leader, Boone Logan, whose

young brothers had been brutally slain by the Tollivers, arose and addressed the crowd.

When the last word of his grave speech had been uttered the men silently drew up a resolution which read in part as follows:

“If anyone is arrested for this day’s work we will reassemble and punish to the death any man who offers the molestation.”

Coffins for the four bodies that lay in shrouds in the old hotel were brought from Lexington. The remains of the Tollivers, Craig, Jay, and Bud, were hauled to Elliott County for burial, while that of Hiram Cooper was removed by his friends to the family burying ground in the outskirts of Rowan County.

The death of these four men brought the total number slain in the Martin-Tolliver feud to twenty-one.

Tragedy stalked two of the crew who had been connected with the killing of John Martin while he sat handcuffed in the baggage coach: Jeff Bowling killed his father-in-law in Ohio and was hanged for the crime; Alvin killed the town marshal of Mt. Sterling, not many miles from Morehead, and was sent to the penitentiary for twenty-one years.

Although Craig Tolliver lived by the sword and died by it, there was no record to be found that he ever actually killed a man. Rather he was credited with plotting the deeds, molding the bullets for others to fire.

The life of Allie Young, the son of the prosecuting attorney, Taylor Young, whose life had been attempted, was saved because on the day of the street battle he was in Mt. Sterling in an adjoining county.

One old woman who witnessed the open battle that day on Railroad Street became raving insane. And Liza, Jay Tolliver’s wife, fled in dismay across the mountain never to return.

Marion, brother of Craig, had no hand whatever in the trouble. He lived his days in peace within sight of the county seat of Rowan tending his farm and looking after his household. If his kinfolk had heeded him there never would have been a Rowan County war which put a blot upon the community that took years to erase.

Family Honor

Looking down on a clear day from a bald on Dug Down Mountain you can see the valley far below. The bald is sometimes called the sods—where the trees can’t grow because of high winds. This particular spot is called Foley Sods after the Foleys who have lived here in the Dug Down Mountains for generations. Looking closer from the high, green bald you can see far below in the edge of a dilapidated orchard a lorn grave. Overrun with ivy and thorns it is enclosed with a wire fence, sagging and rusty and held together here and there with crooked sticks and broken staves.

Ben Foley’s grave it is, anyone whom you happen to meet along the way will tell you, but your informant will say no more. If you have the time and inclination to follow the footpath on around toward a cliff to the right you may come upon old Jorde Foley sitting near on a log as if keeping watch over the place. The old fellow will appraise you from head to foot and either he will be glum, like the person you have passed on the way, or he will invite you to rest a while. Then presently he falls into easy conversation and before you are aware you have learned much about Ben and Jorde Foley too.

It wasn’t that Jorde had any objection to what Ben, his son, was doing, but it was the things that happened when Ben brought home his bride from Cartersville that caused Jorde to speak his mind. This day he went back to the beginning of things.

“I’ve been makin’ all my life right here in these Dug Down Mountains alongside this clift,” he said. “It’s my land, my crop. And I’ve a right to do with my corn whatever I’m a mind to. And Cynthie, my wife, many’s the time she taken turns with me breakin’ up the mash, packin’ the wood to keep the fire under the still. We’ve set by waitin’ for the run off. And Ben, our boy, he learnt from watchin’ us how to make good whiskey, from the time he was a little codger. Sometimes Cynthie would keep an eye out for the law. But we hated that part of it worser’n pizen. We were in our rights and had no call to be treated like thieves in the night. Pa made whiskey right here in these Dug Down Mountains same as his’n before him, out of corn he raised on his own place and in them days there wasn’t ever the spyin’ eyes of the law snoopin’ around.” Jorde rolled his walking staff between his rough hands and looked away. “Sometimes I’d change places with Cynthie whilst she tended the fire. We made good whiskey,” he said neither boastfully nor modestly. “We sold it for an honest price. That’s the way we learnt Ben to do. But, hi crackies, what takes my hide and taller is when a son o’ mine turns out yaller. I never raised my boy for no chicanery.” Old Jorde’s voice raised in indignation. However, when he spoke again there was a note of tolerance even pity in his tone.

“Ben would never ’a’ done it only for that Jezebel he married down to Cartersville and brought

home here to the mountains. Effie, like Delilah that made mock of her man Samson, was the cause of it all. Ben just nat'erly couldn't make whiskey fast enough to give that woman all her cravin's and now you see where it got my poor boy. A man's a right," said the old fellow in deadly earnest, "to marry a girl he's growed up with—stead of tryin' to get above his raisin'. See where it got my poor boy," he repeated. The troubled eyes sought the neglected grave in the scrubby orchard far below.

There was no marker, not even a rough stone from the mountain side at head or foot like on the other Foley graves in the Foley burying ground on the brow of the hill. Only the sagging fence enclosed Ben's resting place. "It was hard to do," old Jorde said grimly, "but it had to be so's no other Foley will follow Ben's course."

With that he slowly arose and led the way to a pile of soot-covered stones.

"Now close here was where the thumpin' keg stood," he began to indicate positions, "and yonder the still."

There was nothing but charred remnants of staves and rusty hoops left of the barrel through which the copper worm had run, while the copper still itself was reduced to a battered heap. The worm and the thumping keg and all the essentials for making whiskey leaped into a living scene, however, when Jorde Foley got to telling of the days when he and Cynthie and young Ben, peaceable and contented, earned a meager living at the craft.

"Set your still right about here," Jorde hovered over the remnants of the stone furnace, "and you break your mash once in so often. A man's got to know when it is working right. The weather has a heap to do with it fermenting. Sometimes it takes longer than other times. No, you don't stir it with a stick but a long wooden fork. I've whittled many a one." He retrieved from the pile of stone what was left of the stirring fork. "Have it long so you can retch far all around the barrel," he said, measuring the fork against his own height. With unconcealed pride he explained the various steps of making corn whiskey in his own primitive way. He told how the thumping keg in which it was aged was first carefully charred inside to add a tempting flavor, and how the barrel in which the cornmeal and malt were placed was made of clean staves of oak or chestnut, or whatever wood was at hand. The wood was cut green and when the mash began to work the liquid caused the staves to swell and thus make the barrel leak-proof.

Never once in his explanation did Jorde Foley say moonshine, or shine, or mountain dew.

"Whiskey, pure corn whiskey," he repeated, "when it is treated right won't harm no one. And when a body sees the first singlin' come treaklin' out the worm, cooled by the cold water that this worm is quiled in," he indicated the location of the barrel, "somehow there's a heap of satisfaction in it. Seeing that clear whiskey, clear as a mountain stream come treaklin' into the tin bucket or jug that is settin' there to ketch it, it makes a man plum proud over his labors."

Jorde looked inward upon his thoughts. "Many a time me and Cynthie would take a full bucket to a neighbor's when there was a frolic, set it in the middle of the table with a gourd dipper in it, and let everyone help hisself to a drink. Why, there was no harm in whiskey in my young day. And us people up here didn't know or need no other medicine."

In the bat of an eye Jorde Foley explained how pure corn whiskey had cured cases of croup, saved mothers in childbirth, cured children of spasms and worms, and saved the life of many a man bitten by a copperhead or suffering from sunstroke. "Once I saw Brock Pennington stob Bill Tanner in the calf of the leg with a pitchfork. Bill he bled like a stuck hog and we grabbed up a jug of whiskey and poured it on his leg. Stopped the blood! No how," Jorde was off on another defense, "land up here and in lots of places in these mountains is not fitten to farm so we have allus made whiskey of it after exceptin' out enough for our bread. Good, pure whiskey that never harmed no man that treated it right, that's what we made. In Pa's day he sold it for fifty cents a gallon. Us Foleys in my day sold it for a dollar a gallon and let the other fellow pack it off and sell it for what he could get. Why, I had knowin' of a man on Chester Creek in Fentress County over in Tennessee that sold it for three dollars a gallon. But that is a plum outrage!" Jorde spat vehemently halfway to the cliff.

"After Pa died, me and Mose Keeton got to makin' together. We halved the corn and halved the work and halved the cash money and never no words ever passed betwixt us. By the time Mose died my boy Ben taken his place."

Only once did a smile light the grim face. "One day Cynthie and me was busy here and Ben's pet pig followed him up here when he brought us a snack to eat. The pig snooted around and found the place where we had dumped the leavin's of the mash after we had took off the brine. Well, sir, that pig just nat'erly gorged itself and directly it was tipsy as fiddlesticks. I never saw such antic was out of a critter in my life. It reeled to and fro and squealed and grunted and went round and round tryin' to ketch its own tail. Finally it rolled down the hill. Ben packed it back up again and it reeled around, its feet tangled and it rolled down again. Kept that up till it got sober. Its eyes rolled back in its head, it sunk down in a grassy spot over yonder and slept till dark. It follered at Ben's heels meek as a lamb when we went down the hill that night. That pig was too sick to eat or even sniff a nubbin of corn for two whole days, just laid and groaned. 'Now, Ben,' says Cynthie to our boy, 'you see what comes of gettin' tipsy.' And Ben Foley learnt a lesson off the pig and never did take a dram too much."

Again Jorde's eyes sought the neglected grave far off. He looped back to the story of his son. "Everything was peaceable here, though we did miss Cynthie powerful after she died. But me and Ben made on the best we could. We had a living from our whiskey. Then come Effie! That woman nat'erly tore up the whole place. She kept gougin' Ben for more cash money." Jorde

pointed a condemning finger toward a ravine. “There’s a half dozen washtubs rustin’ away under there.”

A part of a zinc tub protruded from the brush heap. “One day,” Jorde continued, “unbeknown to Ben’s wife, Effie, I snuck off up here away from that Jezebel though she had talked no end about me being too old to climb the mountain. ‘You’ll get a stroke, Jorde,’ she’d warn me. ‘You best sit here in the cool, or feed the chickens or the hogs.’ Effie was ever finding something for me to do if I offered a word about comin’ up here to see how Ben was getting on. That made me curious. So I snuck off from the house and come up here one day.” Jorde’s eyes turned toward the ground. “When I come up on Ben I couldn’t believe my own eyes. My boy had a fire goin’ not under just one but a half dozen tubs! What’s left of them are over yonder.” He jerked a thumb toward the brush covered ravine. “My boy Ben was stirring around not with the wood fork like he had been learnt, but with a shovel!” Jorde lifted scandalized eyes. “A rusty shovel, at that! He was talking in a big way to his helper—a strange man to me. I come to find out he was a friend of Effie’s from Cartersville.”

Jorde pondered a while. “Come to find out, to make a long story short, Ben was cheatin’ them that bought his whiskey, tellin’ them it was a year old when he knew in reason he’d just run it off maybe the night before. Ben Foley was sellin’ pizen!” Old Jorde Foley’s voice trembled. 111
“That’s all it was that he was makin’. Pizen that he forced to ferment with stuff that Effie’s friend, who used to work in the coal mines, brought here. And Ben sellin’ that pizen that burnt the stummick and the brains out of men that drunk it. Hi gad!”—old Foley spat vehemently—“I never raised my son to be no such thief! It was that Jezebel Effie that led my boy to the sin of thievin’. She wanted more cash money than he could earn honest with makin’ good whiskey.”

It was Ben’s fear of prison, old Jorde explained bluntly, that caused him to run from the law, and running he had stumbled and thereby stopped a bullet.

“What the law didn’t bust to pieces of them tubs and shovels and such, I did,” Jorde added with a note of satisfaction. For a moment he lapsed into silence, then added gravely, “Ben just nat’erly disgraced us Foleys.” The father hung his head in shame. “Why, Cynthie would turn over in her grave if she knew of him thievin’ and runnin’—runnin’ from the law! It’s such as that Jezebel with her carryin’s on, temptin’ men to thievin’ that’s put an end to makin’—makin’ good whiskey in these Dug Down Mountains here in Georgia. Put an end to sellin’ good pure whiskey for an honest price like me and mine used to make.”

112

3. Products of the Soil

Timber

The individualism of the mountaineer has not made of him a scientific inventor, but this marked trait of character has developed his self-reliance and resourcefulness. He may not know, or care to know, in figures the degree of the angle at which the mountain slopes. Probably he has never heard of the clinometer by which geological surveyors arrive at such information. Yet the untrained mountain man seeing a stream gushing down a steep escarpment knows how to divert it to his own best use.

Sometimes he set his tub mill, or the wheel, at the most advantageous point to grind his corn into meal. If, however, his house happened to be near no stream he had a simpler method for grinding his corn, a way his forbears learned from the Indian, or heard about through his Scotch ancestors. He rounded two stones, about the size of the average dishpan, with great patience. Bored a hole in the center of the top one, placed the two in a hollowed log and patiently, laboriously poured corn, a few grains at a time, into the opening. With the other hand he turned the top stone by means of a limber branch attached to a rafter overhead, the other end of which was thrust into a small hole near the rim of the top stone. In this way he kept the top stone moving, slowly, steadily. The Scotch called this simple handmill a quern. It was a laborious way 113
of grinding meal.

It has amazed men of the U. S. Geological Survey to find that the corn patch of the mountaineer often slants at an angle of fifty degrees so that it is impossible to plow. The mountaineer cultivates such a patch entirely with a hoe. When the mountain side, crop and all, slides down to the base he bears the ill luck with patience and fortitude and tries to find a remedy. He hauls rocks to brace the earth and plants another crop. He had no time to sit and bemoan his fate. Through such trials, and because neighbors were so far removed, his self-reliance and resourcefulness were of necessity developed. The mountain man learned early to face alone the

hazards of life in the forest; first of all was defense of his home against wild beasts and the Indian. He knew the danger to life and limb from fallen trees, treacherous quicksand, swollen creeks, the peril of slipping mountain sides after heavy rains. Of necessity he relied upon himself; he could not wait for a neighbor to help pull the ox out of the ditch. He learned early to make his own crude farm implements at his own anvil. In short, he had to be jack-of-all-trades—blacksmith, tanner, barber, shoemaker, wagoner, and woodsman.

Men of the Blue Ridge did not clear their land after the manner of the German farmer in Pennsylvania, who uprooted his trees. Instead, it was done by belting the tree. He notched a six-inch band around the trunk, removed the bark which prevented the sap from going up and thus killed the tree from lack of nourishment. A field of such trees he called a deadening. The roots were left to rot and enrich the soil but the hillsides were so steep that the fertility from wood soil soon washed away and another deadening had to be made before another crop could be 114
planted. Though crops were scant, the forest itself was ample and sometimes brought him rich returns if he managed right.

A timber cruiser would come into the community, prospecting for a lumber company, and examine the standing timber. After he reported back to the company, a lawyer was sent to sound out the landowners—to see if they were willing to sell their surface rights. When the legal matters were attended to, the lumber company sometimes bought as much as seventy thousand acres of forest. Woodsmen were brought in to work along with the mountain men. Portable sawmills were set up and busy hands—sawyers, choppers—set to work leveling the giant trees.

The owners calculated it would take twenty-five years to cull out all the large timber and by the time that job was finished there would be a second growth ready to cut. With this in view, hardwood and rich walnut were cut and used with utter extravagance and disregard for their great worth; full-sized logs of the finest grade were used for building barns, planks of black walnut found their way into porch floors, walnut posts were used freely for fencing by the mountaineer himself.

So profuse was the supply up until a quarter century ago that no thought was given to its possible disappearance through wasteful methods of lumbering, frequent forest fires, and the woodsman's utter carelessness and disregard for the future.

A timber cruiser in Knott County, Kentucky, once came upon an old woman chopping firewood beside the door of her one-room cabin. Upon examination he found it to be a fine species of walnut. After talking with her he learned that she owned hundreds of acres of timber, much of 115
which was covered with walnut such as she was ruthlessly burning in the fireplace. He spent days going over the acreage and offered the old woman a fabulous price for the larger timber, at the same time assuring her, through written agreement, protection of all her rights. But the old creature, who lived alone, dismissed the timber cruiser with a wave of her bony hand. "Begone!" she chirped, "I don't want to be scrouged by your crew comin' in on my land choppin' down trees and settin' up them racket-makin' contrapshuns under my very nose. No how such as that skeers off the birds in the forest." Though the cruiser agreed that his company would even be willing to keep a distance of three miles in all directions from her little cabin, the old woman still refused, and when he tried again in honeyed tones to persuade her she up with the ax and chased him off the place.

The mountain man, however, often seized the opportunity to dispose of his timber and set to work with a vim to get it to the nearest market, though such was a mighty task. Having cut down the larger trees, he rolled the logs down the mountain side toward the watercourse. Usually the creeks were much too shallow to carry rafts of logs so he constructed a splash dam at a suitable point between the high banks of the stream. A splash dam consisted of two square cribs of logs filled with great stones. Against these two crude piers he built a dam in the middle of which he placed an enormous gate. He remembered how he had made rabbit traps when he was a boy. So now, on a bigger scale, he made a figure-four trap-trigger for his splash dam. On one side, the gate which he built in the middle, pushed against two projecting logs in the dam. A long slender pole like a telegraph pole held the gate in place. This is the trigger pole. Thus dammed, the water soon formed a deep lake into which strong-armed men threw the logs. 116

Gate and trigger are in readiness. The mountaineer has only to wait for a tide, which is often not long in coming. Even overnight, even in a few short hours, a stream has been known to swell from sudden rains or snow, bringing the water with a rush down steep mountain sides and carrying with it the logs that were left strewn on the slopes or near the bank. Men work with feverish haste to roll the logs into the stream. The whole is swept into the dam, the trigger is released at the right moment and the rush of water with its freight of logs sweeps through the open gate with a mighty roar, carrying its cargo for miles on down to the river.

Zealous workers have been known to splash out in this fashion as many as thirteen thousand logs in one season.

Timber so floated down the Big Sandy River made at its mouth the largest round timber market in the world and brought untold fortunes to capitalists who ruthlessly cut down the virgin forests along its banks.

Here at the waterfront taverns a motley crowd of loggers and raftsmen, woodsmen and timbermen, were wont to gather for nights of revelry. The old taverns rang with as rollicking songs as ever enlivened a western bar in gold-rush days. Here too woodsman and logger rubbed shoulders betimes with Devil Anse Hatfield and Randall McCoy, for it was to the mouth of Big Sandy, the village of Catlettsburg, the county seat of Boyd, that the clansmen repaired to

reinforce their ammunition for carrying on their bloody feud.

And here, in the spring of the year, the calliope could be heard far down the Ohio as the showboat steamed into view. Shouts of glee went up from the throats of youngsters along the way as they rushed excitedly for the river-bank to watch the approach of the flag-decked boat. And when the *Cotton Blossom* had docked and deckhands had made her fast to her moorings with rope and chain, a gayly uniformed band—led by a drum major in high-plumed hat and gold-braided coat—with sounding horns and quickened drumbeat walked the gangplank, leaped nimbly to shore, and paraded the narrow winding village street. 117

Old and young wept over the death of Uncle Tom and hissed viciously the slave-whipping Legree. Woodsman or logger, who had imbibed too freely at the waterfront taverns, sometimes arose and cursed angrily the black-mustachioed villain. Whereupon the town marshal patted the disturber on the shoulder (the officer always had passes to the showboat for himself and family and friends), wheedled the giant mountaineer into silence, and left him dozing in his seat.

When the curtain fell on the last act, woodsmen and raftsmen and their newfound friends in the village returned to the riverfront tavern to make a night of it.

By sunup the crew would be on its way back up to the head of Big Sandy to make ready for another timber run.

Woman's Work

The woman of the mountains has always been as resourceful in her way as the man. She made the sweetening for the family's use from a sugar tree and as often used sorghum from cane for the same purposes, even pouring the thick molasses into coffee if they were fortunate enough to have coffee. She made her own dyes from barks and herbs. And though she may have had a dozen children of her own she was ready and eager to help a neighbor in time of sickness. Doctors were scarce, so she of necessity turned midwife to help another through childbirth. She shared the tasks of her husband in the field and home. She was as busy at butchering time as the menfolk. Once the hog was killed and cleaned, she helped chop the meat into sausage and helped to case it. She boiled the blood for pudding and looked to the seasoning, with sage and pepper, of the head cheese and liverwurst. Hers was the task of rendering the lard in the great iron kettle near the dooryard. And once the meat was cut into slabs she helped salt it down in the meat log. But only the man felt capable of properly preparing and smoking the ham for the family's use. She frugally set aside the cracklins, after rendering the lard, for use in soap-making at the hopper. 118

At sorghum-making time mother and daughter worked as busily as father and son. The men cut the cane and fed it to the mill, while the womenfolk took turns tending the pans in which the syrup boiled, skimming off the greenish foam and scum that gathered on the top. They urged the young boys, who hung around on such occasions, to bring on more wood to keep the fire going under the pans. The owner of the portable sorghum mill sometimes took his pay for its use in sorghum, if there was no money to be had. He was paid too for the use of his team in hauling the mill to the cane patch of the neighbor who had engaged it, and he himself sometimes tarried to help set it up. A small boy was sometimes pressed into service to urge the patient mule on its monotonous course around and around pulling the beam that turned the mill.

Sorghum-making had its lighter side. The young folks especially found fun in seeing a guileless fellow step into the skimming hole concealed by cane stalks. The sport was complete when the bewildered fellow struggled to free himself from the sticky mess. But the woman was quick to help him out of his plight by providing a change of raiment and soap and water and clean towels, "yonder in the kitchen-house." She knew what to expect at sorghum-making time. 119

Each season of the year brought its communal activity: corn shucking in the fall, that was ever followed by a frolic. Bean stringing when the womenfolk pitched in to help each other out stringing beans with a long darning needle on long strands of thread. These were hung up to dry and supplied a tasty dish on cold winter days. There was also apple-butter-making in the fall when long hours were spent in peeling and preparing choicest apples which were boiled in the great copper kettle and richly seasoned with sugar and spice. Apple-butter-making was an all-day job in the boiling alone but the rich and tasty product is considered well worth the effort and any mountain woman who cannot display shelves laden with jars of apple-butter would be considered a laggard indeed.

But the mountain woman's greatest pride and joy was handiwork—quiltmaking, crocheting. Perhaps it is because these crafts have always gone hand-in-hand with courtship and marriage.

At the first call of the robin in the spring, Aunt Emmie on Honey Camp Run, in clean starched apron and calico frock, dragged her rocker to the front stoop of her little house and there she sat for hours rocking contentedly while her nimble fingers moved swiftly with crochet needle and thread. "Aunt Emmie's crocheting lace for Lulie Bell's wedding garments." Folks knew the signs. Hadn't Lulie Bell ridden muleback from Old Nell Knob just as soon as winter broke to take the day with the old woman. "Make mine prettier than Dessie's and Flossie's," she had said. Or, "I want the seashell pattern for my pillowcases." Or, "I want you to crochet me a pretty 120

chair back.” “I want a lamberkin all scalloped deep”—another bride-to-be measured a half arm’s length. “I want my edging for the gown and petticoat to match.” Passersby overheard the talk of the young folk. “Wouldn’t you favor the fan pattern?” Aunt Emmie offered a suggestion now and then while the shiny needle darted in and out of scallop and loop. Sometimes she dropped a word of advice to the young, how to live a long and happy married life, how and when to plant, what to take for this ailment and that. There were things that brought bad luck, she warned, and some that brought good.

“If a bride plants cucumber seed the first day of May when the dew is still on the ground, the vines will grow hardy and bear lots of cucumbers and she will bring forth many babes, too,” her words fell on willing ears of the young bride-to-be. “If you sleep under a new quilt that no one has ever slept under, what you dream that night will come true.” Many a young miss declared she had experienced the proof of the saying. There was something else. “Mind, don’t ever sew a ripped seam or patch a garment that’s on your back. There will be lies told on you sure as you do.” That could be proved in most any community in the Blue Ridge.

Yards upon yards of lace Aunt Emmie crocheted, the Clover Leaf pattern, the Sea Shell, Acorn, the Rose, and if a bride-to-be had no silver, the lacemaker was content to take in exchange a pat of butter, eggs, or well-cured ham. Her delight was in the work itself.

The thrifty woman of the mountains takes great pride in her quilts; not only does she strive to excel her neighbor in the variety of patterns but in the number as well. On a bright summer day she brings them out of cupboard and presses, and hangs them on the picket fence to sun. She is pleased when a passerby stops to admire, and especially so if it be a young miss. The older woman recognizes the motive behind the question, “What is this pattern?” “Is this easy to piece?” The older woman knows the young miss has marrying in her head and goes to great lengths to explain. “Now this is Compass and Nine Patch and it’s easiest of any to put together. This is Grandmother’s Flower Garden—it’s a lot of little bitsy pieces, you see, and a heap of different colors and it’s most powerful tejous to put together. This is Double Wedding Ring, this Irish Chain”—she names one after another—“this is Neck Tie, and this in the fair blue and white is Dove in the Window.” 121

The quiltmaker is even more pleased when the young miss comes to take the day and she has the proud privilege of starting John’s or Tom’s future wife on her very first quilt. It is an occasion of merriment when the quilt is finally finished and taken out of the frames after many a pleasant quilting bee. Then, at the urging of one of the older women, two girls shake a cat on the new quilt. The one toward whom the cat jumps will be married first, they believe. Some brides believe too that by going to the oldest woman in the community to set up the quilt for their marriage bed they will be insured long life and joy. There are lovelorn maidens so eager to peer into the future they will even help a neighbor on wash day. Two girls will wring a dripping quilt by twisting it in rope fashion. The one toward whom the end curls up will be first to rock the cradle.

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4. Tradition 122

Philomel Whiffet’s Singing School

Philomel Whiffet was dim of eye and sparse of beard. A little white fringe framed his wrinkled face and numbered indeed were the hairs of his foretop. Trudging up the snow-covered mountain, he caught sight of the glowing stove through the window of Bethel church house whither he was bound this winter night to conduct singing school. He chuckled to himself, drawing the knitted muffler closer about his thin throat and making fast the earflaps of his coonskin cap. “Yes, they’re getting the place het up before the womenfolk come. Mathias or Jonathan, one or the other.” The singing master had come to know the signs by the behavior of the old heating stove—who rivaled, who courted, who might be on the outs. “It’s Jonathan that’s making the fire tonight. I caught the shadow of him against the wall when he threw in the stove wood. Jonathan’s all of a head taller than Mathias. Trying to get in favor with Drusilla Osborn. It’s a plum shame the way that girl taynts him and Mathias. At meeting first with one, then the other. She’s got the two young fellows as mad as hornets at each other nigh half the time. No telling, Dru’s liable to shun them both when it comes to choosing a mate. Women are strange creatures.” The singing master talked to himself as he plodded on. 123

Many the year Philomel Whiffet traveled that selfsame road with the selfsame aim, for the church house was the only place on Pigeon Creek where folks could gather. The seat of learning too it was there in the Tennessee mountains, so that old Whiffet, having journeyed hither and

yon to take up a subscription for singing school, must need get the consent of school trustees and elders in order to hold forth in Bethel church house. Honor-bound too, was he, to divide his fee of a dollar per scholar with his benefactors.

“We’re giving you the chance, brother Whiffet, to earn a living,” one of the elders murmured when the singing master that year shared with them his meager earnings. But when Philomel ventured to suggest it might liven the gathering somewhat if he brought along his dulcimer and strummed the tune while scholars sang, both elders and trustees stood aghast. Couldn’t believe their ears. “Brother Whiffet!” gasped one of the elders, “so long as we’re in our right mind no music box of any nature shall be brought into Bethel church house. We don’t intend to contrary the good Lord in any such way.”

That settled it.

The memory of that session brought a smile to the old man’s face. “Elders and women have strange ways,” he told himself as he walked on through the snow, eyes fixed on the beacon light of the old heating stove in the church house.

“Now I used to think that Mathias had got the best of Jonathan,” his thoughts returned to the present, “but there’s no knowing if Drusilla is aiming to set down her name Mistress Oneby or Mistress Witchcott. Women are powerful tetcheous. Keep a man uncertain and troubled in his mind with their everlasting whims.”

No one knew that any better than did Philomel Whiffet. It made him patient with the young fellows in their trials, for he had had a mighty hard row to hoe in his own courting days. Hadn’t Ambrose Creech and Herb Masters aggravated him within an inch of his life before he finally persuaded Clarissa that neither of the two was worth his salt, that only he, Philomel Whiffet, the singing master, could bring her happiness in wedded life. That had been long years ago.

Philomel had been a widower for ten years past and never once had he cast eyes on another woman; that is to say, with the idea of marriage. “There’s no need for a man to put his mind on such as that without he can better himself, and I never calculate to see Clarissa’s equal, let alone her betters. Nohow, singing school is good a-plenty to keep a body company.” That was Philomel Whiffet’s notion and he stuck to it. It was as though she, Clarissa, still bustled about the Whiffet cabin, for Philomel, though he lived alone, kept the place as she had—spic and span just as Clarissa had left it. There on the shelf were the cedar piggins, scoured clean with white sand from the creek, one for spice, one for rendering, one for sweeting. And there on the wall hung the salt gourd. “It’s convenient to the woman for cooking,” he had said when first they started housekeeping. How happy he had been in those days, looking after Clarissa and the little Whiffets as they came along. Not until they were all grown and married off and gone, and he and Clarissa were alone once more, did he really come to realize how very happy their household had been. He liked to look back on those times. “It’s singing-school night, Pa”—Clarissa had taken to calling him Pa; got it from the children. “You best strike the tuning fork and sing a tune or two before you start. Gets your throat limbered up and going smooth.” Philomel had come to wait for her urging. Then he would fumble in his waistcoat pocket for the tuning fork and tapping it to chair rim or bootheel, he’d hold it to his ear, pitch the tune, and sing a verse or two of this ballad and of that. Then when he started forth on a winter’s night, “Mind your wristban’s!” his wife would say, “and your spectacles! Don’t forget your spectacles! Your sight’s not sharp as it once was. And your tuning fork, Pa. Don’t forget to put it in your pocket.” It pleased the old singing master in those days to have Clarissa feel that he was dependent upon her. And now that she was gone, for ten long years, those familiar words running through old Philomel Whiffet’s thoughts were all he had left to remind him of his needs when he started out to singing school.

Slowly he plodded on through the snow, his eyes raised now and again to the light of the heating stove in the church house.

Arrived at the door he stomped the snow from his well-greased boots and went in. Untying the flaps of the coonskin cap he moved across the floor. “Good evening, boys,” he greeted cheerily, unwinding now the muffler from his throat.

“Good evening, sir!” the early birds, Jonathan and Ephraim Scaggs, answered together. It wasn’t Mathias Oneby, after all, whose shadow he had seen against the wall. At once the singing master knew why Ephraim Scaggs was there. His sister, Tizzie Scaggs, was head-over-heels in love with Jonathan Witchcott. She was trying every scheme to get him away from Drusilla Osborn. Yes, Tizzie had sent her brother Ephraim along with Jonathan to make the fire so he could drop in a few words about her; how apt she, Tizzie, was at many tasks, what a fine wife she’d make for some worthy fellow. Philomel Whiffet knew the way of young folks. And Drusilla knew the ways of Tizzie. She was really wary of her and watchful, though Dru would never own it to Jonathan Witchcott.

Even though the snow was nearly knee-deep it didn’t keep folks from singing school. Already they were crowding in. So by the time old Whiffet was ready to begin every bench was filled. Young men and old in homespun and high boots, mothers and young girls in shawls and fascinators, talking and laughing at a lively clip as they took their places: sopranos in the front benches opposite the bass singers; behind them, altos and tenors.

“I’m sorry to see that some of our high singers are not here this evening.” The old singing master from his place behind the stand surveyed the gathering, squinting uncertainly by the light of the oil lamp. High on the wall it hung without chimney, its battered tin reflector dimmed by soot of many nights’ accumulation. He picked up the notebook from the little stand which

served as pulpit for the preachers on Sundays, and casually remarked, “We kinda look to the high singers to help us through, to pitch the tune and carry it. Too bad”—he squinted again toward the gathering—“that Drusilla Osborn is not here. Dru is a extra fine singer. A fine note-singer is Dru. Takes after the Osborns. Any of you heard if Osborns’ folks have got sickness?”

A titter passed over the singing school and just then Tizzie Scaggs, leering at Dru, piped out, “Why, yonder’s Dru Osborn in the back seat!”

The tittering raised to a snicker and Philomel Whiffet, too flabbergasted to call out Drusilla’s name and send her to her own seat with the sopranos where she belonged, turned quickly his back to the school and fumbled in his pocket. He brought forth a piece of charred wood, for 127
chalk was a rarity on Pigeon Creek, and began to set down on the rough log wall a measure of music. In shaped notes, for round notes had not yet made their way into Philomel Whiffet’s singing school. Painstakingly he set down the symbols, some like little triangles, others square, until he had completed a staff. Nor did he face the school again until all the tittering had subsided. Then with the same charred stick he drew a mark on the floor and called for sopranos, alto, bass, and tenor to toe the mark.

Drusilla Osborn was first, then Lettie Burley, an alto, came next. Tom Jameson, the tenor, and Felix Rideout, who couldn’t be beat singing bass, stood in a row careful-as-you-please to see that they kept a straight line, toes to the mark, shoulders back, chests expanded. They sang the scale through twice—forward and backward, bowed to the singing master, then went back to their seats. It was a never-changing form to which Philomel Whiffet clung as an example for the whole school to follow should they be called to toe the mark. A fine way to show all how a singer should rightly stand and rightly sing.

“Now, scholars,” Whiffet brushed the black from his fingers, having replaced the charred stick in his pocket, “lend attention!” Taking the tuning fork from his waistcoat pocket, he looked thoughtfully at the school. “Being as this singing school is drawing to a close, seems to me we should review all we can this evening.” He paused. “Now all that feel the urge can take occasion to clear their throats before we start in.”

Not one spurned the invitation, and when the raucous noise subsided Philomel Whiffet tapped the tuning fork briskly on the edge of the stand, put it to his ear, and listened as he gazed thoughtfully downward. 128

“Do! Me! Sol! Do!” he sang in staccato notes, nodding the sparse gray foretop jerkily with each note as bass, alto, tenor, soprano took up their pitch. Thereupon he seized the pointer, a long switch kept conveniently near in the corner, and indicated the first note of the staff.

Scarcely had the pointer tapped a full measure before the school realized they were singing by note an old familiar tune and with that they burst forth with the words:

Oh! have you heard Geography sung?
For if you’ve not it’s on my tongue;
First the capitals one by one,
United States, Washington.

They changed the meter only slightly as they boomed forth:

Augusta, Maine, on the Kennebec River,
Concord, New Hampshire, on the Merrimac.

Of course they knew it was the Geography Song from their McGuffey Reader which the singing master had set to tune. To make sure they had not forgotten the McGuffey piece he halted the singing and directed that they speak over the piece together, which they did with a verve:

Oh! have you heard Geography sung?
For if you’ve not, it’s on my tongue;
About the earth in air that’s hung.
All covered with green, little islands.
Oceans, gulfs, and bays, and seas;
Channels and straits, sounds, if you please;
Great archipelagoes, too, and all these
Are covered with green, little islands.

Philomel Whiffet sometimes had his school do unexpected things that way. And now once again 129
they went on with the geography singing lesson, putting in the names of places and rivers to the tune.

Far and wide traveled Philomel Whiffet’s singing school, wafted by note from freedom’s shore to African wilds. They knew it all by heart. On and on they sang, and Drusilla Osborn’s voice led all the rest:

Bolivia capital Suc-re
Largest city in South America

Mexico is Mexico
Government Republican

Around the world and back again, nor did they stop until they again went through all the States, finishing with a lusty:

New Hampshire's capital is for a fact
Concord on the Merrimac.

Silence came at last.

Taking from the stand the songbook, Philomel placed a hand behind him and announced with quiet decorum, "Those who have brought their notebooks will please open them up to page—" he faltered, fumbling the leaves of his book. "Open to page—" still groping was Philomel Whiffet and squinting at the faded pages. "Those who have not brought their notebooks can look on with someone else." Trying to act unconcerned was the singing master. "Turn to one—of our—old favorites," poor old Whiffet murmured, still fumbling the pages of the book. "My eyes—are dim"—he mumbled in confusion—"I—cannot see." Vainly he searched his vest pockets, the pockets of his coat. "—I've left my specs at home," he blurted in desperation. 130

With that the tantalizing Drusilla Osborn, from her bench at the back of the room, nudged the girl beside her and, pointing to the staff of music left on the wall where Philomel had placed it,—Dru began to hum. "You've pitched it too shaller," whispered the other girl, and quickly Dru hummed a lower register until her companion caught the pitch; then the two sang loud and shrill:

My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
My specs I left at home.

And before Philomel Whiffet knew what had happened, sopranos, altos, and bass had taken up the tune. Even Jonathan Witchcott, for all he sat on the very front bench where anybody could see with half an eye that the singing master was plagued and shamefaced, let out his booming bass with all his might and main. Hadn't Drusilla pitched the tune? What else was the doting Jonathan to do? The two had been courting full six months, just to spite Mathias Oneby if for no other reason. And Mathias, the patient and meek fellow, sitting in the far corner of the very last bench straight across from the adored Drusilla, sitting where anyone could see that Dru was playing a prank, when he heard the mighty boom of his rival, joined in with his high tenor:

My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
My specs I left at home.

Louder and stronger roared Jonathan's bass. And Mathias, not to be excelled, raised his shrill notes higher still, sweeping the sopranos along with him. 131

Bethel church house fairly trembled on its foundation. Poor old Philomel Whiffet raised his hands in dismay: "I did not mean for you to sing!" he cried, and again Drusilla took up his words:

I did not mean for you to sing

and louder swelled the chorus. All the while the singing master stood trembling, shaking his white head hopelessly. "I did not mean for you to sing," he pleaded, "I only meant my eyes were dim!"

His words merely spurred them on. On surged the voices, bass, soprano, alto, tenor, in loud and mighty

I did not mean for you to sing,
I only meant my eyes were dim.

The singing master fumbled his woolly wristbands, thrust his hands deep into pockets of coat and breeches, and peered searchingly about the little stand where, it was plain to see, was nothing but the songbook which he had dropped in his confusion. At last his trembling hand sought the sparse foretop. There, bless you, rested the lost spectacles. He yanked them to the bridge of his nose, and then, just as though he didn't know all the time it was Drusilla Osborn behind the prank, he turned his attention toward that pretty young miss.

"Drusilla"—you'd never suspect what he was up to—"we all favor your voice in the ditty of My Son John. And you, Jonathan Witchcott, I don't know of any other fellow that can better sing the part of the courting man than you yourself. And I'm satisfied that no fairer maid was ever wooed than Dru yonder. So lead off, lest the other fellow get the best of you." 132

Almost before Jonathan was aware of it he was singing, with his eyes turned yearningly upon Dru:

My man John, what can the matter be,
That I should love the lady fair and she should not love me?
She will not be my bride, my joy nor my dear,
And neither will she walk with me anywhere.

Then, lest a moment be lost, the singing master himself egged on the swain by singing the part of the man John:

Court her, dearest Master, you court her without fear,
And you will win the lady in the space of half a year;
And she will be your bride, your joy and your dear,
And she will take a walk with you anywhere.

Encouraged by the smiling school, Jonathan Witchcott took up the song, turning yearningly to Dru who now smiled coyly, head to one side, while he entreated:

Oh, Madam, I will give to you a little greyhound,
And every hair upon its back shall cost a thousand pound,
If you will be my bride, my joy and my dear,
And you will take a walk with me anywhere.

Scarcely had the last note left his lips when Drusilla, now that all eyes were turned upon her, sang coquettishly:

Oh, Sir, I won't accept of you a little greyhound,
Though every hair upon its back did cost a thousand pound,
I will not be your bride, your joy nor your dear,
And neither will I walk with you anywhere.

With added fervor Jonathan offered more: 133

Oh, Madam, I will give you a fine ivory comb,
To fasten up your silver locks when I am not at home.

That too Dru spurned, but all the same she was watching nervously—indeed Dru was watching anxiously—Tizzie Scaggs, lest she take up Jonathan's offer, which is another girl's right in the play-game song.

Quickly Jonathan Witchcott, knowing all this, sang pleadingly:

Oh, Madam, I will give to you the keys of my heart,
To lock it up forever that we never more may part,
If you will be my bride, my joy and my dear.

Whereupon Drusilla, her eyes sparkling, her rosy lips parted temptingly, sang:

Oh, Sir, I will accept of you the keys of your heart;
I'll lock it up forever and we never more will part,
And I will be your bride, your joy and your dear,
And I will take a walk with you anywhere.

When her last note ended Dru turned demurely toward Jonathan, whereupon that happy swain leaped to his feet and, extending a hand toward the singing master, sang:

My man, Philomel Whiffet, here's fifty pounds, for thee,
I'd never have won this lady fair if it hadn't been for thee.

With that the whole singing school cheered and laughed.

Drusilla Osborn was so excited she almost twisted her kerchief into shreds, for she and all the rest knew that by consenting to sing the play-game song through she and Jonathan had thereby plighted their troth. Either could have dropped out on the very second verse if they had been so inclined. But there, they had sung it through to the end. If she hadn't Tizzie Scaggs would have leaped at the chance. So now, the singing master arose and was first to wish them well. 134

"A life of joy to the Witchcotts!" He bowed profoundly.

Even Mathias Oneby wished his rival happiness. The girls tittered. Older folks nodded approval.

Then away they all went into the starlit night, trooping homeward through the snow, Jonathan and Drusilla leading the way.

Philomel Whiffet lingered a moment in the doorway of Bethel church house chuckling to himself, "Dru's got her just deserts. She had no right to taynt the two young fellows. I'm pleased I caught her in the snare and made her choose betwixt them." He wrapped the muffler about his throat and, drawing on his mittens, the singing master stepped out into the snow, the coonskin cap drawn lower over his bespectacled eyes. "I'm proud I caught Dru for Jonathan," he repeated. "She's too peert nowhow for that shy Mathias Oneby. Women are strange critters when it comes to courting. And her prankin' like she did over me misplacing my specs."

He went steadily on his way, mittened hands thrust deep into coat pockets, spectacles firmly on the bridge of his nose. "She had no call to make mock of me and my specs like she did," Philomel mumbled to himself as he trudged along.

As for the courting play-game song and the way it turned out for Dru and Jonathan, that story too traveled far and wide, so that Philomel Whiffet never lacked for a singing school as long as he lived. That is the reason, old folks will tell you, you'll come upon so many good singers to this day along Pigeon Creek.

135

Riddles and Fortunes

Telling riddles is no lost art in the Blue Ridge Country and their text and answers are much the same whether you turn to the Carolinas, Tennessee, or Virginia. There is little difference among those who tell them. It is usually the older women who cling to the tradition which goes hand-in-hand with trying fortunes.

Aunt Lindie Reffitt in Laurel Cove would rather have a bevy of young folks around her anytime than to sit with women of her own age. “It’s more satisfaction to let a body’s knowing fall on fresh ears.” That was her talk.

Aunt Lindie knew no end of riddles and ways to try fortunes. And as soon as girl or boy either turned their thoughts to love they took occasion to drop in at Aunt Lindie’s.

What would be the color of their true love’s eyes, the hair? Or, “Tell me, Aunt Lindie”—a lovelorn one begged—“will I have a mate at all or die unwed?” And the old woman, sipping a cup of sassafras tea made tasty with spice-wood sticks, had an answer ready:

“On the first day of May, just as soon as the sun comes up, go to an old well that’s not been used for many a year. With a piece of looking glass cast a shadow into the well. The face that appears reflected there will be that of your true love. The one you are to wed.”

One of the Spivey girls had tried her fortune so. And no one could make her believe other than that the handsome black-mustached man from Collins Gap was the one whom she had seen reflected in the well. They married. But poor Minnie Tinsley. That same May she tried her fortune at the well. But never a face appeared. Instead there seemed to float to the surface of 136
the water a piece of wood in the shape of a coffin. Minnie died before the summer was over. For a while others were afraid to go near the well. But, as Aunt Lindie reminded, “There are other ways. In the springtime the first dove you hear cooing to its mate, sit down, slip off your shoe, and there you will find in the heel a hair. It will be the color of your husband’s locks.”

There were other ways too, even for the very, very young. To try this fortune it had to be a very mild winter when flowers came early, for this was a fortune for St. Valentine’s Day. “The lad sets out early on his quest,” Aunt Lindie explained. “He knows to look in a place where there is rabbit bread on the ground—where the frost spews up and swells the ground. Close by there will be a clump of stones, and if he looks carefully there he will find snuggled under the stones a little Jack-in-the-pulpit. He plucks the flower and leaves it at the door of his sweetheart. Though all the time she has listened inside for his coming, she pretends not to have heard until he scampers away and hides—but not too far away lest he fail to hear her singing softly as she gathers up his token of love:

A little wee man in the wood he stood,
His cap was so green and also his hood.

By my step rock he left me a love token sweet,
From my own dear true love, far, far down the creek.

Some call his name Valentine, St. Valentine good,
This little wee man in the wood where he stood.

When Aunt Lindie finished singing the ballad she never failed to add, “That is the best way I know to try a body’s fortune. My own Christopher Reffitt was scarce six when he left such a love 137
token on my step rock and I a little tyke of five.”

Many a night they told riddles at Aunt Lindie’s until she herself could not think of another one. Some of the young folks came from Rough Creek away off on Little River and some from Bullhead Mountain and the Binner girls from Collins Gap. If several of the girls took a notion to stay all night, Aunt Lindie Reffitt made a pallet on the floor of extra quilts and many a time she brought out the ironing board, placed it between two chairs for a bed for the youngsters, Josie Binner, her hair so curly you couldn’t tell which end was growing in her head, always wanted to outdo everyone else. Some said Josie was briggaty because she had been off to settlements like Lufty and Monaville.

No sooner had they gathered around the fireplace and Aunt Lindie had pointed out the first one to tell a riddle, than Josie popped right up to give the answer. It didn’t take Aunt Lindie a second to put her in her place. “Josie, the way we always told riddles in my day was not for one to blab out the answer, but to let the one who gives it out to a certain one, wait until that one answers, or tries to. Your turn will come. Be patient.”

Josie Binner slumped back in her chair.

“Now tell your riddle over again, Nellie.” Aunt Lindie pointed to the Morley girl who piped in a thin voice:

As I went over heaple steeple
There I met a heap o’ people;
Some was nick and some was nack,
Some was speckled on the back.

“Pooh!” scoffed Tobe Blanton to whom Nellie had turned, “that’s easy as falling off a log. A man went over a bridge and saw a hornet’s nest. Some were speckled and they flew out and stung 138
him.”

“Being as Tobe guessed right,” Aunt Lindie was careful that the game was carried on properly, “he’s a right to give out the next riddle.”

Tobe was ready.

A man without eyes saw plums on a tree.
He neither took plums nor left plums.

Pray tell me how that could be?

The cross-eyed lad to whom Tobe had turned shook his head. “Well, then, Josie Binner, I can see you’re itchin’ to speak out. What’s the answer?”

Josie minded her words carefully. “A one-eyed man saw plums. He ate one and left one.”

It was the right answer so Josie had her turn at giving out the next riddle:

Betty behind and Betty before.
Betty all around and Betty no more.

No one could guess the answer. Some declared it didn’t make a bit of sense and Josie, pleased as could be, challenged, “Give up?”

“Give up!” they all chorused.

“Well,” Josie felt ever so important, “a man who was about to be hanged had a dog named Betty. It scampered all around him as he walked to the gallows and then dashed off and no one saw where it went. The hangman told him if he could make up a riddle that no one could riddle they would set him free. That was the riddle!”

“Ah, shucks! Is that all?” Ben Harvey scoffed and mumbled under his breath, “I’ll bet Josie made that up herself.”

“It’s your turn.” Aunt Lindie had sharp ears and young folks had to be mannerly in her house. If not she had her own way of teaching them a lesson. She took Ben unawares. He had to think quickly and blurted out the first riddle that came to his mind:

Black upon black, and brown upon brown,
Four legs up and six legs down.

Even half-witted Tom Cartmel to whom Ben happened to be looking gave back the answer:

“A darky riding a horse and he had a kittle turned up-side-down on his head. The kittle had four legs!”

Not even Aunt Lindie could keep a straight face, but to spare Ben’s feelings she gave out a verse that she felt certain no one could say after her. And try as they would no one could, not even when she said it slowly:

One a-tuory
Dickie davy
Ockie bonie
Ten a-navy.
Dickie manie
Murkum tine
Humble, bumble
Twenty-nine.

One a-two
A zorie, zinn
Allie bow
Crock a-bowl.
Wheelbarrow
Moccasin
Jollaway
Ten.

No one could say it, try as they would.

“Then answer me this,” Aunt Lindie said. “Does it spell Tennessee or is it just an old comical way of counting?”

Again no one could answer and Aunt Lindie said smilingly if she told all she knew they would know as much as she. Though perhaps she wasn’t aware of it, Aunt Lindie was keeping alive their interest in telling riddles. For young folks went about in their neighborhood trying to find answers to her riddles.

She now pointed to Katie Ford, and that young miss started right off, saying:

“As I was going to St. Ives,” but everyone protested, so Katie had to try another that everyone didn’t know.

As I was going over London bridge
I heard a lad give a call;
His tongue was flesh, his mouth was horn,
And such a lad was never born.

“A rooster!” shouted cross-eyed Steve Morley, who vowed Katie looked straight at him. And in the bat of an eye he said:

As I went over London bridge
I met my sister Ann;
I pulled off her head and sucked her blood
And let her body stand.

“A bottle of wine,” two in the corner spoke at once, which was against the rules, but both thought Steve was looking in their direction.

“Tell another,” Aunt Lindie settled the matter.

“As I went over London bridge I met a man,” said Steve. “If I was to tell his name I’d be to blame. I have told his name five times over. Who was it?” 141

No one spoke up for they all knew the answers to Steve’s simple, threadbare riddles. “The answer is I,” he said, running a hand over his bristling pompadour.

And lest he assert his rights by starting on another, Aunt Lindie, which was her right, gave a jingle and the answer to it too.

As I walked out in my garden of lilies
There I saw endible, crindible, cronable kernt
Ofttimes pestered my eatable, peatable, partable present,
And I called for my man William, the second of quillan,
To bring me a quill of anatilus feather
That I might conquer the endible, crindible, cronable kernt.

She looked about the puzzled faces. “I’ll not plague your minds to find the answer. I’ll give it to you. As the woman walked out in her garden she saw a rabbit eating her cabbage and she called for her second husband to bring her a shotgun that she might kill the rabbit.”

The old teller of riddles pointed out that there was good in their telling. “People have been known to be scared out of doing meanness just by a riddle. Now what would you think this one would be?

Riddle to my riddle to my right,
You can’t guess where I laid last Friday night;
The wind did blow, my heart did ache
To see what a hole that fox did make.

Whoever knows can answer.” She looked at Josie Binner. “You have the best remembrance of anyone I know. Don’t tell me you can’t give the answer.” 142

“I never heard it before,” Josie had to admit, twisting her kerchief and looking down at the floor.

“Speak out!” urged Aunt Lindie. But no one did so she riddled the riddle. “A wicked man once planned to kill his sweetheart. He went first to dig her grave and then meant to throw her into it. She got an inkling of his intent, watched from the branches of a tree, then accused him with that riddle. He skipped the country and so that riddle saved a young girl’s life. And while we’re on trees, here’s another:

Horn eat a horn in a white oak tree.
Guess this riddle and you may hang me.

For the fun of it they all pretended not to know the answer so she gave it. “You’re just pranking,” she admonished playfully, “but nohow—a man named Horn eat a calf’s horn as he sat up in a white oak tree. But I’ll give you one now to take along with you. It’s a Bible riddle, now listen well:

God made Adam out of dust,
But thought it best to make me first;
So I was made before the man,
To answer God’s most holy plan.

My body he did make complete,
But without legs or hands or feet;
My ways and actions did control,
And I was made without a soul.

A living being I became;
’Twas Adam that gave me my name;
Then from his presence I withdrew;
No more of Adam ever knew.

143

I did my Maker’s laws obey;
From them I never went astray;
Thousands of miles I run, I fear,
But seldom on the earth appear.

But God in me did something see,
And put a living soul in me.
A soul of me my God did claim,
And took from me that soul again.

But when from me the soul was fled,
I was the same as when first made.
And without hands, or feet, or soul,
I travel now from pole to pole.

I labor hard, both day and night,
To fallen man I give great light;
Thousands of people, both young and old,
Will by my death great light behold.

No fear of death doth trouble me,
For happiness I cannot see;
To Heaven I shall never go,
Nor to the grave, or hell below.

And now, my friends, these lines you read,
And scan the Scriptures with all speed;
And if my name you don't find there,
I'll think it strange, I must declare."

That was the way Aunt Lindie and other older mountain women had of sending young folk to read the Word.

There was rarely a gathering for telling riddles and trying simple fortunes, especially during the winter, that did not end with a taffy pull. That too afforded the means for courting couples to pair off and pursue their romance. 144

The iron pot filled with sorghum was swung over the hearth fire to bubble and boil. In due time the mother of the household dropped some of it with a spoon into a dipper of cold water. If it hardened just right she knew the sorghum had boiled long enough. Then it was poured into buttered plates to cool. Often to add an extra flavor the taffy was sprinkled with walnut kernels. The task of picking out the kernels with Granny's knitting needles usually fell to the younger folks. There on the hearth was a round hole worn into the stone where countless walnuts had been cracked year after year.

When the taffy had cooled so that it could be lifted up in the hands the fun of pulling it began. The girls buttered or greased their hands so that it would not stick, and the boys, of their choice, did likewise. Pulling taffy to see who could get theirs the whitest was an occasion for greatest merriment. "Mine's the whitest," you'd hear a young, tittering miss call out. Then followed comparisons, friendly argument. And when at last the taffy was pulled into white ropes it was again coiled on buttered plates in fancy designs of hearts and links and left to harden until it could be broken into pieces with quick tap of knife or spoon.

Once more the courting couples paired off together and helped themselves politely when the plate was passed.

Riddles and fortunes, taffy pulling and harmless kissing games, like Clap In and Clap Out, Post Office, and I Lost My Kerchief Yesterday, made for the young folk of the mountains a most happy and (to them of yesterday) a most hilarious occasion.

And when a neighbor like Aunt Binie Warwick gave out the word there'd be a frolic and dance at her house, nothing but sickness or death could keep the young people away. Such an occasion 145 started off with a play-game song in order to get everyone in a gay mood. The hostess herself led off in the singing:

Come gather east, come gather west,
Come round with Yankee thunder;
Break down the power of Mexico
And tread the tyrants under.

Everyone knew how to play it. The boys stood on one side of the room, the girls on the other, and when the old woman piped out the very first notes the boys started for the girls, each with an eye on the one of his choice. Sometimes two or more of the young fellows were of the same mind, which added to the fun and friendly rivalry. The one who first caught the right hand of the girl had her for his partner in the dance that would follow. Immediately each couple stepped aside and waited until the others had found a partner. If there was a question about it, the oldest woman present, who by her years was the recognized matchmaker of the community, decided the point.

"Who'll do the calling?" asked the hostess, Aunt Binie.

Everyone knew there was not a better caller anywhere than Uncle Mose, who was just as apt at fiddling. So Uncle Mose proudly took his place in the corner, chair tilted back against the wall. Fiddle to chin, he called out: "Choose your partners!"

With a quick eye he singled out one couple. "Lizzie, you've got a bound to stand to the right of the gent!"

Quickly Lizzie, tittering and blushing, stepped to the other side of Dave.

"And you, Prudie," Uncle Mose waved a commanding hand, "get on the other side of John. You fellows from Fryin' Pan best learn the proper ways here and now." 146

A wave of laughter swept over the gathering and Uncle Mose, sweeping the bow across the strings, called: "Salute your partner!"

There was bowing and shuffling of feet and, as the tempo of the fiddle increased, heels clicked

against the bare floor and the caller's voice rang out above music and laughter:

Salute your corner lady,
Salute your partners, all:
Swing your corner lady
And promenade the hall.

They danced to the fiddle music of O Suzanna and Life on the Ocean Wave, and Uncle Mose had calls to suit any tune:

Swing old Adam
Swing Miss Eve,
Then swing your partner
As you leave.

Now and then a breathless girl would drop out and rest a moment leaning against the wall. And just for fun an oldster like Old Buck Rawlins, who didn't even have a partner, caught up one boot toe and hopped off to a corner moaning:

Sudie, Sudie, my foot is sore,
A-dancing on your puncheon floor.

Sometimes a young miss limped off to a chair. "Making out like someone stepped on her toe," Aunt Binie whispered behind her hand, for she knew all the signs of young folks, "but she's just not wanting to dance with Big Foot Jeff Pickett." The next moment Dan Spotswood had pulled himself loose from his cross-eyed partner and made his way to the side of his true love who had limped to the corner. 147

Nor was Uncle Mose unmindful of what was going on. The caller must have a quick eye, know who is courting, who is on the outs, who craves to be again in the arms of so and so. Quick as a flash he shouted, "Which shall it be Butterfly Swing or Captain Jinks?"

"Captain Jinks," cried Dan Spotswood jovially. For Dan knew the ways of the mountains. He didn't want any hard feelings with anyone. This dance would give all an opportunity to mingle and exchange partners. Even though Big Foot had tried his best to break up the match between him and Nellie, Dan meant that that fellow shouldn't have the satisfaction of knowing his jealousy. So he urged the couples into the circle. Dan, however, did see to it that he had Nellie's hand as they circled halfway around the crowded room before following the familiar calls of the play-party game as they sang the words along with the lively notes of the fiddle. They were words that their grandparents had sung in the days of the Civil War, with some latter-day changes:

Captain Jinks came home last night.
Pass your partner to the right;
Swing your neighbor so polite,
For that's the style in the army.

All join hands and circle left,
Circle left, circle left,
All join hands and circle left,
For that's the style in the army.

They saluted partners, they stepped and circled, and sashayed, they fairly galloped around the room, much to the disapproval of old Aunt Binie. "I don't favor no such antic ways. They're steppin' too lively." Her protest was heeded. 148

The fiddler stopped short. Folks were respectful in that day and time.

"Mose," the hostess called out to the fiddler when he had rested a little while, "please to strike up the tune Pop Goes the Weasel."

No sooner said than done. The notes of the fiddle rang out and Uncle Mose himself led off in the singing:

A penny for a spool of thread,
A penny for a needle,

while old and young joined in the singing as each lad stepped gallantly to the side of the girl of his choice and went through the steps of the Virginia Reel.

Though all knew every step and danced with grace and ease, they perhaps did not know that the dance was that of Sir Roger de Coverley; that it was one of a large number of English country dances, so called, not because they were danced in the country, but because their English ancestors corrupted the French word *contredanse*, which had to do with the position the dancers assume. Of one thing they could be sure, however, they owed it to their elders that this charming dance had survived.[A]

With what charming ease even old Aunt Binie with an aged neighbor went through the lovely figures of the Virginia Reel, harking back to the days of powdered wigs, buckled shoes, satin breeches and puffed skirts, as the head lady and foot gentleman skipped forward to meet each other in the center of the set. How gracefully she bowed to him and he to her with hand upon his chest, as they returned to their places! 149

Then the head lady and foot gentleman skipped forward, made one revolution, holding right hands.

With dignity and charm they went through the entire dance while those on the side lines continued to sing with the fiddle:

A penny for a spool of thread,
A penny for a needle.
That's the way the money goes.
Pop! goes the weasel.

Each time on the word "Pop!" the fiddler briskly plucked a string.

There was an interlude of fiddle music without words, then followed another verse while the dancers stepped the tune: 150

All around the American flag,
All around the eagle,
The monkey kissed the parson's wife,
Pop! goes the weasel.

This was followed by a lively tune, Vauxhall Dance, with a lusty call from the fiddler: "Circle eight!"

Whereupon all joined hands, circled to the left and to place.

Head couple out to the right and circle four,
With all your might
Around that couple take a peek!

At this Dan Spotswood peeked at smiling Nellie, almost forgetting to follow the next figure in his excitement.

Back to the center and swing when you meet,
Around that couple peek once more.

Back to the center and swing all four,
Circle four and cross right o'er.

The dance was moving toward the end.

"Balance all. Allemande left and promenade," the fiddler's voice raised louder.

There was repetition of calls and figures and a final booming from the indefatigable caller: "Meet your partners and promenade home."

Then the fiddler struck up Cackling Hen and a Breakdown so that the nimblest of the dancers might show out alone and so the frolic and dance ended. 151

[A] DANCE DIRECTIONS:

I. *a*. Head lady and foot gentleman skip forward to meet each other in center of the set. They bow and return to places.

b. Head gentleman and foot lady repeat *a*.

II. *a*. The head lady and foot gentleman skip forward and make one revolution, holding right hands.

b. The head gentleman and foot lady repeat *a*.

c. The head lady and foot gentleman skip forward and make one revolution, holding left hands.

d. Head gentleman and foot lady repeat *c*.

III. *a*. Head lady and foot gentleman skip forward and around each other back to back.

b. Head lady and foot gentleman repeat *a*.

IV. The head couple meet in center, lock right arms, and make one and one-half revolutions. They go down the set swinging each one once around with left arms locked, the gentleman swinging the ladies, the lady swinging the gentlemen. They meet each other swinging around with right arms locked, between each turn down the line. They swing thus down the set.

V. Couples join hands, forming a bridge under which the head couple skips to head of set. They separate, skipping down the outside of the lines and take their new places at the foot of the set. The original second couple is now the head couple. The dance is repeated from the beginning until each couple has been the head couple.

The Infare Wedding

Even when the dulcimer, that primitive three-stringed instrument, could not be had, mountain folk in the raggeds of Old Virginia were not at a loss for music with which to make merry at the infare wedding. They stepped the tune to the singing of a ballad, nor did they tire though the

infare wedding lasted all of three days and nights. It began right after the wedding ceremony itself had been spoken—at the bride's home, you may be sure.

How happy the young couple were as they stood before the elder, the groom with his waiter at his side, and the bride with her waiter beside her. Careful they were too that they stood the way the floor logs were running. Thoughtless couples who had stood contrary to the cracks in the floor had been known to be followed by ill luck.

When the elder had spoken the word which made them one, the bride with her waiter hurried out to another room, if there was such, if not she climbed the wall ladder to the loft and there in the low-roofed bedroom she changed her wedding frock for her infare dress—the second day dress. In early times it was of linsey-woolsey, woven by her own hands, and dyed with homemade dyes, while her wedding frock had been of snowy white linsey-woolsey.

And what a feast *her* folks had prepared for the occasion. Cakes and pies, stewed pumpkin that had been dried in rings before the fireplace, venison, and wild honey.

While the bride was changing to her infare dress, older hands quickly took down the bedsteads, tied up the flock ticks and shuck ticks in coverlids and quilts, shoved them back into the corners so as to make room for the frolic and dancing. 152

If the bride's granny lived it was her privilege to lead off in the singing, which she did in a high querulous voice while the young folks, the boys on one side, the girls on the other, faced each other and to soft handclapping and lightly tapping toe sang:

There lived an old Lord by the Northern sea,
Bowee down,
There lived an old Lord by the Northern sea,
And he had daughters one, two three;
I'll be true to my love,
If my love will be true to me.

All the while the bride and groom sat primly side-by-side near the hearth and looked on.

The rest stepped the tune to the singing of the Twa Sisters, reenacting the story of the old ballad as it moved along.

It gave everyone an opportunity to swing and step.

After that the bride's father stepped to the middle of the room and urged even the bride to join in. In the meantime the young folks had taken the opportunity to tease the bride, while the young men went further by bussing her cheek. A kiss of the modest, proper sort was not out of order; every groom knew and expected that. Even a most jealous fellow knew to conceal his displeasure, for it would only add to further pranking on the part of the rest if he protested.

Presently two of the young lads came in bearing a pole. They caught the eye of the groom who knew full well the meaning of the pole. Quickly he tapped his pocket till the silver jingled, nodded assent to the unspoken query. They should have silver to buy a special treat for all the menfolks; forthwith the polebearers withdrew, knowing the groom would keep his word. 153

And now the father of the bride egged the groom and his wife to step out and join in singing and dancing the next song, which the father started in a rollicking, husky voice:

Charlie's neat, and Charlie's sweet,
And Charlie he's a dandy.

It was a dignified song and one of the few in which the woman advanced first toward the man in the dance. The lads already being formed in line at one side, the girls one at a time advanced as all sang, took a partner by the hand, swung him once; then stepping, in time with the song, to the next the lad repeated the simple step until she had gone down the line. The second girl followed as soon as the first girl had swung the first lad, and so each in turn participated, skipping finally on the outside of the opposite line, making a complete circle of the dancers, and resuming her first position.

It did not concern them that they were singing and stepping an old Jacobean song that had been written in jest of a Stuart King, Charles II.

At the invitation of the bride's mother the dancing ceased for a time so that all might partake of the feast she had spent days preparing. Even in this there was the spirit of friendly rivalry. The bride's mother sought to outdo the groom's parent in preparing a feast for the gathering; the next day, according to their age-old custom, the celebration of the infare would continue at the home of his folks.

When all had eaten their fill again the bride's granny carried out her part of the tradition. She hobbled in with a rived oak broom. This she placed in the center of the floor with the brush toward the door. Everyone knew that was the sign for ending the frolic at the bride's home. Also they knew it was the last chance for a shy young swain to declare himself to his true love as they sang the ancient ballad, which granny would start, and did its bidding. Usually not one of the unwed would evade this custom. For, if *she* sang and stepped with *him*, it meant betrothal. So they stepped and sang lustily: 154

Here comes the poor old chimney sweeper,
He has but one daughter and cannot keep her,
Now she has resolved to marry,

Go choose the one and do not tarry.

Now you have one of your own choosing,
Be in a hurry, no time for losing;
Join your right hands, this broom step over,
And kiss the lips of your true lover.

So ended the infare wedding at the bride's home.

The next day all went to the home of the groom's parents and repeated the feasting and dancing, and on the third day the celebration continued at the home of the young couple.

In those days mountain people shared each other's work as well as their play. Willing hands had already helped the young groom raise his house of logs on a house seat given by his parents, and along the same creek.

It was the way civilization moved. The son settled on the creek where his father, like his before him, had settled, only moving farther up toward its source as his father had done when he had wed.

155

5. Religious Customs

FUNERALIZING

To the outsider far removed, or even to people in the nearby lowlands, mountain people may seem stoic. A mountain woman whose husband is being tried for his life may sit like a figure of stone not for lack of feeling, but because she'd rather die than let the other side know her anguish. A little boy who loses his father will steal off to cliff or wood and suffer in silence. No one shall see or know his grief. "He's got a-bound to act like a man, now." The burden of the family is upon his young shoulders.

Mountain folk love oratory. Men, especially, will travel miles to a speaking—which may be a political gathering or one for the purpose of discussing road building.

To all outward appearances they seem unmoved, yet they drink in with deep emotion all that is said. Both men and women are eager to go to meeting. Meeting to them means a religious gathering. Here they listen with rapt attention to the lesser eloquence of the mountain preacher. But at meeting, unlike at speaking, they give vent to their emotions, especially if the occasion be that of funeralizing the dead.

156

Much has been written upon this custom, but the question still prevails, "Why do mountain people hold a funeral so long after burial?"

The reason is this. Long ago, before good roads were even dreamed of in the wilderness, when death came, burial of necessity followed immediately. But often long weeks, even months, elapsed before the word reached relatives and friends. There were few newspapers in those days and often as not there were those who could neither read nor write. For the same reason there was little, if any, exchange of letters.

So the custom of funeralizing the dead long after burial grew from a necessity. The funeralizing of a departed kinsman or friend was published from the pulpit. The bereaved family set a day, months or even a year in advance, for the purpose of having the preacher eulogize their beloved dead. "Come the third Sunday in May next summer," a mountain preacher could be heard in mid winter publishing the occasion. "Brother Tom's funeral will be held here at Christy Creek church house."

The word passed. One told the other and when the appointed Sunday rolled around the following May, friends and kin came from far and near, bringing their basket dinner, for no one family could have prepared for the throng. Together, when they had eaten their fill, they gathered about the grave house to weep and mourn and sing over "Brother Tom," dead and gone this long time.

The grave house was a crude structure of rough planks supported by four short posts, erected at the time of the burial to shelter the dead from rain and snow and scorching wind.

Many a one, having warning of approaching death, named the preacher he wished to preach his funeral, even naming the text and selecting the hymns to be sung.

157

As the service moved along after the singing of a doleful hymn, the sobbing and wailing

increased. The preacher eulogized the departed, praising his many good deeds while on earth, and urged his hearers on to added hysteria with, “Sing Brother Tom’s favorite hymn, Oh, Brother, Will You Meet Me!”

Sobs changed to wailing as old and young joined in the doleful dirge:

Oh, brother, will you meet me,
Meet me, meet me?
Oh, brother, will you meet me
On Canaan’s far-off shore.

It was a family song; so not until each member had been exhorted to meet on Canaan’s shore did the hymn end—each verse followed of course with the answer:

Oh, yes, we will meet you
On Canaan’s far-off shore.

By this time the mourners were greatly stirred up, whereupon the preacher in a trembling, tearful voice averred, “When I hear this promising hymn it moves deep the spirit in me, it makes my heart glad. Why, my good friends, I could shout! I just nearly see Brother Tom over yonder a-beckoning to me and to you. He ain’t on this here old troubled world no more and he won’t be. Will Brother Tom be here when the peach tree is in full blowth in the spring?”

“No!” wailed the flock.

“Will Brother Tom be here when the leaves begin to drap in the falling weather?” again he wailed.

“No!”

“Will Brother Tom be up thar? Up thar?”—the swift arm of the preacher shot upward—“when Gabriel blows his trump?” 158

“Eh, Lord, Brother Tom will be up thar!” shouted an old woman.

“Amen!” boomed from the throat of everyone.

As it often happened, Tom’s widow had long since re-wed, but neither she nor her second mate were in the least dismayed. They wept and wailed with fervor, “He’ll be thar! He’ll be thar!”

“Yes,” boomed the preacher once more, “Brother Tom will be thar when Gabriel blows his trump!”

Then abruptly in a very calm voice, not at all like that in which he had shouted, the preacher lined the hymn:

Arise, my soul, and spread thy wings,
A better portion trace.

Having intoned the two lines the flock took up the doleful dirge.

So they went on until the hymns were finished.

After a general handshaking and repeated farewells and the avowed hope of meeting again come the second Sunday in May next year, the funeralizing ended.

Old Christmas

Though in some isolated sections of the Blue Ridge, say in parts of the Unakas, the Cumberlands, the Dug Down Mountains of Georgia, there are people who may never have heard of the Gregorian or Julian calendar, yet in keeping Old Christmas as they do on January 6th, they cling unwittingly to the Julian calendar of 46 B.C., introduced in this country in the earliest years. To them December 25th is New Christmas, according to the Gregorian calendar adopted in 1752. 159

They celebrate the two occasions in a very different way. The old with prayer and carol-singing, the new with gaiety and feasting.

To these people there are twelve days of Christmas beginning with December 25th and ending with January 6th. In some parts of these southern mountain regions, if their forbears were of Pennsylvania German stock, they call Old Christmas Little Christmas as the Indians do. But such instances are rare rather than commonplace.

Throughout the twelve days of Christmas there are frolic and fireside play-games and feasting, for which every family makes abundant preparation. There is even an ancient English accumulative song called Twelve Days of Christmas which is sung during the celebrations, in which the true love brings a different gift for each day of the twelve. The young folks of the community go from home to home, bursting in with a cheery “Christmas gift!” Those who have been taken unaware, though it happens the same way each year, forgetting, in the pleasant excitement of the occasion, to cry the greeting first, must pay a forfeit of something good to eat —cake, homemade taffy, popcorn, apples, nuts.

After the feast the father of the household passes the wassail cup, which is sweet cider drunk

from a gourd dipper. Each in turn drinks to the health of the master of the house and his family.

Throughout the glad season some of the young bloods are inclined to take their Christmas with rounds of shooting into the quiet night. Some get gloriously drunk on hard cider and climbing high on the mountain side shout and shoot to their hearts' content.

However, when Old Christmas arrives, even the most boisterous young striplings assume a quiet, prayerful calm. The children's play-pretties—the poppet, a make-believe corn-shuck doll—the banjo, and fiddle are put aside. In the corner of the room is placed a pine tree. It stands unadorned with tinsel or toy. On the night of January 6th, just before midnight, the family gathers about the hearth. Granny leads in singing the ancient Cherry Tree Carol, sometimes called Joseph and Mary, which celebrates January 6th as the day of our Lord's birth. With great solemnity Granny takes the handmade taper from the candlestick on the mantel-shelf, places it in the hands of the oldest man child, to whom the father now passes a lighted pine stick. With it the child lights the taper. The father lifts high his young son who places the lighted taper on the highest branch of the pine tree where a holder has been placed to receive it. This is the only adornment upon the tree and represents a light of life and hope—"like a star of hope that guided the Wise Men to the manger long ago," mountain folk say.

In the waiting silence comes the low mooing of the cows and the whinny of nags, and looking outside the cabin door the mountaineer sees his cow brutes and nags kneeling in the snow under the starlit sky. "It is the sign that this is for truth our Lord's birth night," Granny whispers softly.

Then led by the father of the household, carrying his oldest man child upon his shoulder, the womenfolk following behind, they go down to the creek side. Kneeling, the father brushes aside the snow among the elders, and there bursting through the icebound earth appears a green shoot bearing a white blossom.

"It is the sign that this is indeed our Lord's birth night, the sign that January 6th is the real Christmas," old folk of the Blue Ridge bear witness.

Foot-washing

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

"It is writ in the Good Book," said Brother Jonathan solemnly, "in the thirteen chapter of St. John, the fourth and the fifth verses."

With hands meekly clasped in front of him Brother Jonathan stood—not behind a pulpit—but beside a small table. Nor did he hold the Book. That too lay on the table beside the water bucket, where he had placed it after taking his text.

It could be in Pleasant Valley Church in Magoffin County, or in Old Tar Kiln Church in Carter County; it could be in Bethel Church high up in the Unakas, or Antioch Church in Cowee, Nantahala, Dry Fork, or New Hope Chapel in Tusquitee, in Bald or Great Smoky. Anywhere, everywhere that an Association of Regular Primitive Baptists hold forth, and they are numerous throughout the farflung scope of the mountains of the Blue Ridge.

"He laid aside his garments ... and after that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the feet of the disciples...." Again Brother Jonathan repeated the words.

Slowly, deliberately he went over much that had gone before. This being the third Sunday of August and the day for Foot-washing in Lacy Valley Church where other brethren of the Burning Spring Association had already been preaching since sunup. One after the other had spelled each other, taking text after text. And now Brother Jonathan—this being his home church—had taken the stand to give out the text and preach upon that precept of the Regular Primitive Baptists of washing feet. It was the home preacher's sacred privilege.

Old folks dozed, babies fretted, young folks twisted and squirmed in the straight-backed benches. A parable he told, a story of salvation, conviction, damnation. But always he came back to the thirteenth chapter of St. John. He spoke again of that part of the communion service which had preceded: the partaking of the unleavened bread, which two elders had passed to the worthy seated in two rows facing each other at the front of the little church; the men in the two benches on the right, the womenfolk in the two benches facing each other on the left. Among these, who had already examined their own conscience to make sure of their worthiness, had passed an elder with a tumbler of blackberry juice. He walked close behind the elder who bore the plate of unleavened bread. The first said to each worthy member, "Remember this represents the broken body of our Lord who died on this cross for our sins." The second intoned in a deep voice, "This represents the blood of our Lord who shed his blood for our sins." All the while old and young throughout the church house had sung that well-known hymn of the Regular Primitive Baptists.

When Jesus Christ was here below,
He taught His people what to do;

And if we would His precepts keep,
We must descend to washing feet.

That part of the service being ended, Brother Jonathan exhorted the flock to make ready for foot-washing.

The men in their benches removed shoes and socks. The women on the other side of the church, facing each other in their two benches, removed shoes and stockings. A sister arose, girthed herself with a towel, knelt at a sister's feet with a tin washpan filled with water from the creek, and meekly washed the other's feet. Having dried them with an end of the long towel, she now handed it to the other who performed a like service for her. This act of humility was repeated by each of the worthy. All the while there was hymn-singing.

The menfolk who participated removed their coats and hung them beside their hats on wall pegs.

"It is all Bible," the devout declare. "He laid aside His garments. We take off our coats."

Brother Jonathan and the other elders are last to wash each other's feet.

And when the service is ended and the participants have again put on their shoes, they raise their voices in a hymn they all know well:

I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,
The House of Thine abode,
The church our blessed Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.

The tin washpans were emptied frequently out the door and refilled from the bucket on the table, for many were they, both women and men, of the Regular Primitive Baptist faith who felt worthy to wash feet.

164

At the invitation everyone arose and those who felt so minded went forward to take the hand of preacher, elder, moderator, sister, and brother, in fellowship. An aged sister here, another there, clapped bony hands high over head, shouting, "Praise the Lord!" and "Bless His precious name!"

Again all was quiet. Brother Jonathan announced that there would be foot-washing at another church in the Association on the fourth Sunday of the month and slowly, almost reluctantly, they went their way.

New Light

SNAKE BITE IS FATAL. RELIGIOUS ADHERENT DIES FROM BITE
AFTER REFUSING MEDICAL AID

The death of 48-year-old Robert Cordle, who refused medical aid after being bitten by a rattlesnake during church services, brought 1,500 curious persons today to a funeral home to see his body.

While the throngs passed the bier of the Doran resident, the Richlands council passed an ordinance outlawing the use of snakes in religious services and sent officers to the New Light church to destroy the reptiles there.

Commonwealth's Attorney John B. Gillespie, who estimated the visitors at the funeral home totaled 1,500, said after an investigation that no arrests would be made. He explained that the state of Virginia has no law, similar to that in Kentucky, forbidding the use of snakes in church services.

J. W. Grizzel of Bradshaw, itinerant pastor who preached at the services Thursday night when Cordle was bitten, was questioned by Gillespie.

The Commonwealth's attorney quoted Grizzel as saying:

"I was dancing with the snake held above my head. Brother Cordle approached me and took the snake from my hands. I told him not to touch it unless he was ready."

165

After a moment, the rattler struck Cordle in the arm, Gillespie said Grizzle told him. Cordle threw the snake into the lap of George Hicks, 15, and then was taken to the home of a friend and later to his own home.

—The Ashland Daily Independent

CHILD, SNAKEBITTEN AT RITES, MAY GET
MEDICAL CARE

Kinsmen of snake-bitten Leitha Ann Rowan permitted her examination by a physician today, but barred actual treatment and claimed she was recovering rapidly in justification of their sect's belief that faith counteracts venom.

The six-year-old child was brought to Sheriff W. I. Daughtrey's office today by relatives, after

having been missing for three days while her mother, Mrs. Albert Rowan, sought to avoid treatment for the girl.

Dr. H. W. Clements did not support relatives' claims that Leitha Ann was almost fully recovered but said she had made some progress in overcoming the effects of a Copperhead Moccasin's bite sustained eight days ago in religious rites at her farm home near here.

He said her condition remained serious and directed that she be brought to his office for another examination Monday.

Meanwhile the child's father, a mild-mannered tenant farmer, and preacher-farmer W. T. Lipahm, tall leader of the snake-handling folk, remained in jail on charges of assault with intent to murder. Sheriff Daughtrey said they would be allowed freedom under $3,000 bonds when the child is pronounced out of danger.

—Atlanta Journal

MAN SUFFERS SNAKE BITE DURING
RELIGIOUS RITES

A man listed by chief of police Ralph Tuggle as Raymond Hayes of Harlan county was in a serious condition today from the bite of a copperhead snake suffered yesterday during religious exercises in a vacant storeroom.

Hayes and three other persons, including a woman, were under bond Chief Tuggle said, pending a hearing Friday on charges of violating a Kentucky statute prohibiting the use of snakes in religious ceremonies.

Tuggle said the four first appeared on the courthouse square and started to hold services from the bandstand but that he dispersed them. The chief said they then secured a vacant storeroom which was quickly crowded and before police could break up the gathering Hayes had been bitten by the copperhead.

—Barbourville, Ky., Advocate

MAN DIES OF SNAKE BITE. SECOND MEMBER OF RELIGIOUS
SECT TO DIE IN FOUR DAYS; BITTEN DURING SERVICES

County Attorney Dennis Wooton listed Jim Cochran, 39, unemployed mechanic, today as the second member of an eastern Kentucky snake-handling religious sect to die within four days as the result of bites suffered during church services.

Bitten on the right hand Sunday morning Cochran, married and father of several children, died 18 hours later at his home at nearby Duane.

Mrs. Clark Napier, 40, mother of seven children, died Thursday night at Hyden, coal-mining community in adjacent Leslie county, and County-Judge Pro-Tem Boone Begley said she had been bitten at services.

Wooton said Jimmy Stidham, Lawsie Smith and Albert Collins were fined $50. each after Cochran's death on charges of violating the 1940 anti-snake-handling law. Unable to pay, they were jailed, he said.

Elige Bowling, a Holiness church preacher, is under bond pending grand jury action on a murder charge in the death of Mrs. Napier. Wooton said Perry county officials would be guided on further prosecution in the Cochran case by disposition of the Leslie county case.

—Corbin, Ky., Times

Finding themselves in the throes of the law, members of the snake-handling sect at times turned to drinking poison in testing their faith. There was no legislation to prevent it, the leaders craftily observed. However, in some southern mountain states such a measure has been advocated.

At times, nevertheless, even in cases of death from snakebite during religious service, county officials refused to prosecute, saying the matter was up to the state itself to dispose of.

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6. Superstition

There once prevailed a superstition among timbermen in the Big Sandy country which dated back to the Indian.

The mountain men knew and loved their own Big Sandy River. They rode their rafts fearlessly, leaping daringly from log to log to make fast a dog chain, even jumping from one slippery, water-soaked raft to another to capture with spike pole or grappling hook a log that had broken loose. They had not the slightest fear when a raft buckled or broke away from the rest and was swept by swift current to midstream. There were quick and ready hands to the task. Loggers of the Big Sandy kept a cool head and worked with swift decisive movements. But, once their rafts reached the mouth of Big Sandy, there were some in the crew who could neither be persuaded nor bullied to ride the raft on through to the Ohio. Strong-muscled men have been known to quit their post, leap into the turbulent water before the raft swept forward into the forbidding Ohio. They remembered the warning of witch women, “Don’t ride the raft into the Big Waters! Leap off!” So the superstitious often leaped, taking his life in his hands and often losing it.

169

Water Witch

If anyone wanted to dig a well in Pizen Gulch he wouldn’t think of doing it without first sending for Noah Buckley, the water witch. He lived at the head of Tumbling Creek. Noah wore a belt of rattlesnake skin to keep off rheumatism. “That belt’s got power,” Noah boasted. And young boys in the neighborhood admitted it. More than one who had eaten too many green apples and lay groveling under the tree, drawn in a knot with pain, screamed in his misery for Noah. If Noah was within hearing he went on a run, fast as his long legs could carry him. And the young sufferer reaching out a hand touched the rattlesnake belt and quicker than you could bat an eye his griping pains left and the next thing he was up playing around.

However, it was his power to find water that was Noah Buckley’s pride. He took a twig from a peach tree, held a prong in each hand, and with head bent low he stumbled about here and there mumbling:

Water, water, if you be there,
Bend this twig and show me where.

If the twig bent low to the earth you could count on it that was the spot where the well should be dug. To mark the spot Noah stuck the twig at once into the earth. Mischievous boys sometimes slipped around, pulled up the peach branch and threw it away. Again there would be a doubting Thomas who sought to test the water witch’s power by stealing away the peach branch and dropping in its place a pebble. But Noah was not to be defeated. He forthwith cut another branch, repeated the ceremony, and located the exact spot again. Whereupon neighbor menfolk pitched in and dug the well. Not all in one day, of course. It took several days but their labors were always rewarded with clear, cold water at last.

170

A well once dug where Noah directed never went dry. That was his boast as long as he lived.

However, it was not so much his power to find water that strengthened the faith of people in the water witch. It was what happened on Dog Slaughter Creek. The Mosleys, a poor family, had squatted on a miserable place there. One day the baby of the lot toddled off without being missed by the other nine children of the flock. When Jake Mosley and his wife Norie came in from the tobacco patch they began to search frantically for the babe, screaming and crying as they dashed this way and that. They looked under the house, in the well, in the barn. They even went to neighbors’ pig lots; the Mosleys had none of their own. “I’ve heard of a sow or a boar pig too eating up the carcass of a child,” a neighbor said. “Maybe the babe’s roamed off into Burdick’s pasture and the stallion has tromped her underfoot,” Jake opined. With lighted pine sticks to guide their steps they searched the pasture. There was no trace even of a scrap of the child’s dress anywhere to be seen on ground or fence.

At last someone said, “Could be a water witch might have knowing to find a lost child!” And the frantic parents moaned, “Could be. Send for the water witch.”

It was after midnight that neighbors came bringing the water diviner.

“Give me a garmint of the lost child,” Noah spoke with authority, “a garmint that the little one has wore that’s not been washed.”

The mother tearfully produced a bedraggled garment.

171

The water witch took it in his hand, sniffed it, turned it wrongside out, sniffed it again. “Now have you got a lock of the little one’s hair?” He looked at Norie, moaning on the shuck tick bed, then at Jake. They stared at each other. At last Norie raised up on her elbow. They did have a lock of the babe’s hair. “Mind the time she nigh strangled to death with croup”—the mother fixed weary eyes on the father of her ten children—“and we cut off a lock of her hair and put it in the clock?”

In one bound Jake Mosley crossed the floor and reached the clock on the mantel. Sure enough there was the little lock of hair wrapped around with a thread. Without a word Jake handed it to the water witch.

Noah eyed it in silence. “I’ll see what can be done,” he promised at last, “but, Jake, you and Norie and the children stay here. And you, neighbors, stay here too. I’ll be bound to go alone.”

With a flaming pine stick in one hand and the child’s dress and lock of hair in the other, he set out.

Before morning broke, the water witch came carrying the lost child.

They hovered about him, the parents kissed and hugged their babe close and everyone was asking questions at the same time. “How did it happen?” “Where did you find the little one?”

“I come upon a rock ledge,” said Noah with a great air of mystery, “and then I fell upon my knees. I’d cut me a peach branch down at the edge of the pasture. I gripped the lost child’s garmint and the lock of her hair on one hand with a prong of the peach branch clutched tight in fists this way,” he extended clenched hands to show the awed friends and neighbors. “I’d already put out the pine torch for daylight was coming. It took quite a time before I could feel 172
the little garmint twitching in my hand. Then the peach branch begun to bear down to the ground. First thing I know something like a breath of wind pulled that little garmint toward the edge of the rock cliff. My friends, I knowed I was on the right track. I dropped flat on my belly and retched a hand under the cliff. I touched the little one’s bare foot! Then with both hands I dragged her out. This child”—he lifted a pious countenance—“could a-been devoured by wild varmints—a catamount or wolf. There’s plenty of such in these woods. But the water witch got there ahead of the varmints!”

The mother began to sob and wail, “Bless the good old water witch!” and the joyful father gave the diviner the only greenback he had and said he was only sorry he didn’t have a hundred to give him.

After that more than one sought out the water witch. Even offered him silver to teach them his powers.

“It’s not good to tell all you know, then others would know as much as you do,” said Noah Buckley of Pizen Gulch, who knew that to keep his powers a water witch has to keep secrets too.

Marrying on Horseback

Millie Eckers, with her arms around his waist, rode behind Robert Burns toward the county seat one spring morning to get married. But before they got there along came Joe Fultz, a justice of the peace, to whom they told their intent. Joe said the middle of the road on horseback was as good a place as any for a pair to be spliced, so then and there he had them join right hands. When they were pronounced man and wife Robert handed Joe a frayed greenback in exchange 173
for the signed certificate of marriage. Joe Eckers always carried a supply of blank documents in his saddlebags to meet any emergency that might arise within his bailiwick. The justice of the peace pocketed his fee, wished Mister and Mistress Burns a long and happy married life, and rode away, and Robert turned his mare’s nose back toward Little Goose Creek from whence they had come.

Some said, soon as they heard about Millie and Robert being married on horseback right in the middle of the road, that no good would come of it. As for the preacher he said right out that while the justice of the peace was within his rights, he had observed in his long ministry that couples so wed were sure to meet with misfortune—married on horseback and without the blessing of an Apostle of the Book.

Scarcely had Millie and Robert settled down to housekeeping than things began to go wrong.

One morning when the dew was still on the grass Millie went out to milk. “Bossy had roamed away off ferninst the thicket,” she told Robert, “and ginst I got there to where she was usin’ I scratched the calf of my leg on a briar.”

Robert eyed her swollen limb. “Seein’ your meat black like it is and the risin’ in your calf so angry, I’m certain you’ve got dew pizen.”

Sure enough she had. Millie lay for days and when the rising came to a head in a place or two, Robert lanced it with the sharp blade of his penknife.

Some weeks later old Doc Robbins who chanced by wondered how Millie had escaped death from blood poison from the knife blade, until the young husband told casually how when he was a little set along child he had seen an old doctor dip the blade of a penknife in a boiling kettle of 174
water and lance a carbuncle on another’s neck. He had done the same for Millie.

No sooner was she up and about than something else happened.

Millie and Robert had just the one cow but soon they had none. Even so Millie said things might have been worse. “It could have been Robert that was taken.” And he said, bearing their loss stoically, “What is to be will be, if it comes in the night.”

It was Millie who first noticed something was wrong with Bossy. It was right after she had found her grazing in the chestnut grove. All the young growth had been cut out and the branches of the trees formed a solid shade so that coming out of the sunlight into the grove Millie blinked and groped in the darkness with hands out before her, feeling her way and calling, “Sook,

Bossy! Sook! Sook!" Millie all but stumbled over the cow down on her all fours. She coaxed and patted for a long time before Bossy finally got to her feet and waddled slowly out of the shaded grove into the sunlit meadow.

That evening Robert did the milking. But before he began he stroked Bossy's nose and bent close. "I've caught the stench of her breath!" he cried. "Sniff for yourself, Millie!"

Millie did. "Smells worser'n a dung pile," she gasped, hand to stomach.

Quick as a flash Robert put the tin pail under Bossy's bag and began to milk with both hands.

There was scarcely a pint in the bucket until Robert gaped at Millie. "Look! It don't foam!" His eyes widened with apprehension. He took a silver coin from his pocket, dropped it into the pail and waited. In a few moments he fished it out. "Black as coal!" gasped Robert. "Our cow's got milk sick!"

Bossy slumped to the ground. By sundown the cow was stark dead.

Before dark Robert himself grew deathly ill.

They remembered that at noon time he had spread a piece of cornbread with Bossy's butter. He had drunk a cup of her milk.

Millie lost no moment. She mixed mustard in a cup of hot water and Robert downed it almost at a gulp.

"He begun to puke and purge until I thought his gizzard would sure come up next," Millie told it afterward. "All that live-long night he puked and strained till he got so weakened his head hung over the side of the bed and hot water poured out of his mouth same as if he had water brash. Along toward morning Doc Robbins come riding by. He had a bottle of apple brandy and we mixed it with wild honey. It wasn't long till Robert got ease. Doc set a while and about the middle of the morning he give Robert two heaping spoonfuls of castor oil."

From then on no one could coax Robert Burns to touch a mouthful of butter nor drink a cup of sweet milk. Though he drank his fill of buttermilk with never a pain.

As for the shaded grove where the cow had grazed, every tree was cleared away—at Doc Robbins's orders. The sunlight poured into the place and soon there was a green meadow where once the shaded plot had been covered with a poisoned vegetation. Cows grazed at their will over the place with no ill effects.

Still Robert had no hankering for butter or sweet milk.

"You've no need to fear milk sick now," Doc Robbins tried to reassure Robert. "It's never found where there's sunlight." Though he could never figure out whether the deep shade produced a poisonous gas that settled on the vegetation, or whether it came from some mineral in the ground, he did know, and so did others, that whatever the cause it disappeared when sunlight took the place of dense shade.

The incident was scarcely forgotten when ill luck again befell Millie and Robert. Their barn burned to the ground, reducing their harvest and their only mule to ashes.

Tongues wagged. "Bad luck comes to the couple married on horseback."

Everyone the countryside over was convinced of the truth of the old superstition one fall when a tragedy unheard-of overtook Millie at sorghum-making.

No one ever knew how it happened. But some said that Brock Cyrus's half-witted boy was the cause of it. He shouted, "Look out thar!" and Millie, looking up from her task of feeding cane stalks into the mill, saw, or thought she saw, her babe, Little Robert, toddling toward the boiling pans. She screamed and lunged forward, and as she did so the mule started on a run. The beam to which it was hitched whirled about and struck Millie helpless. Before anyone could reach her side or stop the frightened mule, her right hand was drawn into the mill, then her left. With another revolution of the iron teeth of the cane mill both of her arms were chopped into shreds.

It was necessary for old Doc Robbins to amputate both at the shoulders. Everyone thought it would take Millie Burns out and they said as much. But she lived long, long years, even raised a family. All her days she sat in a strange chair that Robert made. A chair with a high shelf on which her babes, each in turn, lay to nurse at her breast.

And always the armless woman was pointed out as a warning to young courting couples, "Don't get married on horseback! It brings ill luck, no end of ill luck."

Death Crown

Once you evidence even the slightest respect of a superstition in the Blue Ridge Country there is ever a firm believer eager to show proof of the like beyond all doubt. It was so with Widow Plater as we sat by the flickering light of the little oil lamp in her timeworn cabin that looked down on the Shenandoah Valley.

"I want to show you Josephus's crown," she said in a hushed voice. Going to the bureau she opened the top drawer, bringing out what appeared to be a plate wrapped in muslin. She placed it on the stand table beside the lamp and carefully laid back the covering, revealing a matted

circle of feathers about the size of the human head. The circle was about two inches thick and a finger length in width. Strangely enough the feathers were all running the same way and were so closely matted together they did not pull apart even under pressure of the widow's firm hand, she showed with much satisfaction. "Can't no one pull asunder a body's death crown," she said with firm conviction.

Resuming her chair she went on with the story. "All of six months my husband, Josephus, poor soul, lay sick with his poor head resting on the same pillow day in and day out. I'd come to know he was on his death bed," she said resignedly, "for one day when I smoothed a hand over his pillow I felt there his crown a-forming inside the ticking. I'd felt the crown with my own hands and I knew death was hovering over my man. Though I didn't tell him so. I wanted he should not 178
be troubled, that he should die a peaceable death and he did. When we laid him out we put the pillow under his head and when we laid him away I opened the pillow and took out his crown that I knew to be there all of six months before he breathed his last." She sighed deeply. "It's not everyone that has a crown"—there was wistful pride in her voice—"and them that has, they do say, is sure of another up yonder." The Widow Plater lifted tear-dimmed eyes heavenward. "And what's more, it is the bounden duty of them that's left to keep the crown of their dead to their own dying day. Josephus's death crown I'll pass on to my oldest daughter when my time comes."

Carefully she folded the matted circle of feathers in its muslin covering and reverently replaced it in the bureau drawer.

A White Feather

Rhodie Polhemus who lived on Bear Fork of Puncheon Creek was one who believed in signs. It had started long years ago when Alamander, her husband, had met an untimely fate. That morning after he had gone out hunting Rhodie was sweeping the floor when she saw a white feather fluttering about the brush of her broom. It hovered strangely in midair, then sank slowly to the puncheon floor near the door. "The angel of death is nigh. There'll be a corpse under this roof this day." Rhodie trembled with fear. Sure enough Alamander was carried in stark dead before sundown. It came at a time when there wasn't a plank on the place. They had disposed of their timber, which was little enough, as fast as it was sawed. So that there was not a piece left with which to make Alamander's burying box. Nor was there a whipsaw in the whole country 179
round with which to work, the itinerate sawyer having gone on with his property to another creek. But folks were neighborly and willing. They cut down a fine poplar tree, reduced a log of it to proper length and with ax and adze hewed out a coffin for Rhodie's husband, hollowing it out into a trough and shaping the ends to fit the corpse. The lid they made of clapboards. Placing a coverlid inside the trough they laid the body of Alamander upon it, made fast the lid, and bore him off to the burying ground.

"I knowed his time had come," Rhodie often repeated the story, "when I found the white feather —and when it hovered near the door where Alamander went out that morning."

There were other signs.

All of a week after Alamander was buried Rhodie claimed she had seen the mound above him rise and move in ripples the full length of the log coffin in which he lay buried. "Could be he's not resting easy," the old woman said to herself. "Could be the coverlid under his back is wrinkled." In response to her question the departed Alamander is said to have assured his widow that it was his sign of letting her know he was aware of her presence. However, when curious neighbors accompanied Rhodie to the burying ground, the mound remained still as a rock. Rhodie said it was the sign that he had rather she come to his grave alone.

Though there was never an eyewitness to the rippling earth on the grave save that of Rhodie, whenever anyone found a white feather about the house he remembered what the old woman on Bear Fork of Puncheon Creek had said, "It is a sign of death!"

180

7. LEGEND

Crockett's Hollow

When Jasper Tipton married Talithie Burwell and settled on Tipton's Fork in Crockett's Hollow, folks said no one could ask for a better start. The Tiptons had given the couple their house seat, a bedstead, a table. Jasper had a team of mules he had swapped for a yoke of oxen, and he had a cookstove that he had bought with his own savings. A step stove it was, two caps below and two higher up. The Burwells had seen to it that their daughter did not go empty-handed to her man. She had a flock tick, quilts, coverlids, and a cow. But, old Granny Withers, a midwife from Caney Creek, sitting in the chimney corner sucking her pipe the night of the wedding, vowed that all would not be well with the pair. Hadn't a bat flitted into the room right over Talithie's head when the elder was speaking the words that joined the two in wedlock? Everyone knew the sign. Everyone knew too that Talithie Burwell, with her golden hair and blue eyes, had broken up the match between Jasper and Widow Ashby's Sabrina. Yet Talithie and Jasper vowed that all was fair in love and war. If a man's heart turned cold toward a maid, it was none of his fault. There was nothing to be done about it. You can't change a man's way with woman, they said. It's writ in the Book. 181

And soon as Jasper had cast her off, Widow Ashby's Sabrina took to her bed and there she meant to stay, so she said, the rest of her life. Or—until she got a sign that would give her heart ease. Sabrina Ashby didn't mince her words either. "I don't care what the sign may be," she said it right out, before Granny Withers. That toothless creature cackled and replied, "I'm satisfied you're knocking center."

Indeed Sabrina was telling the truth. She meant every word of it. The jilted girl did not go to the wedding. She didn't need to, as far as that was concerned, for old Granny Withers came hobbling over the mountain fast as her crooked old legs would carry her, and it in the dead of winter, mind you, to tell Widow Ashby's Sabrina all that had happened. How lovely fair the bride looked beside her handsome bridegroom! "Eh law, they were a doughty couple, Jasper and Talithie," Granny Withers mouthed the words. She lifted a bony finger, "Yet, mark my words, ill luck awaits the two. When the bat flew into the house and dipped low over the fair bride's head, she trembled like she had the agger—and—"

"The bat flew over her head?" Sabrina interrupted, eyes glistening. "A bat—it's blind—stone blind!" the jilted girl echoed gleefully. "There's a sign for you, Mistress Jasper Tipton, to conjure with!" She let out a screech and then a weird laugh that echoed through Crockett's Hollow. She cast off the coverlid and in one bound was in the middle of the floor, though she had lain long weeks pining away. She clapped her hands high overhead like she was shouting at meeting. Sabrina laughed again and again, holding her sides.

Granny Withers thought the girl bewitched. So did Widow Ashby and when the two tried to put a clabber poultice on her head and sop her wrists in it, the jilted Sabrina thrust them aside with pure main strength. That was the night of the wedding. 182

The days went by. Jasper and Talithie were happy and content everyone knew.

Old Granny Withers in her dilapidated hut up the cove watched and carried tales to Sabrina. The forsaken girl listened as the old midwife told how she had seen the two with arms about each other sitting in the doorway in the evening many a time when their work was done. Or how she had found them in loving embrace when by chance she happened to pass along the far end of their corn patch. "Under the big tree, mind you!" Granny Withers scandalized beyond further speech clapped hand to mouth, rolled her eyes in dismay. "Just so plum lustful over each other they can't bide till night time. The marriage bed is the fitten place for such as that."

When the forsaken Sabrina heard such things she burned with envy and jealousy. Secretly she tried to conjure the pair, to no avail. That had been by wishing them ill. She meant to try again. One day she went far into the woods and caught a toad. She put it in a bottle. "There you are, Mistress Talithie Tipton. I've named the toad for you!" she gloated as she made fast the stopper. "You'll perish there. That's what you'll do. Didn't old Granny Withers tell me how she worked such conjure on a false true love in her young day? He died within twelve month. Slipped off a high cliff!" Stealthily, in the dusk, Sabrina made her way through the brush to a lonely spot far up the hollow where the big rock hung. There she put the bottle far back under a slab of stone.

She waited eagerly to hear some word of the wedded couple. 183

One day, a few months later, old Granny Withers came hobbling again over the mountain. "Jasper's woman is heavy with child," the toothless midwife grinned, moistening her wrinkled lips with the tip of her tongue. "He's done axed me to tend her."

Not even to Granny Withers did Sabrina tell of the toad in the bottle. "If you ever tell to a living soul what you've done, that breaks the conjure," the old midwife had warned long ago. So Sabrina kept a still tongue and bided her time. Nor did she have long to wait.

News traveled swiftly by word-of-mouth. And bad news was fleetest of all.

At first Jasper and his wife were unaware of their babe's fate, though Talithie had noticed one day, when the midwife carried the little one to the door where the sun was shining brightly, that it did not bat an eye. Granny Withers noticed too, but she said never a word. The young mother kept her fear within her heart. She did not speak of it to Jasper.

Two weeks later, after Granny Withers had gone, Talithie was up doing her own work. Supper was over and the young parents sat by the log fire. There was chill in the air. The babe had whimpered in her bee-gum crib, a crib that the proud young father had fashioned from a hollowed log in which wild bees had once stored their honey. Cut the log in two, did Jasper, scraped it clean, and with the rounded side turned down it made as fine a cradle as anyone

could wish. With eager hands Talithie placed in it, months before her babe was born, a clean feather tick, no bigger than a pillow of their own bed. Pieced a little quilt too, did the happy, expectant mother.

How contentedly the little one snuggled there even the very first time Talithie put her in the crib! Rarely did the child whimper, but this night small Margie was fretful. Talithie gathered her 184
up and came back to the hearth crooning softly as she jolted to and fro in a straight chair. The Tipton household, like most in Crockett's Hollow, owned no such luxury as a rocker. But for all the crooning and jolting small Margie fretted, rubbed her small fists into her eyes, and drew up her legs. "Might be colic," thought Talithie. "Babes have to fret and cry some, makes them grow," offered the young father who continued to whittle a butter bowl long promised. However, for all his notions about it, Talithie was troubled. Never before had she known the babe to be so fretful.

The log fire was burning low and in the dimness of the room she leaned down to the hearth, picked up a pine stick and lighted it. She held it close above the babe's face. The small eyes were open wide and strangely staring. Talithie passed the bright light to and fro before the little one's gaze. But never once did the babe bat a lash.

"Lord God Almighty!" Talithie cried, dropping the lighted pine to the floor. "Our babe is blind, Jasper! Blind, I tell you! Stone blind!"

Jasper leaped to his feet. The wooden bowl, the knife, clattered to the floor. The pine stick still burning lay where it had fallen.

"Our babe can't be blind," he moaned, falling to his knees. "Our helpless babe that's done no harm to any living soul, our spotless pure babe can't be so afflicted!" he sobbed bitterly, putting his arms about the two he loved best in all the world.

The pine stick where Talithie dropped it burned deep into the puncheon floor leaving a scar that never wore away.

Again old Granny Withers hobbled over the mountain as fast as she had the night she bore the 185
news to Sabrina about the bat that flew over the fair bride's head. "Talithie's babe is blind—stone blind, Sabrina Ashby! Do you hear that?"

This time Widow Ashby's Sabrina did not cry out in glee. She did not clap her hands above her head and laugh wildly. The forsaken girl sank into a chair. Her face turned deathly white, she stared ahead, unseeing.

It was a long time before she spoke. Then there was no one there to hear. Granny Withers had scurried off in the dark and Widow Ashby—she was long since dead and gone.

"A toad in a bottle," the frightened Sabrina whispered and her voice echoed in the barren room, "a toad in a bottle works a conjure. Ma's gone and now Talithie's babe and Jasper's is plum stone blind." She swayed to and fro, crying hysterically. Then she buried her face in the vise of her hands, moaning, "Little Margie Tipton, your pretty blue eyes won't never 'tice no false true love away from no fair maid. And you, Mistress Jasper Tipton, you'll have many a long year for to ruminate such things through your own troubled mind."

Some shake their heads sympathetically, finger to brow, when they speak of Widow Ashby's Sabrina living alone in her ramshackle house far up at the head of Crockett's Hollow. "A forsaken girl that holds grudge and works conjure comes to be a sorry, sorry woman," they say.

Should you pass along that lonely creek and venture to call a cheery "Hallo!" only a weird, cackling laugh, a harsh "Begone" will echo in answer.

186

The Silver Tomahawk

In Carter County, Kentucky, there is a legend which had its beginning long ago when Indian princesses roamed the Blue Ridge, and pioneers' hopes were high of finding a lost silver mine said to be in caves close by.

Morg Tompert loved to tell the story. As long as he lived the old fellow could be found on a warm spring day sitting in the doorway of his little shack nearly hidden by a clump of dogwoods. A shack of rough planks that clung tenaciously to the mountain side facing Saltpeter, or as it was sometimes called—Swindle Cave. The former name came from the deposit of that mineral, the latter from the counterfeiters who carried on their nefarious trade within the security of the dark cavern.

As he talked, Morg plucked a dogwood blossom that peeped around the corner of his shack like a gossipy old woman. "See that bloom?" He held it toward the visitor. "Some say that a Indian princess who was slain by a jealous chieftain sopped up her heart's blood with it and that's how come the stains on the tip of the white flower. There have been Indian princesses right here on this very ground." Morg nodded slowly. "There's the empty tomb of one—yes, and there's a silver mine way back yonder in that cave. They were there long before them scalawags were counterfeiting inside that cave. Did ever you hear of Huraken?" he asked with childish eagerness. Morg needed no urging. He went on to tell how this Indian warrior of the Cherokee tribe loved a beautiful Indian princess named Manuita:

“Men are all alike no matter what their color may be. They want to show out before the maiden they love best. Huraken did. He roved far away to find a pretty for her. That is to say a pretty he could give the chieftain, her father, in exchange for Manuita’s hand. He must have been gone a right smart spell for the princess got plum out of heart, allowed he was never coming back and, bless you, she leapt off a cliff. Killed herself! And all this time her own true love was unaware of what she had done. He, himself, was give up to be dead. But what kept him away so long was he had come upon a silver mine. He dug the silver out of the earth, melted it, and made a beautiful tomahawk. He beat it out on the anvil and fashioned a peace pipe on its handle. He must have been proud as a peacock strutting in the sun preening its feathers. Huraken was hurrying along, fleet as a deer through the forest, his shiny tomahawk glistening in his strong right hand. The gift for the chieftain in exchange for the princess bride. All of a sudden he halted right off yon a little way. There where the stony cliff hangs over. Right there before Huraken’s eyes at his feet lay the corpse of an Indian lass, face downward. When he turned the face upwards, it was the princess. Princess Manuita, his own true love. His sorryful cry raised up as high as the heavens. Huraken was plum beside himself with grief. He gathered up the princess in his arms and packed her off into the cave. Her tomb is right in there yet—empty.” 187

Old Morg paused for breath. “Huraken kept it secret where he had buried his true love. He meant to watch over her tomb all the rest of his life. Then the chieftain, Manuita’s father, got word of it somehow. He vowed to his tribe that Huraken had murdered his daughter in cold blood. So the chieftain and his tribe set out and captured Huraken. They bound him hand and foot with strips of buckskin out in the forest so that wild varmints could come and devour his flesh and he couldn’t help himself. He’d concealed his tomahawk next to his hide under his heavy deerskin hunting coat. But the spirit of the dead princess pitied her helpless lover. Come a big rain that night that pelted him and soaked him plum to the skin. The princess had prayed of the Rain God to send that downpour. It soaked the buckskin through and through that bound Huraken’s hands and feet and he wriggled loose. Many a long day and night he wandered away off in strange forests, but all the time the spirit of his true love, the princess, haunted him. He got no peace till he came back and give himself up to the chieftain. Only one thing the prisoner asked. Would they let him go to the cave before they put him to death? Now the Cherokees are fearful of evil spirits. When they took Huraken to the mouth of the cave they would go no farther. ‘Evil spirits are inside!’ the chieftain said, and the rest of his tribe nodded and frowned. So Huraken went into the dark cave alone. From that to this he’s never been seen. And the corpse of the Princess Manuita, it’s gone too. Her empty tomb is in yonder’s cave. Not even a crumb of her bones can be found.” 188

Old Morg Tompert reflected a long moment. “I reckon when Huraken packed the princess off somewhere else her corpse come to be a heavy load. He dropped his silver tomahawk that he had aimed to give the chieftain for his daughter’s hand. It lay for a hundred year or more—I reckon it’s been that long—right where it was dropped. Off yonder in Smoky Valley under a high cliff some of Pa’s kinfolks found it. A silver tomahawk with a peace pipe carved on its handle. Pa’s own blood kin, by name, Ben Henderson, found that silver tomahawk but no living soul has ever found the lost silver mine. There’s bound to have been a mine, else Huraken could never have made that silver tomahawk. Only one lorn white man knew where it was. His name was Swift. But when he died, he taken the secret of the silver mine to the grave with him. Swift ought to a-told some of the womenfolks,” declared old Morg, still vexed at the man Swift’s laxity though his demise had occurred ages ago. “Swift ought to a-told some of the womenfolks,” old Morg repeated with finality. 189

Black Cat

From where old Pol Gentry lived on Rocky Fork of Webb’s Creek she could see far down into the valley of Pigeon River and across the ridge on all sides. Her house stood at the very top of Hawks Nest, the highest peak in all the country around. Pol didn’t have a tight house like several down near the sawmill. She said it wasn’t healthy. Even when the owner of the portable mill offered her leftover planks to cover her log house where the daubin had fallen out, Pol refused. “The holes let the wind in and the cat out,” she’d say, “and a body can’t do without either.”

There was a long sleek cat, with green eyes and fur as black as a crow, to be seen skulking in and out of Pol Gentry’s place. If it met a person as it prowled through the woods, the cat darted off swift as a weasel into the bush to hide away. Young folks on Rocky Fork of Webb’s Creek learned early to snatch off hat or bonnet if the cat crossed their path, spit into it, and put it quickly on again—to break the witch of old Pol Gentry’s black cat. But never were the two, Pol and the cat, seen together.

Truth to tell there were some among the old folks on Rocky Fork who long had vowed that Pol and the cat were one and the same. They declared Pol was a witch in league with the Devil and that she could change herself from woman to cat when the spell was strong enough within her, when the evil spirits took a good strong hold upon her. Moreover, Pol Gentry had but one tooth. One sharp fang in the very front of her upper jaw. “A woman is bound to be a witch if she has just one tooth,” folks said and believed. 190

Pol Gentry was a frightful creature to look upon. She had a heavy growth of hair, coal black hair

all around her mouth and particularly upon her upper lip. Her beard was plain to be seen even when she turned in at a neighbor's lane, long before she reached the door. Little children at first sight of her ran screaming to hide their faces in their mother's skirts.

There wasn't a child old enough to give ear to a tale who hadn't heard of Pol Gentry's powers. How she had bewitched Dan Eskew's little girl Flossie. It wouldn't have happened, some said, if Flossie had spit in her bonnet when the black cat crossed her path as she trooped through the woods one day gathering wild flowers. That very evening when she got back home Flossie sank on the doorstep, the bonnet filled with wild flowers dropped from her arm. She moaned pitifully, holding her head between her hands and swaying to and fro. Right away her head began to swell and by the time they got word to Seth Eeling, the wizard doctor who lived in Mossy Bottom, Flossie's head was twice its size. Indeed, Flossie Eskew's head was as big as a full-grown pumpkin. The minute the wizard clapped eyes on the child he spoke out.

"Beat up eggshells as fine as you can and give them to this child in a cup of water. If she is bewitched this mixture will pass through her clear." 191

Orders were promptly obeyed. Flossie drained the cup but no sooner had Flossie passed the powdered egg shells than the witch left her. Her head went back to its natural size. Nevertheless Flossie Eskew died that night.

"Didn't send for the wizard soon enough," Seth Eeling said.

Some believed in the powers of both, though neither witch nor wizard would give the other a friendly look, much less a word.

Pol Gentry was never downright friendly with any, though she would hoe for a neighbor in return for something to eat. "My place is too rocky to raise anything," she excused herself. And whatever was given her, Pol would carry home then and there. "Them's fine turnips you've got, Mistress Darby," she said one day, and Sallie Darby up and handed her a double handful of turnips. Pol opened the front of her dirty calico mother-hubbard, put the turnips inside against her dirty hide and tripped off with them. Nor was Pol Gentry one to sit home at tasks such as knitting or piecing a quilt. But everyone admitted there never was a better hand the country over at raising pigs. So Pol swapped pigs for knitting. She had to have long yarn stockings, mittens, a warm hood, for her pigs had to be fed and tended winter and summer. Others needed meat as much as Pol needed things to keep her warm. Tillie Bocock was glad to knit stockings for the old witch in return for a plump shoat. Tillie had several mouths to feed. Her man was a no-account, who spent his time fishing in summer and hunting in winter, so that all the work fell to Tillie. Day by day she tended and fed the shoat. It was black-and-white-spotted and fat as a butterball, she and the little Bococks bragged.

"Another month and you can butcher that shoat." Old Pol would stop in at Tillie's every time she went down the mountain, eyeing the fat pig. Sometimes she would put the palms of her dirty hands against her mouth and rub the black hair back to this side and to that, then she'd stroke her chin as though her black beard hung far down. Pol would make a clucking sound with her tongue. "Wisht I was chawin' on a juicy sparerib or gnawin' me a greasy pig's knuckle right now," she'd say. Then Pol would begin on a long tale of witchery: how she had seen young husbands under the spell of her craft grow faithless to young, pretty wives; how children gained power over their parents through her and had their own will in all things, even to getting title to house and land from them before it should have been theirs. She told how Luther Trumbo's John took with barking fits like a dog and became a hunchback over night. "Why? Becaze he made mauck of Pol Gentry, that's why!" She rubbed a dirty hand around her hairy mouth and cackled gleefully. 192

At that Tillie Bocock turned to her frightened children huddled behind her chair. "Get you gone, the last one of you out to the barn. Such witchy talk is not for young ears."

Then old Pol Gentry scowled at Tillie and her sharp eyes flashed and she puffed her lips in and out. Pol didn't say anything but Tillie could see she was miffed and there was in her sharp eyes a look that said, "Never mind, Tillie Bocock, you'll pay for this."

Next morning Pol Gentry was up bright and early, rattling the pot on the stove and grumbling to herself. "I'll show Tillie Bocock a thing or two. So I will. Sending her young ones out of my hearing."

Far down the ridge Tillie Bocock was up early too, for already the sun was bright and there was corn to hoe. Tillie and the children had washed the dishes, and she had carried out the soapy dishwater with cornbread scraps mixed in it and poured it in the trough for the pig. "Spotty," they called their pet. The Bococks had no planks with which to make a separate pen for the spotted pig so they kept its trough in a corner of the chicken lot. 193

"Mazie, you and Saphroney go fetch a bucket of cold water for Spotty," Tillie called to her two eldest. "A pig likes a cold drink now and then same as we do." So off the children went with the cedar bucket to the spring. When they returned they poured some of the water into the dishpan and Spotty sucked it up greedily while they hurried to pour the rest into the mudhole where the pig liked to wallow.

The sun caked the mud on the pig's sides and legs as it lay grunting contentedly in the chicken yard.

And when Tillie and the children came in from hoeing corn at dinner time Spotty still lay snoozing in the sun. An hour later they returned to toss a handful of turnip greens into the pig. But Spotty didn't even grunt or get up, for on its side was a sleek black cat. A cat with green

eyes stretched full length working its claws into the pig's muddy sides, now with the front paws, now with the hind ones.

The children screamed and stomped a foot. "Scat! Scat!" they cried but the black cat only turned its fierce eyes toward them.

Hearing their screams Tillie came running out. She fluttered her apron at the cat to scare it away but it only snarled, showing its teeth, lifting its bristling whiskers. Then Tillie picked up a stone and threw it as hard as she could, striking the cat squarely between the eyes. It screamed like a human, Tillie told afterwards. Loud and wild it screamed, and leaping off the pig it darted off quick as a flash.

When the cat reached the cliff halfway up the mountain that led toward Pol Gentry's it turned around and looked back. With one paw uplifted it wiped its face for there was blood pouring out of the cut between its shining green eyes. It twitched its mouth till the black fur stood up.

"Come, get up, Spotty!" Tillie and the children coaxed the pig. "Here's more dishwater slop for you. Here's some cornbread!"

Slowly the pig got to its knees, then to its feet. It grunted once only and fell over dead.

After that old Pol Gentry wasn't seen for days. But when Tillie Bocock did catch sight of her, Pol turned off from the footpath and hurried away. Even so Tillie saw the deep gash in Pol's forehead oozing blood right between her eyes. She saw Pol Gentry's mouth widen angrily and the black hair about it twitch like that of a snarling cat, as she slunk away.

The Deer Woman and the Fawn

Amos Tingley, a bachelor, and a miser as well, lived in Laurel Hollow. Nearby was a salt lick for deer. Often he saw them come there a few at a time, lick the salt, and scamper away. There were two he noticed in particular, a mother and its fawn. They had come nearer than the salt lick—into his garden—more than once and trampled what they did not like, or nibbled to the very ground things that suited their taste, vegetables that Amos had toiled to plant and grow. He didn't want to harm the animals if it could be helped so Amos thought to make a pet of the fawn. When a boy he had had a pet fawn, carried it in his arms. He even brought it into the house and when it grew older the little creature followed at his heels like a dog. He reached a friendly hand toward this fawn in his garden but it kicked up its heels and fairly flew down the garden path. However, the mother, watching her chance when Amos had returned to the house, led her fawn into the garden again and together they ate their fill of the choicest green things.

It annoyed Amos Tingley no little. He determined to put a stop to it. One evening he greased his old squirrel rifle. He took lead balls out of the leather pouch that hung on the wall, rolled them around in the palm of his hand, and wondered when his chance would come to use them. As he sat turning the thoughts over in his mind pretty Audrey Billberry and her little girl, Tinie, came along the road. Audrey was a widow. Had been since Tinie was six months old. Some wondered how she got along. But Audrey Billberry was never one to complain and if neighbors went there she always urged them to stay and eat. If it was winter, there was plenty of rabbit stew and turnips and potatoes, or squirrel and quail. Audrey loved wild meat. "It's cleaner," she'd say, "and sweeter. Sweet meats make pretty looks." Audrey smiled and showed her dimples and little Tinie patted her mother's hand and looked up admiringly into her face. Then off the two would skip through the woods to gather greens or berries, chestnuts or wild turkey eggs, whatever the season might bring.

Sometimes they went hand in hand, Audrey and the child, past Amos Tingley's place.

"Good day, to you," pretty Audrey Billberry would call out and Tinie would say the same. "How goes it with you today, good neighbor?"

"Well enough," Amos answered, "and better still if I can get rid of that pestering deer and her fawn. The two have laid waste my garden patch. See yonder!" he pointed with the squirrel rifle. "And it won't be good for the two the next time they come nibbling around here!"

Pretty Audrey Billberry gripped little Tinie's hand until the child squealed and hopped on one foot. They looked at each other, then at the gun. Fright came into their eyes. Audrey tried to laugh lightly. "When you kill that deer be sure to bring me a piece, neighbor Tingley," she said, as unconcerned as you please, and away she went with the little girl at her side. When they reached home Audrey Billberry turned the wood button on the door and flung back her head. "Kill a deer and her fawn! There is no fear, Tinie. Why"—she scoffed—"Amos Tingley's got only lead to load his rifle. I saw." She put her hands to her sides and laughed and danced around the room. "Lead can't kill a deer and her fawn. It takes silver! Silver! Do you hear that, Tinie? Silver hammered and molded round to load the gun. And when, I'd like to know, would skinflint Amos Tingley, the miser, ever destroy a silver coin by pounding it into a ball to load a gun? There's nothing to fear. Rest easy, Tinie. Besides all living creatures must eat. It is their right. Only silver, remember, not lead, can harm the deer. A miser will keep his silver and let his garden go!" She caught little Tinie by both hands and skipped to and fro across the floor, saying over and over, "Only silver can harm the deer."

The wind caught up her words and carried them through the trees, across the ridge into Laurel

Hollow.

While Audrey and Tinie skipped and frolicked and chanted, “Only silver can harm the deer,” Amos Tingley, the miser, over in Laurel Hollow was busy at work. He took a silver coin from the leather poke in his pocket and hammered it flat on the anvil in his barn. Thin as paper he hammered it until he could roll it easily between thumb and finger. Then around and around he rolled it between his palms until there was a ball as round and as firm as ever was made with a mold. Amos put it in his rifle. 197

The next morning when he went out to work in his garden there was scarcely a head of cabbage left. The bunch beans he had been saving back and the cut-short beans had been plucked and the row of sweet corn which he had planted so carefully along the fence-row had been stripped to the last roasting ear. He stooped down to look at the earth. “Footprints of the deer and the fawn, without a doubt. But she must have worn an apron or carried a basket to take away so much.” Amos shook his head in perplexity. Then he hurried back to the house to get his gun.

“Right here do I wait.” He braced himself in the doorway, back to the jam, knees jackknifed, gun cocked. “Here do I wait until I catch sight of that doe and her fawn.”

It wasn’t long till the two appeared on a nearby ridge, pranking to and fro. Into the forest they scampered, then out again, frisking up their hind feet, then standing still as rocks and looking down at Amos Tingley in his doorway.

Then Amos lifted his gun, pulled the trigger.

The fawn darted away but the deer fell bleeding with a bullet in the leg.

“Let her bleed! Bleed till there’s not a drop of blood left in her veins and my silver coin is washed back to my own hands!” That was the wish of Amos Tingley, the miser. He went back into the house and put his gun in the corner. 198

When darkness came little Tinie Billberry stood sobbing at Amos Tingley’s door. “Please to come,” she pleaded. “My mother says she’ll die if you don’t. She wants to make amends!”

“Amends?” gasped Amos Tingley. “Amends for what?”

But Tinie had dashed away in the darkness.

When Amos reached pretty Audrey Billberry’s door, he found her pale in the candlelight, her ankle shattered and bleeding. The foot rested in a basin.

“See what you’ve done, Amos Tingley.” The pretty widow lifted tear-dimmed eyes, while Tinie huddled shyly behind her. “A pitcher of water, quick, Tinie, to wash away the blood!”

As the child poured the water over the bleeding foot, Amos heard something fall into the basin. He caught the flash of silver. Amos stood speechless.

In the basin lay the silver ball the miser had made from a coin.

“Never tell!” cried pretty Audrey Billberry, her dark eyes starting from the bloodless face. “Never tell and I promise, I promise and so does Tinie—see we promise together.”

The child had put down the pitcher and came shyly to rest her head upon her mother’s shoulder, her small hand in Audrey’s.

“We promise,” they spoke together, “never, never again to bother your garden!”

They kept their word all three, Amos Tingley and pretty Audrey Billberry and little Tinie. But somebody told, for the tale still lives in Laurel Hollow of the miser and the deer woman and the little fawn. 199

Ghost of Devil Anse

Near the village of Omar, Logan County, in the hills of West Virginia there is a little burying ground that looks down on Main Island Creek. It is a family burying ground, you soon discover when you climb the narrow path leading to the sagging gate in the rickety fence that encloses it. There are a number of graves, some with head stones, some without. But one grave catches the eye, for above it towers a white marble statue. The statue of a mountain man, you know at once by the imposing height, the long beard, the sagging breeches stuffed into high-topped boots. Drawing nearer, you read the inscription upon the broad stone base upon which the statue rests:

Capt. Anderson Hatfield

and below the names of his thirteen children:

JOHNSON
WM. A.
ROBERT L.
NANCY
ELLIOTT R.
MARY
ELIZABETH

You lift your eyes again to the marble statue. If you knew him in life, you'll say, "This is a fine likeness—and a fine piece of marble."

"His children had it done in Italy," someone offers the information.

"So," you say to yourself, "this is the grave of Devil Anse Hatfield."

You've seen all there is to see. You're ready to go, if you are like hundreds of others who visit the last resting place of the leader of the Hatfield-McCoy feud. But, if you chance to tarry—say, in the fall when fogs are heavy there in the Guyan Valley, through which Main Island Creek flows—you may see and hear things strangely unaccountable.

Close beside the captain's grave is another. On the stone is carved the name—Levisa Chafin Hatfield. If you were among the many who attended her funeral you will remember how peaceful she looked in her black burying dress she'd kept so long for the occasion. Again you will see her as she lay in her coffin, hands primly folded on the black frock, the frill of lace on the black bonnet framing the careworn face. You look up suddenly to see a mountain woman in a somber calico frock and slat bonnet. She is putting new paper flowers, to take the place of the faded ones, in the glass-covered box between the grave of Devil Anse and the mother of his children.

"You best come home with me," she invites with true hospitality, after an exchange of greetings. You learn that Molly claims kin to both sides, being the widow of a Hatfield and married to a McCoy, and at once you are disarmed.

That night as you sit with Molly in the moonlight in the dooryard of her shack, a weather-beaten plank house with a clapboard roof and a crooked stone chimney, she talks of life in the West Virginia hills. "There's a heap o' things happens around this country that are mighty skeery." Suddenly in the gloaming a bat wings overhead, darts inside the shack. You can hear it blundering around among the rafters. An owl screeches off in the hollow somewhere. "Do you believe in ghosts and haynts?" There are apprehension and fear in Molly's voice.

Presently the owl screeches dolefully once more and the bat wheels low overhead. A soft breeze stirs the pawpaw bushes down by the fence row. "Did you hearn something mourn like, just then?" Molly, the widow of a Hatfield and wife of a McCoy, leans forward.

If you are prudent you make no answer to her questions.

"Nothing to be a-feared of, I reckon. The ghosts of them that has been baptized they won't harm nobody. I've heard Uncle Dyke Garrett say as much many's the time." The woman speaks with firm conviction.

A moth brushes her cheek and she straightens suddenly.

The moon is partly hidden behind a cloud; even so by its faint light you can see the clump of pawpaw bushes, and beyond—the outline of the rugged hills. Farther off in the burying ground atop the ridge the marble figure of the leader of the Hatfields rises against the half-darkened sky.

At first you think it is the sound of the wind in the pines far off in the hollow, then as it moves toward the burying ground it changes to that of low moaning voices.

You feel Molly's arm trembling against your own.

"Listen!" she whispers fearfully, all her courage gone. "It's Devil Anse and his boys. Look yonder!"—she tugs at your sleeve—"See for yourself they're going down to the waters of baptism!"

Following the direction of the woman's quick trembling hand you strain forward.

At first there seems to be a low mist rolling over the burying ground and then suddenly, to your amazement, the mist or cloud dissolves itself into shafts or pillars of the height of the white figure of Devil Anse above the grave. They form in line and now one figure, the taller, moves ahead of all the rest. Six there were following the leader. You see distinctly as they move slowly through the crumbling tombstones, down the mountain side toward the creek.

"Devil Anse and his boys," repeats the trembling Molly, "going down into the waters of baptism. They ever do of a foggy night in the falling weather. And look yonder! There's the ghost too of Uncle Dyke Garrett a-waiting at the water's edge. He's got the Good Book opened wide in his hand."

Whether it is the giant trunk of a tree with perhaps a leafless branch extended, who can say? Or is nature playing a prank with your vision? But, surely, in the eerie moonlight there seems to appear the figure of a man with arm extended, book in hand, waiting to receive the seven phantom penitents moving slowly toward the water's edge.

After that you don't lose much time in being on your way. And if anyone should ask you what of interest is to be seen along Main Island Creek, if you are prudent you'll answer, "The marble statue of Capt. Anderson Hatfield." And if you knew him in life you'll add, "And a fine likeness it

is too."

The Winking Corpse

On the night of June 22, 1887, the bodies of four dead men lay wrapped in sheets on cooling boards in the musty sitting room of an old boarding house in Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky. Only the bullet-shattered faces, besmeared with blood, were exposed. Their coffins had not yet arrived from the Blue Grass. No friend or kinsman watched beside the bier that sultry summer night; they had prudently kept to their homes, for excitement ran high over the battle that had been fought that day in front of the old hostelry which marked, with the death of the four, the end of the Martin-Tolliver feud.

While the bodies lay side-by-side in the front part of the shambling house, there sat in the kitchen, so the story goes, a slatternly old crone peeling potatoes for supper—should the few straggling boarders return with an appetite, now that all the shooting was over.

It was the privilege of old women like Phronie in the mountains of Kentucky to go unmolested and help out as they felt impelled in times of troubles such as these between the Martins and Tollivers.

The place was strangely quiet. Indeed the old boarding house was deserted. For those who had taken the law in their own hands that day in Rowan County had called a meeting at the courthouse farther up the road. The citizenry of the countryside, save kin and friend of the slain feudists, had turned out to attend.

"Nary soul to keep watch with the dead," Phronie complained under her breath. "It's dark in yonder. Dark and still as the grave. A body's got to have light. How else can they see to make it to the other world?" She paused to sharpen her knife on the edge of the crock, glancing cautiously now and then toward the door of the narrow hallway that led to the room where the dead men lay.

The plaintive call of a whippoorwill far off beyond Triplett Creek, where one of the men had been killed that day, drifted into the quiet house.

"It's a sorry song for sorry times," murmured old Phronie, "and it ought to tender the heart of them that's mixed up in these troubles. No how, whosoever's to blame, the dead ort not to be forsaken."

There was a sound behind her. Phronie turned to see the hall door opening slowly. "Who's there?" she called. But no one answered. The door opened wider. But no one entered.

"It's a sign," the old woman whispered. "Well, no one can ever say Phronie forsaken the dead." It was as though the old crone answered an unspoken command. She put down the crock of potatoes and the paring knife. Wiping her hands on her apron, Phronie took the oil lamp, with its battered tin reflector, from the wall. "Can't no one ever say I forsaken the dead," she repeated, "nor shunned a sign or token. The dead's got to have light same as the living."

Holding the lamp before her, she passed slowly along the narrow hall on to the room where the dead men lay wrapped in their sheets. She drew a chair from a corner and climbed upon it and hung the lamp above the mantel. It was the chair on which Craig Tolliver, alive and boastful and fearless, had sat that morning when she had brought him hot coffee and cornbread while he kept an eye out for the posse, the self-appointed citizens who later killed the Tolliver leader and his three companions.

The flickering light of the oil lamp fell upon the ghastly faces of the dead men.

For a moment the old woman gazed at the still forms. Then suddenly her glance fixed itself upon the face of Craig Tolliver.

Slowly the lashes of Craig's right eye moved ever so slightly.

Phronie was sure of it. She gripped the back of the chair on which she stood to steady herself, for now the lid of the dead man's eye twitched convulsively. As the trembling old woman gaped, the eye of the slain feudist opened and shut. Not once, but three times, quick as a wink.

"God-a-mighty!" shrieked Phronie, "he ain't dead! Craig Tolliver ain't dead!" She leaped from the chair and ran fast as her crooked old limbs would carry her, shrieking as she went, "Craig Tolliver ain't dead!"

Some say it was just the notion of an old woman gone suddenly raving crazy, though others, half believing, still tell the story of the winking corpse.

The House with the Green Gables

About halfway between the thriving, up-to-date, electrically lighted City of Ashland, Boyd County, Kentucky, with its million-dollar steel mills, and Grayson, the county seat of Carter

County, Kentucky, there stands on the hillside a few rods from the modern highway U. S. 60, a little white cottage with green gables.

Within a mile or so of the place unusual road signs catch your eye. White posts, each surmounted by a white open scroll. There are ten of them, put there, no doubt, by some devoted pilgrim. There is one for each of the Ten Commandments. You read carefully one after the other. The one nearest the point where you turn off on a dirt road that leads to the white house with the green gables reads

206

Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother.

You leave your car at the side of the dirt road near U. S. 60, and go on foot the rest of the way.

You wonder, as you look at the beauty of the well-kept lawn, the carefully planted hedge and cedars, the step stone walk that leads up the sloping hill to the door, at the silence of the place. As you draw nearer, you wonder at the uncurtained windows, neat, small-paned casements with neither shade nor frill.

You learn that the place has stood untenanted for years. Truth to tell it has never been occupied. Some call it the haunted house with the green gables.

Some will tell you there is a shattered romance behind the empty, green-gabled house. Others contend it *is* tenanted. They have seen a lovely woman, lamp in hand, move about from room to room through the quiet night and stand sometimes beside the window up under the green gable that looks toward the west. She seems to be watching and waiting, they say. But when the day dawns woman and lamp vanish into thin air.

Others will tell you that an eccentric old man built the house for his parents long since dead. He believes, so they say—this old eccentric man living somewhere in the Kentucky hills (they are not sure of the exact location)—that his parents will return. Not as an aged couple, feeble and bent as they died, but in youth, happy and healthful. This “eccentric” son himself now stooped with age, with silver hair and faltering step, built the pretty white house that his parents might have beauty in a dwelling such as they never knew in their former life on earth. The old fellow himself, so the story goes, makes many a nocturnal visit to the dream house, hoping to find his parents returned and happily living within its paneled walls.

207

There are all sorts of stories, varying in their nature according to the distance of their origin from the green-gabled house.

Curious people have come all the way from the Pacific Coast to see it, from New England and Maine, from Canada and Utah.

As the years go by the legend grows.

“Oh, yes, I’ve seen the haunted house with the green gables,” some will say, glowing with satisfaction. “And they do say the eccentric old man who built it for his parents has silent, trusty Negro servants dressed in spotless white who stand behind the high-backed chair of the master and mistress at the table laden with gleaming silver and a sumptuous feast. The old man firmly believes his parents will return!”

What with the increasing stories you decide to take a look for yourself. I did, accompanied by a newsman and a photographer.

Nothing like getting proof of the pudding.

Out you go, under cover of darkness, equipped with flashlights and flash bulbs. A haunted house, you calculate, will be much more intriguing by night. Stealthily you draw near. You peer into the windows, the uncurtained windows, in breathless awe prepared to see the lady with the lamp floating from room to room, hoping to glimpse the spectral couple seated at table in the high-paneled dining hall of which you have heard so many tales. Tales of gleaming silver, white-clad Negro servants bowing with deference before the master and mistress of the green-gabled house.

208

Through the uncurtained windows you gape wide-eyed. Instead of the scene you expected, there looms before your eyes plunder of all sorts tossed about helter-skelter: sections of broken bookcases, old tables, musty books, broken-down chairs.

You are about to retreat in utter disgust when you hear the sound of footsteps on the cobblestone walk that leads around the house. The sound draws nearer.

The wary photographer pulls his flashlight. Its bright beam plays upon the stone walk, catching first in its lighted circle the feet of a man. The light plays upward quickly. It holds now in its bright orb the smiling face of a man. A middle-aged man with pleasant blue eyes.

“—could—we see—the owner of this place?” stammers the reporter.

“You’re looking at him, sir!” the fellow replies courteously. “What can I do for you?” It is a pleasant voice with an accent that is almost Harvard.

“Who—who—are you?” the reporter stammers.

“Hedrick’s my name. Ray Hedrick! What’s yours?”

When the uninvited visitors have identified themselves the owner invites you most graciously to take a seat on the doorstep.

You learn that this “eccentric old man,” of whom you have heard such ridiculously fantastic tales, is and has been for a number of years telegraph operator for the Chesapeake and Ohio

Railroad at their little wayside station, Kilgore. It is within a few miles of the mill town of thriving Ashland, Boyd County, Kentucky, and the county seat of Carter County. The little railroad station is within a stone's throw, as the crow flies, of "the haunted house." 209

"Pleasant weather we are having," the owner observes casually.

"Yes," the reporter replies reluctantly, "but this house—here"—the reporter is obviously peeved for having been snipe-hunting—"what about this house?"

"Well," drawls the owner tolerantly, "a house can't help what's been told about it, can it?"

"But how did the story get started—about it being haunted?" the reporter is persistent.

The owner jerks a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of U. S. 60. "Is that your car parked over there?"

There is in his tone that which impels you to stand not on the order of your going. You go at once—annoyed at being no nearer the answer than when you came.

And still the curious continue to motor miles and miles to see the haunted house with the green gables.

210

8. Singing on the Mountain Side

Though there were and are people in the Blue Ridge Country who, like Jilson Setters, the Singin' Fiddler of Lost Hope Hollow, can neither read nor write, such obstacles have meant no bar to their poetic bent. They sing with joy and sorrow, with pride and pleasure, of the scene about them, matching their skill with that of old or young who boast of book learning.

Of Land and River

APPALACHIA

Clothed in her many hues of green,
Far Appalachia rises high
And takes a robe of different hue
To match the seasons passing by.

Her summits crowned by nature's hand,
With grass-grown balds for all to see,
Her towering rocks and naked cliffs
Hid by some overhanging tree.

In early spring the Maple dons
Her bright red mantle overnight;
The Beech is clad in dainty tan,
The Sarvis in a robe of white.

211

The Red Bud in profusion blooms
And rules the hills a few short days,
And Dogwoods with their snowy white
Are mingled with its purple blaze.

High on the frowning mountain side
Azaleas bloom like tongues of flame,
The Laurel flaunts her waxy pink,
And Rhododendrons prove their fame.

Then comes the sturdy Chestnut tree
With plumes like waving yellow hair,
And Wild Grapes blossom at their will
To scent the glorious mountain air.

But when the frost of autumn falls,
Like many other fickle maids,
She lays aside her summer robes

And dons her gay autumnal shades.

Oh, Appalachia, loved by all!
Long may you reign, aloof, supreme,
In royal robes of nature's hues,
A monarch proud—a mountain Queen.

—Martha Creech

BIG SANDY RIVER

Big Sandy, child of noble birth,
Majestically you roll along,
True daughter of the Cumberlands,
With heritage of wealth and song.

Free as the hills from whence you came,
In folklore and tradition bound,
You seek the valleys deep and wide,
With frowning forests girded round.

Descendants of a stalwart breed
And fed by nature's lavish hand,
You carry on your bosom broad
The riches of a virgin land.

When ringing ax of pioneers
The silence of the forests broke,
Upon your rising crest you bore
The poplar and the mighty oak.

The push boat launched by brawny arms
And filled with treasure from the earth
Has drifted on your current strong
From out the hills that gave you birth.

And steamboats loaded to the hold
You swept upon your swelling tide,
'Til fruits of sturdy, mountain toil
Were scattered out both far and wide.

The Dew Drop plowed your mighty waves.
From Catlettsburg to old Pike Town,
To bring her loads of manmade gifts
And carry homespun products down.

And Market Boy, that far-famed craft,
Churned through the foam, her holds to fill,
And proudly reared her antlered head
A trophy rare of mountain skill.

—D. Preston

OLD TIME WATERFRONT

Come all you old-time rivermen
And go along with me,
Let's sing a song and give a cheer
For the days that used to be.

Let's wander down to Catlettsburg
And look upon the tide.
We'll mourn the changes time has made
There by the river side.

Gone is the old-time waterfront
That rang with joy and mirth,
And known throughout a dozen states
As "the wettest spot on earth."

And Damron's famed Black Diamond,
The logger's paradise,
Where whiskey flowed like water
And timbermen swapped lies.

Here Big Wayne ruled in splendor;
His right, none would deny.
And Little Wayne was always there
To serve the rock and rye.

And Big Wayne never failed a friend,
Or stopped to chat or lie,
And no one entering his doors
Was known to leave there dry.

And many a time some timberman
Would land himself in jail,
But Big Wayne always lent a hand,
And went the wretch's bail.

Some of the buildings still are there,
Along the old-time ways.
Silent and dark their windows stare
Gray ghosts of bygone days.

No sound of merriment or song,
No dancing footsteps fall;
The days of fifty years ago,
Are gone beyond recall.

So to Big Wayne and Little Wayne,
Big Sandy's pride and boast,
And to the old-time waterfront,
Let's drink a farewell toast.

While to the old-time timbermen,
This song we'll dedicate,
Who fought their battles with their fists,
And took their whiskey straight.

—Coby Preston

WEST VIRGINIA

There is singing in the mountain where the sturdy hill folk meet,
There is singing in the valleys where the days are warm and sweet,
There is singing in the cities where the crowds of workers throng,
Wherever we meet, no day is complete, for West Virginians without a song.

West Virginia, land of beauty, West Virginia, land of song,

West Virginia, hear the singing of the crystal mountain streams,
Songs of joy and songs of power to fulfill man's mightiest dreams,
West Virginia, hear the singing of thy shadowed forest trees,
Holding the winds, holding the floods, so that thy sons may be at ease.

West Virginia, land of beauty, West Virginia, land of song.

—Esther Eugenia Davis

SKYLINE DRIVE

The Skyline Drive is not a road
To bring you near the skies
Where you can sit and gather clouds
That flit before your eyes,
Or jump upon a golden fleece
And sail to paradise—
But it is a super-mountain road
Where you can feast your eyes

Upon the beauties of the world
The Lord God gave to man
For his enjoyment and his use;
Improve it if you can.
The builders of this Skyline Drive
Have filed no patent right
That they improved upon God's plan,
Nor have more power and might;
But they have seen His handiwork,
This panoramic view,
Have paved this road to ease the load
Of all the world and you.
This is akin to hallowed ground,
A sacred beauty shrine;
Its fame has traveled all around;
It now is yours and mine.
There's little points of vantage—views,
Where you can see afar—
Compare the beauty with that land
That stands with "Gates Ajar."
The people who have given much
To save this precious shrine
Must surely all be friends of God
And friends of yours and mine.

—George A. Barker

Feud

THE LOVE OF ROSANNA McCOY

Come and listen to my story
Of fair Rosanna McCoy.
She loved young Jonse Hatfield,
Old Devil Anse's boy.

But the McCoys and Hatfields
Had long engaged in strife,
And never the son of a Hatfield
Should take a McCoy to wife.

But when they met each other,
On Blackberry Creek, they say,
She was riding behind her brother,
When Jonse came along that way.

"Who is that handsome fellow?"
She asked young Tolbert McCoy.
Said he, "Turn your head, sister.
That's Devil Anse's boy."

But somehow they met each other,
And it grieved the Hatfields sore;
While Randall, the young girl's father,
Turned his daughter from the door.

It was down at old Aunt Betty's
They were courting one night, they say,
When down came Rosanna's brothers
And took young Jonse away.

Rosanna's heart was heavy,
For she hoped to be his wife,
And well she knew her brothers
Would take his precious life.

She ran to a nearby pasture
And catching a horse by the mane,
She mounted and rode like a soldier,
With neither saddle nor rein.

Her golden hair streamed behind her,
Her eyes were wild and bright,
As she urged her swift steed forward
And galloped away in the night.

Straight to the Hatfields' stronghold,
She rode so fearless and brave,
To tell them that Jonse was in danger
And beg them his life to save.

And the Hatfields rode in a body.
They saved young Jonse's life;
But never, they said, a Hatfield
Should take a McCoy to wife.

But the feud is long forgotten
And time has healed the sting,
As little Bud and Melissy
This song of their kinsmen sing.

No longer it is forbidden
That a fair-haired young McCoy
Shall love her dark-eyed neighbor
Or marry a Hatfield boy.

And the people still remember,
Though she never became his bride,
The love of these young people
And Rosanna's midnight ride.

—Coby Preston

Legend

THE ROBIN'S RED BREAST

Through the southern mountains the Robin is often called the "Christ Bird" because of this legend. It is also called "Love Bird."

The Savior hung upon the cross,
His body racked with mortal pain;
The blood flowed from His precious wounds
And sweat dropped from His brow like rain.

A crown of thorns was on His head,
The bitter cup He meekly sips;
His life is ebbing fast away,
A prayer upon His blessed lips.

No mercy found He anywhere,
He said, "My Father knoweth best."
A little bird came fluttering down
And hovered near his bleeding breast.

It fanned His brow with gentle wings,
Into the cup it dipped its beak;
And gazed in pity while He hung
And bore His pain so calm and meek.

At last the bird it flew away
And sought the shelter of its nest;
Its feathers dyed with crimson stain,
The Savior's blood upon its breast.

The lowly robin, so 'tis said,
That comes to us in early spring,
Is that which hovered near the cross
And wears for aye that crimson stain.

—Martha Creech

JENNIE WYLIE

Thomas Wiley, husband of Jennie Sellards Wylie, was a native of Ireland. They lived on Walker's Creek in what is now Tazewell County, Virginia. She was captured by the Indians in 1790. Her son Adam was sometimes called Adam Pre Vard Wiley.

Among the hills of old Kentucky,
When homes were scarce and settlers few,
There lived a man named Thomas Wylie,
His wife and little children two.

They left their home in old Virginia,
This youthful pair so brave and strong.
And built a cabin in the valley
Where fair Big Sandy flows along.

220

Poor Thomas left his home one morning,
He kissed his wife and children dear;
He little knew that prowling Indians
Around his home were lurking near.

They waited in the silent woodland
Till came the early shades of night;
Poor Jennie and her young brother
Were seated by the fireside bright.

They peeped inside the little cabin
And saw the children sleeping there.
These helpless ones were unprotected
And Jennie looked so white and fair.

They came with tomahawks uplifted
And gave the war whoop fierce and wild;
Poor Jennie snatched her nursing baby;
They killed her brother—her oldest child.

They took poor Jennie through the forest
And while they laughed in fiendish glee,
A redskin took the baby from her
And dashed out its brains against a tree.

They traveled down the Sandy valley
Until they reached Ohio's shore;
They told poor Jennie she would never
See home or husband any more.

For two long years they kept her captive,
And one dark night she stole away,
And many miles she put behind her
Before the dawning of the day.

Straight for home the brave woman headed
As on her trail the redskins came;
The creek down which she fled before them
To this day bears poor Jennie's name.

221

She reached the waters of Big Sandy
And plunged within the swollen tide.
The thriving little town of Auxier
Now stands upon the other side.

Her husband welcomed her, though bearing
A child sired by an Indian bold;
He proudly claimed the stalwart Adam,
Whose blood descendants are untold.

—Luke Burchett

MOUNTAIN PREACHER

When the Sabbath day is dawning in the mountains,
And the air is filled with bird song sweet and clear,
Once again I think of him who lives in spirit,
Though his voice has silent been for many a year.

And the music of the simple prayer he uttered
Seems to echo from the highest mountain peak,
And the people still respect the holy teaching
Of that mountain preacher, Zepheniah Meek.

I can see him there upon the wooded hillside,
While between two giant Trees of Heaven he stood,
And the blue skies formed a canopy above them,
As befitting one so humble, wise and good.

And he reads of how the Tree of Life is blooming,
From the thumbworn leaves of God's own book of love,
While the wind sweeps gently through the Trees of Heaven
And they seem to whisper softly up above.

Oh, your name still lives among Big Sandy's people,
Though your earthly form is molding 'neath the sod;
May your memory linger in their hearts forever,
While your spirit rests in peace at home with God.

—D. Preston

CHURCH IN THE MOUNTAINS

This was composed by a little girl in Rowan County, Kentucky, after she had been to church in the mountains on Christy Creek in that county in 1939.

Have you been to church in the mountains?
'Tis a wonderful place to go,
Out beneath the spreading branches
Where the grass and violets grow.

Hats hang around on the trunks,
Coats lay across the limbs,
No roof above but heaven,
They sing the good old hymns.

So they pray and preach together
And sing in one accord,
My heart within rejoices
To hear them praise the Lord.

Though seats are rough, uneven,
And they lay upon the sod,
There can be no fault in the building,
For the Architect is God.

Through years—it's been a custom
That prayer should first be made,
And then the others follow,
Their praises ring in wood and glade.

There in the temple of temples,
They tell of the glory land,
While they beg the many sinners
To take a better stand.

They beg the sinners to listen
As they explain God's love,
Telling of home that's waiting
In the mansions up above.

Still praising God, the Father,
Who gave His only Son,
The meeting service closes
Just as it had begun.

—Jessie Stewart

MOUNTAIN DOCTOR

This ballad was composed and set to tune by Jilson Setters, the Singin' Fiddler of Lost Hope Hollow, who can neither read nor write, yet who has composed and set to tune more than one hundred ballads, some of which the late Dr. Kittredge of Harvard declared "will live as classics."

A very kindly doctor, a friend, I quite well know,
He owned a mighty scope of land, some eighty year ago.
The doctor had an old-time house, built from logs and clay,
A double crib of roughhewn logs, it was built to stay.

The doctor he would fish and hunt,
He would bring in bear and deer;
He was content and happy in his home
with his loved ones always near.

The doctor owned a faithful horse,
He rode him night and day;
He had nothing but a bridle path
To guide him on his way.

The panther was his dreadful foe,
It often lingered near;
The doctor always went well armed,
He seemed to have no fear.

He made himself a nice warm coat
From the pelt of a brown woolly bear;
Often I loved to trace its length
With eager hands through shaggy hair.

The forepaws fitted round his wrists,
The hind parts reached to his thighs,
And of the head he made a cap
That sheltered both his ears and eyes.

The doctor dearly loved the woods,
He was raised there from a child;
He was very fond of old-time ways,
If you scoffed them, he would chide.

He was good and sympathetic,
He traveled night and day;
He doctored many people,
Regardless of the pay.

Nels Tatum Rice was his name,
He was known for miles around;
Far beyond the county seat,
'Long the Big Sandy up and down.

His mother wove his winter clothes,
As a boy he'd case their furs;
With them to the county seat,
But once a year he'd go.

The merchant he would buy the fur,
It gladdened the boy's heart.
He had money in his jeans,
When for home he did start.

Boys, them days was full of glee,
Both husky, fat and strong.
Nels very soon retraced his steps,
It didn't take him long.

Safely, of home once more in sight,
The boy quite glad did feel.
For he could hear old Shep dog bark,
Hear the hum of the spinning wheel.

—Jilson Setters

MOUNTAIN WOMAN

’Tain’t no use a-sittin’ here
And peerin’ at the sun,
A-wishin’ I had purty things,
Afore my work is done.
I best had bug the taters
And fetch water from the run
And save my time fer wishin’
When all my work is done.

Paw heerd the squirrels a-barkin’
This morning on the hill,
And taken him his rifle-gun
And tonic fer his chill.
Menfolks ain’t got no larnin’
And have no time to fill;
Paw spends his days in huntin’
Or putterin’ round his still.

“’Tain’t no use complainin’”
Is the song the wood thrush sings,
And I don’t know of nothin’
That’s as sweet as what he brings.
But I best had comb my honey
And churn that sour cream,
And listen to the wood thrush
When I ketch time to dream.

Sometimes I feel so happy
As I hoe the sproutin’ corn;
To hear, far off upon the ridge,
The call of Paw’s cow horn.
Then I know it’s time for milkin’
And my long day’s work is through,
And I kin sit upon the stoop
And make my dreams come true.

I’ll dream me a wish fer a shiney new hoe,
And some dishes, an ax and a saw:
And a calico shroud with a ribbon and bow
And a new houn’ dawg fer Paw.

—John W. Preble, Jr.

WOMAN’S WAY

You like this Circle Star quilt, Miss, you say:
I have a favorance for this Flower Bed bright and fair;
I made it when my heart was light and gay.
Like me, it’s much the worse for time and wear.
I used it first upon my marriage bed—
And last, when Thomas, my poor man, lay dead.

This Nine Patch that is spread across my bed,
My Emmy made it in her thirteenth year;
I meant for her to claim it when she wed—
Excuse me, Miss, I couldn’t help that tear.
She sewed her wedding dress so fine and proud—
Before the day, we used it for her shroud.

That Double Wedding Ring? poor Granny Day,
Before I married Tom, made that for me.
A thrifty wife, I used to hear her say,
Has kiverlids that all who come may see.
She rests there on the knoll f’nenst the rise—
The little grave is where my youngest lies.

Dove at the Window was my mother's make,
Toad in a Puddle is the oldest one,
Old Maid's Ramble and The Lady of the Lake
I made for Ned, my oldest son.
Hearts and Gizzards make me think of Grandpap Day.
"Like Joseph's coat of many colors, Ma," he'd say.

The Snow Ball and the Rose are sister's make,
She lived in Lost Hope Hollow acrost yon hill,
Poor Jane, she might have had her pick of beaux,
She sits alone because it was her will.
A wife she never would consent to be,
For Jane, she loved the man that favored me.

—Martha Creech

MOUNTAIN SINGERS

What song is this across the mountain side,
Where every leaf bears elements of Him
Who is all music? Silences abide
With rock and stone. A conscious seraphim
Directs the measure, when the need of song
Arrives to set the spirit free again.
The Mountain Singers, traipsin' along
To woody trail and a cabin in the rain,
Bring native music fit to cut apart
Old enemies with gunshot for the heart.
With Singin' Gatherin' and Infare still intact,
The Mountain Singers make of ghost, a fact.

—Rachel Mack Wilson

Tragedy

THE ASHLAND TRAGEDY

One Christmas morn in eighty-one,
Ashland, that quiet burg,
Was startled—the day had not yet dawned—
When the cry of fire was heard.

For well they knew two fair ladies
Had there retired to bed.
The startled crowd broke in, alas,
To find the girls both dead.

And from the hissing, seething flames
Three bodies did rescue;
Poor Emma's and poor Fannie's both,
And likewise Bobby's too.

And then like Rachel cried of old
The bravest hearts gave vent,
And all that blessed holiday
To Heaven their prayers were sent.

Autopsy by the doctors show'd
The vilest of all sin,
And proved to all beyond a doubt
Their skulls had been drove in.

And other crimes too vile to name;
I'll tell it if I must;
A crime that shocks all common sense,
A greed of hellish lust.

An ax and crowbar there was found
Besmeared with blood and hair,
Which proved conclusively to all
What had transpired there.

Two virgin ladies of fourteen,
The flower of that town,
With all their beauty and fond hopes,
By demons there cut down—

Just blooming into womanhood,
So lovely and so true;
Bright hopes of long and happy days
With morals just and pure.

Then Marshal Heflin sallied forth,
Was scarcely known to fail,
And in ten days had the assassins
All safely placed in jail.

George Ellis, William Neal and Craft,
Some were Kentucky's sons,
Near neighbors to the Gibbons' house 230
And were the guilty ones.

In this here dark and bloody ground
They were true types indeed,
Of many demons dead and dam'd
Who fostered that same greed.

A hellish greed of lust to blast
The virtuous and fair,
To gratify that vain desire
No human life would spare.

There Emma Thomas lay in gore,
A frightful sight to view;
Poor Fanny Gibbons in a crisp,
And Bob, her brother, too.

Bob was a poor lame crippled boy,
Beloved by everyone;
His mother's hope, his sister's joy,
A kind, obedient son.

At that dread sight the mother's grief
No mortal tongue can tell.
A broken heart, an addled brain,
When all should have been well.

Both her dear children lying there,
Who once so merry laughed.
There stiff and stark in death they lay,
Cut down by Ellis Craft.

That dreadful demon, imp of hell,
Consider well his crime;
Although he was a preacher's son, 231
Has blackened the foot of time.

—Peyton Buckner Byrne

This ballad was composed by Peyton Buckner Byrne of Greenup, Greenup County, Kentucky. He is in error in writing the name of Emma Thomas; the murdered girl's name was Emma Carico. The tragedy occurred in the early '80's in the mill town of Ashland, Boyd County, Kentucky, which adjoins Greenup County. The town of Greenup was formerly called Hangtown because of the many hangings which occurred there in the days of the Civil War. Peyton Buckner Byrne was a schoolteacher in that County and one of his scholars, Miss Tennessee Smith, supplied this copy of the old schoolteacher's ballad. Ellis Craft is buried on Bear Creek in Boyd County, not far from Ashland where he committed the crime.

THE MORAL OF THE BALLAD

There's a sad moral to this tale.
Now pass the word around;
Pull off your shoes now and walk light;
Ashland is holy ground.

Bill Neal he came from Virginia,
A grand and noble State,
But his associates were bad
And he has shared their fate.

Bill Neal he saw Miss Emma Thomas,
So beautiful and fair
That all his hellish greed of lust
Seemed to be centered there.

Bill Neal he was a married man,
Had children and a wife;
And ofttimes bragged what he would do,
If it should cost his life.

Bill Neal done what he said he would,
And yet a greater sin;
Then with a great big huge crowbar
Broke Emma's skullbones in.

Yes, Bill Neal done just what he said,
And yet that greater sin,
For which the gates of Heaven closed
And will not let him in.

Now while his victim is in Heaven,
Where all things are done well,
There with the angels glorified,
Bill Neal will go to hell.

THE DEATH OF MARY PHAGAN

Leo M. Frank, manager of the pencil factory, was a Jew. Sentiment ran high against him at the time of the murder. This ballad was composed by young Bob Salyers of Cartersville, Georgia, who heard the story on all sides. He could neither read nor write.

Come listen all ye maidens,
A story I'll relate
Of pretty Mary Phagan
And how she met her fate.

Her home was in Atlanta
And so the people say,
She worked in a pencil factory
To earn her meager pay.

She went down to the office
One April day, it's said;
The next time that they saw her,
Poor Mary, she was dead.

They found her outraged body—
Oh, hear the people cry—
"The fiend that murdered Mary
Most surely he must die."

James Conley told the story,
"'Twas Leo Frank," he said,
"He strangled little Mary
And left her cold and dead."

Now Frank was tried for murder,
His guilt he did deny.
But the jury found him guilty
And sentenced him to die.

His life he paid as forfeit;

And then there came a time
Another man lay dying,
And said he did the crime.

We do not know for certain,
But in the Judgment Day,
We know that God will find him
And surely make him pay.

—Bob Salyers

THE FATE OF EFFIE AND RICHARD DUKE

Oh, hearken to this sad warning,
You husbands who love your wife,
Don't never fly in a passion
And take your companion's life.

Of Doctor Rich Duke I will tell you,
Who lived up Beaver Creek way,
He married fair Effie Allen
And loved her well, so they say.

Both Effie and Rich had money,
But he was much older than she,
And she said, "All your lands and money
Should be deeded over to me."

His wife he loved and trusted
And he hastened to obey;
But the fact he soon regretted
That he deeded his riches away.

They quarreled and then they parted,
The times were more than three,
For both of them were stubborn
And they never could agree.

Now Doctor John, his brother,
Was a highly respected man,
He brought Effie home one evening,
Saying, "Make up your quarrel if you can."

And Rich seemed glad to see her,
And followed her up the stair,
But only God and the angels
Know just what happened there.

Doctor John was down at the table
When he heard the pistol roar;
He ran up the stairs in a moment
And looked in at the open door.

Poor Rich lay there by his pistol
With a bullet through his brain,
And Effie lay there dying
Writhing in mortal pain.

They were past all human succor,
No earthly power could save;
And they took their secrets with them
To the land beyond the grave.

Now all you wives and husbands,
Take heed to this warning true.
Never quarrel over lands and money
Or some day the fact you will rue.

—Coby Preston

THE FATE OF FLOYD COLLINS

This ballad was composed in 1925 by Jilson Setters, when Floyd Collins was trapped in a salt mine near Mammoth Cave, Kentucky.

Come all you friends and neighbors
And listen to what I say,
I'll relate to you a story,
Of a man who passed away.
He struggled hard for freedom,
His heart was true and brave,
While his comrades they were toiling
His precious life to save.

His name was Floyd Collins, 236
Exploring he did crave.
But he never dreamed that he'd be trapped
In a lonely sandstone cave.
His entrance it was easy,
His heart was light and gay,
But his mind was filled with trouble
When he found he'd lost his way.

He wandered through the cavern,
He knew not where to go,
He knew he was imprisoned,
His heart was full of woe.
He started for the entrance
That he had passed that day.
A large and mighty boulder
Had slipped down in his way.

The stone was slowly creeping
But that he did not know,
Underneath he found an opening
He thought that he could go.
He soon got tired and worried,
He soon then had to rest,
The boulder still was creeping,
It was tightening on his chest.

He lost all hopes of freedom,
No farther could he go;
His agony was desperate,
That you all well know.
His weeping parents lingered near;
A mother gray and old.
Soon poor Floyd passed away 237
And heaven claimed his soul.

A note was in his pocket,
The neighbors chanced to find;
These few lines were written
While he had strength and mind:
"Give this note to mother,
Tell her not to cry;
Tell her not to wait for me,
I will meet her by and by."

—Jilson Setters

This ballad was written by fifty-year-old Adam Crisp who lived in Fletcher, North Carolina, at the time of Collins' death. Crisp could neither read nor write but composed many ballads.

FLOYD COLLINS' FATE

Come all you young people
And listen to what I tell:
The fate of Floyd Collins,
Alas, we all know well.
His face was fair and handsome,
His heart was true and brave,

His body now lies sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave.

How sad, how sad the story,
It fills our eyes with tears,
His memory will linger
For many, many a year.
His broken-hearted father
Who tried his boy to save
Will now weep tears of sorrow 238
At the door of Floyd's cave.

Oh, mother, don't you worry,
Dear father, don't be sad;
I'll tell you all my troubles
In an awful dream I had;
I dreamed that I was prisoner,
My life could not be saved,
I cried, "Oh! must I perish,
Within the silent cave?"

The rescue party gathered,
They labored night and day
To move the mighty boulder
That stood within the way.
"To rescue Floyd Collins!"
This was the battlecry.
"We will never, no, we will never
Let Floyd Collins die."

But on that fatal morning
The sun rose in the sky,
The workers still were busy,
"We will save him by and by."
But, oh, how sad the evening,
His life they could not save,
His body then was sleeping
Within the lonely cave.

Young people all take warning
With this, for you and I,
We may not be like Collins,
But you and I must die.
It may not be in a sand cave 239
In which we find our tomb,
But at that mighty judgment
We soon will find our doom.

—Adam Crisp

PATRIOT

IT'S GREAT TO BE AN AMERICAN

For long years the members of the Hamm family in Rowan County, Kentucky, both old and young, have gathered on a Sunday in the month of August for their mountain Eisteddfod. Upon this occasion there is friendly rivalry as to whose ballad or poem is best, who speaks his composition best. And the prize, you may be sure, is not silver but a book of poems. This composition of Nannie Hamm Carter was read at their mountain Eisteddfod in August, 1940.

It's great to be an American,
And live on peaceful shores,
Where we hear not the sound of marching feet,
And the war-clouds come no more.
Where the Statue of Liberty ever stands,
A beacon of hope for all,
Heralding forth to every land
That by it we stand or fall.

It's great to be an American,
For wherever we may go,

It is an emblem of truth and right,
A challenge to every foe.
It's great to be free and unfettered,
And know not wars or strife,
Where man to man united,
Can live a carefree life,

While men are falling hour by hour
Upon some foreign shore
Amidst the roar of battle there,
Ne'er to return no more.
They're offered as a sacrifice,
Upon the altar there,
With no one there to sympathize,
Or shed for them a tear.

Where men are marching 'mid the strife,
Where there, day after day,
There's danger and there's loss of life
Where conquerors hold sway.
They bow to rulers' stern commands,
They face the deadly foe,
While far away in other lands,
There's sorrow, pain and woe.

But not so in America,
The birthplace of the free.
For 'midst the conflict Over There,
With loss of life and liberty,
It's a privilege to know,
That in a world, so fraught with pain,
We feel secure from every foe
Where naught but fellowship remains.

For in our free country,
We hear not the battlecry,
We hear not the bugle's solemn call,
When men go forth to die.
For over all this land of ours
The Stars and Stripes still wave,
Waving forth in triumph
O'er this homeland of the brave.

Hats off! to our own America,
With pride we now can say,
We bow not down to rulers,
For justice still holds sway.
God keep us free from scenes like those
That are in other lands,
Where the shell-shocked and the wounded
Are there on every hand.

So, it's great to be an American,
We'll stand by our flag always,
For right shall not perish from the earth
As long as truth holds sway;
As long as her sons are united
In a cause that's just and true,
The bells of freedom still will ring,
Ring out for me and you.

—Nannie Hamm Carter

SAD LONDON TOWN

Jilson Setters composed and set to tune this ballad and sang it at the American Folk Song Festival in June, 1941, to the delight of a vast audience. To the surprise of some he pronounces the word bomb, *bum*, like his early English ancestors.

Eight years ago I took a trip,
I decided to cross the sea;
I spent some weeks in London,
Everything was strange to me.

The city then was perfect peace,
They had no thought of fear,
Soon then the bombs began to fall,
The airplanes hovered near.

The people cannot rest at night,
Danger lingers nigh,
Bombs have dropped on many homes,
The innocent had to die.

The flying glass cut off their heads,
Their hands and noses too;
Folks then had to stand their ground,
There was nothing else to do.

English folks are brave and true,
But do not want to fight.
The Germans slip into their town
And bomb their homes at night.

They watch the palace of the King,
They watch it night and day;
They have a strong and daring guard
To keep the foe at bay.

—Jilson Setters

The aged fiddler also composed and set to tune the following ballad called—

BUNDLES FOR BRITAIN

Two little children toiled along
A steep and lonely mountain road,
They heeded not the bitter cold
But proudly bore their precious load.

I asked them where they might be bound
And what their heavy load might be.
They said, "We're going to the town
To send our load across the sea.

"For, far away on England's shore,
Our own blood kin still live, you know;
They fight to stay the tyrant's hand
That threatens freedom to o'erthrow.

"And many little homeless ones
Are cold and hungry there today,
'Tis them we seek to feed and clothe
And every night for them we pray.

"Some of them reach our own dear land,
While others perish in the sea;
And we must help and comfort them
Until their land from war is free."

Oh, may we like these children face
The curse of hate and war's alarm
With faith and courage in our hearts
And Britain's Bundles 'neath our arms.

—Jilson Setters

SERGEANT YORK

His own favorite ballad, however, is that which he composed and set to tune several years ago about Sergeant Alvin C. York, who is Jilson Setters' idea of "a mountain man without nary flaw."

'Way down in Fentress County in the hills of Tennessee
Lived Alvin York, a simple country lad.

He spent his happy childhood with his brothers on the farm,
Or at the blacksmith shop with busy dad.

He could play a hand of poker, hold his liquor like a man,
He did his share of prankin' in his youth;
But his dying father left him with the family in his care,
And he quickly sought the ways of God and truth.

Then came the mighty World War in the year of seventeen,
And Uncle Sam sent out his call for men.
Poor Alvin's heart was heavy for he knew that he must go,
And his Church contended "fighting was a sin."

He never questioned orders and did the best he could,
And soon a corporal he came to be;
He was known throughout the country as the army's fighting ace,
Beloved in every branch of infantry.

The eighth day of October the Argonne battle raged,
Machine guns whined and rifle bullets flew;
Then Alvin lost his temper, he said, "I've had enough,
I'll show these Huns what Uncle Sam can do."

He took his army rifle and his automatic too,
And hid himself behind a nearby tree;
He shot them like he used to shoot the rabbits and the squirrels
Away back home in sunny Tennessee.

He took the whole battalion—one-hundred-thirty-two—
While thirty-five machine guns ceased to fire;
And twenty German soldiers lay lifeless on the ground
As he marched his prisoners through the bloody mire.

His name was not forgotten, a hero brave was he,
Our country proudly hailed his fearless deeds;
He was offered fame and fortune but for these he did not care,
His daily toil supplied his simple needs.

"I want nothing for myself" he said, "but for the boys and girls,
Who live here in the hills of Tennessee,
I'd like to have a school for them to teach them how to farm
And raise their families in security."

His wish was quickly granted. At Jamestown, Tennessee,
There stands a school, the mountains' joy and pride;
And with his wife and children in the hills he loves so well,
He hopes in peace forever to abide.

—Jilson Setters

A Tennessee mountaineer, who is proud of his "wight of learning" according to his own words, "put together" this ballad which he calls—

NORRIS DAM

At Norris Dam, our Uncle Sam
Has wrought a mighty deed.
He built a dam, did Uncle Sam,
So "all who run may read."

He saw the "writing on the wall"—
Called the soothsayers in.
Soothsayers all, both great and small
Said, "It would be a sin—

"To let the things God wrought for man
Stand idle all the years.
But use God's knowledge (in a can),
Soothsaying engineers."

And so, this miracle today
You see with your own eyes,

Was planned ten million miles away—
In “mansions in the skies.”

That pigeonhole is empty there;
Now we employ that plan
For use and pleasure, down here, where
’Twill be a boon to man.

So day by day in every way,
At least we’re getting wise;
And now we play—as well we may—
On playgrounds from the skies.

So let us give a rousing cheer
For our dear Uncle Sam,
Whose mighty arm reached way up there
And brought down Norris Dam.

—George A. Barker

THE DOWNFALL OF PARIS

Oh, come all ye proud and haughty people,
Behold a nation plunged in gloom,
A country filled with pain and sorrow
Since that great city met its doom.

They had no thought of this disaster;
The Maginot Line could never fail.
Then came the downfall of proud Paris;
Oh, hear the people mourn and wail.

Oh, see the horror and destruction,
When death came flying through the air.
The people vainly sought a refuge;
Oh, friends, take warning and beware.

They hear the sound of alien footsteps,
The soldiers marching side by side
Among the ruins of that great city,
A mighty nation’s boast and pride.

Oh, let us then be wise and careful,
And strive to keep our country free;
For war is cruel to the helpless,
The weak must pay the penalty.

God help the rulers of the nations!
What is in store, no tongue can tell;
But keep in mind the simple story—
The Line was broke and Paris fell.

—Coby Preston

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9. RECLAIMING THE WILDERNESS

Vanishing Feudist

There are people all over the United States to whom the mere mention of the word mountaineer evokes a fantastic picture—a whiskey-soaked ruffian with bloodshot eyes and tobacco-stained beard, wide-brimmed felt cocked over a half-cynical eye, finger on the trigger of a long-barreled squirrel rifle. He is guarding his moonshine still. Or he may be lying in wait behind bush or tree to waylay his deadly enemy of the other side in a long-fought blood-feud.

Though there may be a semblance of truth in both, such pictures should be taken with a grain of salt. Illicit whiskey has been made in our southern mountains, as well as in towns and cities throughout the country. There were blood-feuds in bygone days but they have been so overplayed that scarcely a vestige of the real story remains recognizable. Few of the old leaders are left to tell the facts.

I have known well and claim as my loyal friends members of families who have been engaged in the making of illicit whiskey. I have known quite well many members of families on both sides in two of the most famous feuds in the southern mountains. These people were and are today my good friends and neighbors.

As recently as the fall of 1940, I returned to Morehead, the county seat of Rowan County, for a visit with the Martins and Tollivers. Strangely enough, upon the day of my arrival I found Lin Martin, son of John Martin, who killed Floyd Tolliver, up on a ladder painting the walls of the Cozy Theatre. This modern motion-picture theater occupies the site of the old Carey House where Martin shot Tolliver. Lin was standing in almost the exact spot where his father stood when he shot Floyd Tolliver. Most willingly he stepped out into the sunlight, paint brush and bucket in hand to meet and be photographed with Clint Tolliver, a son and nephew of the Tolliver leaders, whose father, Bud, was killed by the posse in the all-day battle on Railroad Street when the Tolliver band was wiped out. Clint was a nephew of Floyd Tolliver, slain by John Martin; he married Mrs. Lucy Trumbo Martin’s niece, Texannie Trumbo.

While the men shook hands in friendly fashion, believe it or not, across the street in the courthouse yard under a great oak, past which John Martin was hurried to the safety of the jail, a blind fiddler was singing the famous ballad composed by a Rowan County minstrel, called the Rowan County Troubles. The sons of the feudists smiled blandly. Clint Tolliver is a Spanish American War veteran and Lin’s brother, Ben, was a sharpshooter in the World War.

Both Lin Martin and Clint Tolliver say they have but one regret today and that is that they are too old to take up their guns to enlist in the United States Army. The men and their families are the best of friends and meet often at social gatherings.

So feuds die out, though feud tales persist. Old rancors live only in memory.

Today in Morehead, the county seat of the once Dark Rowan, there stands a modern State Teachers College on the sloping hillsides within sight of the courthouse and street where the Rowan County war was fought. One of the halls is called Allie W. Young, taking its name from the Senator whose influence brought about the establishment of the college. Young’s father, Judge Zachariah Taylor Young, was once shot from ambush during the troubles.

This same county is the seat of a native art exhibit which has attracted nation-wide attention. It was started many years ago by a descendant of Mary Queen of Scots, Mrs. Lyda Messer Caudill, then a teacher of a one-room log school on Christy Creek. One morning a little boy living at the head of the hollow brought to school, not a rosy apple (there wasn’t a fruit tree on his place), but clay models he had made in native clay of his dog, the cow, and his pet pig. Mrs. Caudill seized the opportunity to encourage the other children in her mixed-grade one-room school to try their hand at clay modeling. Later Mrs. Caudill became county superintendent of Rowan County Schools. Through her enthusiasm and efforts the plan has developed through the years and today mountain children of Rowan County have exhibited their handicraft in national exhibitions through the co-operation of the group of American Association of University Women of Kentucky with which Mrs. Caudill is affiliated.

Silver Moon Tavern

Over on Main Island Creek in Logan County, West Virginia, where Devil Anse Hatfield held forth in his day, another picture greets the eye today. Coal-mining camps are strung along from one end of the creek to the other. Omar, near where Devil Anse is buried, is quite a thriving town. It was here that Jonse, the eldest son who loved Rosanna McCoy, spent his last days as a night watchman for a power plant. Jonse’s nerves were so shattered he jumped almost at the falling of a leaf and the company, fearing some tragedy might be the result from too sudden trigger-pulling, found other occupation for the Hatfield son.

Within a few yards of the spot where the home of Devil Anse burned to the ground stands today a rustic lodge garishly designed. Over the doorway painted in bright red letters are these words —

SILVER MOON TAVERN

Neighbors call it a beer j’int. Entering, you are greeted by the proprietor, a mild, pleasant fellow who asks in a slow mountain drawl, “What kin I do for you?” If you happen to be an old acquaintance as I am, Tennis Hatfield—for he it is who runs the place—will add, “Glad to see

you. I've not laid eyes on you for a coon's age. Set." He waved me to a chromium stool beside the counter. "I've quit the law." Tennis had been sheriff of Logan County for a term or two. "This is easier." He flung wide his hands with a gesture that encompassed the interior of the Silver Moon Tavern. "Well, there's no harm in selling beer." He fixed me with a piercing look such as I had seen in the eye of Devil Anse. "What's more there's no harm in drinking it either, in reason. Young folks gather in here of a night and listen to the music and dance and it don't cost 'em much money. A nickel in the slot. We ain't troubled with slugs," he said casually. "The folks choose their own tune." He pointed to a gaudily striped electric music box that filled a 252
corner of the tavern. With great care he showed me the workings of the moan box, he called it. "These are the tunes they like best." He called them off as his finger moved carefully along the titles: "Big Beaver, The Wise Owl, Double Crossing Mamma, In the Mood, and Mountain Dew. They just naturally wear that record out. Young folks here on Main Island Creek like Lulu Belle and Scotty. See, they made that record Mountain Dew." A slow smile lighted his face. "'Pon my soul all that young folks do these days is eat and dance. That's how come me to put the sign on the side of my beer j'int—Dine and Dance. We're right up to snuff here on Main Island Creek," he added with a smug smile. "But now Joe Hatfield over to Red Jacket in Mingo County, he follows preaching and he says a beer j'int is just sending people plum to hell. I don't know about that. There's never been no trouble here in my place. I won't sell a man that's had a dram too many. And if he starts to get noisy"—he lifted a toe—"out he goes! I aim to keep my place straight." He shoved his thumbs deep into the belt of his breeches. "Not much doin' at this time of day. The girls in school or helping with the housework; the boys in the mines. Don't step out till after supper. Then look out! The young bucks shake a heel and the girls put on their lipstick. Them that can't afford a permanent go around all day with their hair done up in curlycues till they look a match for Shirley Temple by the time they get here of a night. Times has surely changed."

A bus whizzed by and disappeared beyond the bend of the road.

"Times has changed," Tennis repeated slowly as his gaze sought the hillside where Devil Anse 253
lay buried. "I wonder what Pa would a-thought of my place," he said with conscientious wistfulness. His eyes swept now the interior of the Silver Moon Tavern. "This couldn't a-been in Pa's young days. Nor womenfolks couldn't a-been so free. Such as this couldn't a-been, no more than their ways then could stand today." The son of Devil Anse leaned over the bar and said in a strangely hushed voice, "Woman, I've heard tell that you have a hankerin' for curiosities and old-timey things. I keep a few handy so's I don't get above my raisin'." He reached under the counter. "Here, woman, heft this!" He placed in my hands Devil Anse's long-barreled gun. "Scrutinize them notches on the barrel. That there first one is Harmon McCoy. Year of sixty-three," he said bluntly.

While I hefted the gun, Tennis brought out a crumpled shirt. "Them holes is where the McCoys stobbed Uncle Ellison and there's the stain of his gorm."

The gruesome sight of the blood-stained garment slashed by the McCoys completely unnerved me. I dropped the gun.

Instantly a door opened behind Tennis and a young lad rushed in. He took in the situation at a glance and swiftly appraised my five-foot height. "Pa," he turned to Tennis Hatfield, "you've scared this little critter out of a year's growth. And she ain't got none to spare."

Seeing that all was well he backed out of the door he had entered, and Tennis went on to say that his young son had quit college to join the army. "He'll be leaving soon for training camp. That is, if he can quit courting Nellie McCoy long enough over in Seldom Seen Hollow. 'Pon my soul, I never saw two such turtledoves in my life. She's pretty as a picture and I've told her that whether or not her and Tennis Junior every marry there's always a place for her here with us. A 254
pretty girl in a pretty frock is mighty handy to wait table." Again the wideflung hands of the proprietor of the Silver Moon Tavern embraced in their gesture the shiny tables, booths, chromium-trimmed chairs, and the gaudy juke box in the corner.

In September, 1940, Tennis Hatfield's son, Tennis, Jr., joined the army. He was nineteen at the time.

The Hatfields and McCoys have married. Charles D. Hatfield, who joined the army at Detroit's United States Army recruiting office, is the son of Tolbert McCoy Hatfield of Pike County and is friend to his kin on both sides.

The two families held a picnic reunion in the month of August, 1941, on Blackberry Creek where the blood of both had been shed during the feud, and at the gathering a good time was had by all with plenty of fried chicken and no shooting.

Today on the eve of another war things are still quiet up in Breathitt County so far as the Hargises are concerned. Elbert Hargis, brother of Judge Jim Hargis who was slain by his son Beach, has passed on. They buried him, the last of Granny Hargis's boys, in the family burying ground behind the old homestead on Pan Bowl, so called because it is almost completely encircled by the North Fork of the Kentucky River.

To his last hour, almost, Elbert Hargis sat in the shadow of the courthouse looking sadly toward Judge Jim Hargis's store where Beach had killed his father, the store in front of which Dr. Cox had been assassinated. His eyes shifted occasionally toward the courthouse steps down which the lifeless body of J. B. Marcum plunged when Curt Jett shot him from the back. Again Elbert's gaze turned to the second-story windows of the courthouse from which Jim Cockrell had been 255
shot to death one sunny summer day.

Ever alert and never once permitting anyone to stand behind him, with a gun in its holster thumping on his hip every step he took, Elbert Hargis must have lived again and again the days when his brother Jim directed the carryings-on of the Hargis clan. But if you'd ask him if he ever thought of the old times, there would be a quick and sharp No!, followed by abrupt silence.

Elbert Hargis is dead now. And a natural death was his from a sudden ailment of the lungs. He died in a hospital down in the Blue Grass where white-clad nurses and grave-faced doctors with a knowing of the miracles of modern surgery and medicine could not prolong the life of the aged feudist for one short second. The last of Granny Evaline Hargis's sons rests beside his mother, alongside the three brothers John, Jr., Ben, and Jim, and the half-brother Willie Sewell, whose death away back in 1886, when he was shot from ambush at a molasses-making, started all the trouble. In the same burying ground with Elbert is the vine-covered grave of Senator Hargis, father of the boys, who preceded his wife Evaline to the spirit world long years ago.

Blooming Stills

A visit today to a United States District Court in most any section of the Blue Ridge Country where makers of illicit whiskey are being tried shows that the name moonshine no longer applies to the beverage. It got its name from being made at night. Now operations in the making are conducted by day, while only the transportation of the liquor is carried on after nightfall. Trucks and even dilapidated Fords with the windows smeared with soap to conceal the load are 256
pressed into service. The drivers consider it safer to travel with their illegal cargo under the shades of darkness.

During the questioning of witnesses and offenders in court you learn that tips provided by law-abiding citizens are the usual means of bringing offenders to trial. In rare instances, however, members of a moonshiner's own family have been known to turn him in.

The process of capturing the moonshiner has changed considerably from that of other days. Then the revenooer (mountain folk usually call him the law) slipped up from behind the bushes on the offender and caught him red-handed at the still. In those days the men who were making had their lookout men who gave warning by a call or a whistle, even by gun signals, of the approach of the law while the moonshiner took to his heels, hiding in deep underbrush or far back under cliffs. Today these mountain men have learned not to run. For the officers of the law are equipped with long-range guns and with equipment so powerful the bullets can penetrate the steel body of an automobile. The method of locating the still has changed too since the airplane has come into use. Looking down from the clouds the flyer spies a thin stream of smoke rising from a wooded ravine. He communicates by radio to his co-workers of the ground crew, who immediately set out at high speed by automobile to capture the still.

It is estimated that of the 170,000,000 gallons of liquor consumed in this country in 1939, at least 35,000,000 were illicit and that for every legal distillery there are at least one hundred illegal ones. The southern mountain region has always lent itself admirably to the making of moonshine and for this reason has been a thorn in the flesh of U. S. Alcohol Tax Unit. During the 257
year 1939, according to *Life*, it is estimated that more than 4000 stills were captured in the states of Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida.

However, it is not the moonshiner who reaps the richest revenue from corn whiskey, which he sells for ninety cents a gallon, but the bootlegger and others down the line who add on, each in his turn, until the potent drink reaches a final sale price of ninety cents a quart and more. The tax on legitimate whiskey is $2.25 a proof gallon which makes it prohibitive in a community competing with the moonshiner's untaxed product.

Through the southern mountain region Negroes frequently are employed by white men operating stills on a large scale, where many boxes are used for the fermenting mash. The fines and sentences vary with the output and number of offenses.

The mountaineer, on the other hand, who operates a small still usually is a poor man. When brought into court he pleads that he cannot haul out a load of corn over rugged roads miles to a market and compete with a farmer from the lowlands who is not retarded by bad roads. Or again, if he is from an extremely isolated mountain section, he offers the old reasoning, "It is my land and my corn—why can't I do with my crop whatever I please?"

If the federal judge is a kindly, understanding man he will listen patiently to the story of the mountaineer who has made illicit whiskey, and if it be only the first or second offense, a sentence of six months in prison is imposed. "But, judge, your honor," pleads the perplexed mountaineer. "I've got to put in my crop and my old woman is ailin'—she can't holp none. I've 258
got to lay in foirwood for winter, judge, your honor, my youngins is too little to holp." Often the understanding judge replies, "Now, John, you go back home and get your work done up, then come back and serve your sentence." Rarely has the judge's trust been betrayed.

Learning

What with good roads, the radio, and better schools and more of them the scene is rapidly changing in the Blue Ridge Country.

The little one-room log school is almost a thing of the past. Only in remote sections can it be found. No longer is the mountain child retarded by the bridgeless stream, for good roads have come to the mountains and with them the catwalk—an improvised bridge of barrel hoops strung together with cables—spanning the creek has passed. The mountain mother's warning is heard no longer. "Mind, Johnny, you don't swing the bridge." Concrete pillars support steel girders that span the creek high above even the highest flood point. Education soars high in the southern mountain region. Instead of a few weeks of school there are months now, and what is more Johnny doesn't walk to school any more. The county school bus, operated by a careful driver, picks him up almost at his very door and brings him back safely when school turns out in the evening. Instead of the poorly lighted one-room school, there is the consolidated school built of native stone, with many windows and comfortable desks. If the mountain boy or girl fails to get an education it is his own fault. There is a central heating system and the teacher, you may be sure, is a graduate of an accredited college. The *Kentucky Progress Magazine* of Winter, 1935, gives a remarkable example of what is taking place in an educational way in the mountain region: "Twenty-nine well-equipped, accredited four-year high schools and two junior colleges now dot the five counties, Lawrence, Johnson, Martin, Floyd, and Pike ... seven high schools and one junior college have the highest rating possible, membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.... The advent of surfaced roads has made successful consolidation possible in many instances." 259

Preceding the consolidated school an inestimable service has been rendered the children of the southern highlands by means of the settlement school. It would be impossible to discuss them all adequately, but of the outstanding ones of which I have personal knowledge are: that great institution at Berea, Kentucky, the Hindman Settlement School in Knott County, Kentucky; the Martha Berry School in the mountains of Georgia; the agricultural school of Sergeant Alvin C. York near Jamestown, Tennessee; and the John C. Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, N. C.

Under efficient guidance mountain boys and girls are taught to preserve the handicrafts of their forbears, knitting, spinning, weaving, making of dyes, and even a pastime once indulged in by boys and men—whittling. Idle whittling has been converted into not only an artistic craft, but a profitable one. Nowhere in the country is there to be found a finer collection of whittled figures, ranging from tiny chicks to squirrels, rabbits, birds, than those made by the mountain youths at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

Perhaps no greater service is being rendered mountain folk than that headed by Sergeant York in his agricultural school, because he is of the mountains and knows well the need of his people. 260

But even before the settlement school had been thoroughly rooted there was the Moonlight School of Rowan County, Kentucky, for adult illiterates. It was a great, a magnificent undertaking by a mountain woman—Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, born in Rowan County. She had been a teacher in the wretched, poorly lighted one-room log school. Becoming county superintendent, she set about to lead out of ignorance and darkness the adult illiterates of her county. Happily she had been preceded in such an undertaking by a pioneer teacher in rugged Hocking County, Ohio, in the days of the Civil War. There Miss Kate Smith, scarcely in her teens, who saw her brothers shoulder their muskets and march off to the Civil War, took upon herself the task of teaching, first, a bound boy, an orphan lad bound by the state to a farmer. The lad later became a stowaway in a covered wagon in which the young teacher and her parents rode west. This lad in his teens was only one of many adult illiterates taught by the Ohio woman and her plan proved that it could be done. That boy, William Wright, became a Judge of the Court of Appeals.

With book-learning have come many broadening factors in the life of the southern mountaineer. His sons attend agricultural college, his daughters are active workers in the 4-H clubs. They return to the hillside farm to show their mothers how best to can fruit. The boys have learned how to improve and conserve the soil, how to save forests. The consolidated school has taught mountain children to mix with others. They have Girl Scout groups and Boy Scout groups; they learn self-government under trained leaders. 261

Above all, book-learning is swiftly wiping out the old suspicions and superstitions about the medical profession. Time was when there was but one doctor in all of Leslie County, Kentucky. Mountain mothers relied on the old midwife; infant mortality was appalling. Then came the Frontier Nursing School headed by Mrs. Mary Breckinridge. Her work is known throughout the breadth of the nation. The Frontier Nursing Service has the support of the leading people of the nation. Debutantes gladly give up a life of frivolity and ease to become trained in obstetrics and give their services to helping mountain mothers and babies. Its purpose was to combat the infant death rate in remote Kentucky mountain sections. The nurses ride on horseback and visit and care for mountain mothers. Mrs. Breckinridge herself was a nurse during the World War in France and went back to the Scottish Highlands—from which her kinsman Alexander Breckinridge came to settle in the Shenandoah in 1728—where she became a midwife.

Mountain folk usually are slow to take on new ways. But the wonders wrought through the Frontier Nursing Service they have "seen with their own eyes."

Learning has brought about a great change for the better in the life of the mountain woman. Once we saw her lank, slatternly, meek, stoic—mother of a dozen or more, obeying with patient fortitude the will of her man. We saw too the pitiable child-bride marrying perhaps a man three times her age because he could take care of her. There being so many in the family Pappy and

Mammy were glad to be rid of one of their flock. Though both pictures were often as overdrawn as that evoked by a daughter of the Blue Ridge—a whimsical picture of a pretty maid in full-skirted crinoline with a soft southern accent—moonlight and honeysuckle, a gallant, goateed colonel paying court to her charm and beauty while he sips a mint julep. This picture and that of the snaggle-toothed mountain woman in bedraggled black calico can no more be taken for fact than that Jesse James is still holding up stagecoaches or that cowboys in high boots and leather breeches are daily wedding the rich easterners' daughters who have come West. 262

There are well-organized centers: weaving centers that market the wares of mountain women all over the nation; music centers and recreational centers. Women and their daughters are better dressed and certainly they give more care to their appearance than the mountain woman did when she rode to the county seat on court day with a basket of eggs and butter and ginseng on one arm and a baby on the other.

She still knits and crochets and hooks rugs—not from leavings of the family's wearing clothes—but from leavings she buys from the mills. She does not have to take her wares to the county seat—today she stretches up a clothesline across the front stoop, pins her rugs and lace on the line, and the passing motorist buys all that her busy hands can make.

The question is often asked: How does the mountain woman regard her right to vote? Generally she is unconcerned with the vote. But as time goes on, by reason of the many factors that enter into her new way of living, she is evidencing more interest, both in the county and state elections. Strangely enough, though the mountain woman went hesitantly to the polls, a Kentucky mountain woman, Mrs. Mary Elliott Flanery, of Elliott County, was the first woman to be elected to the legislature south of the Mason and Dixon line. She was self-educated and for a number of years was rural correspondent for newspapers, which experience perhaps gave her a broad understanding of political matters and the incentive to enter the field. Hers was a distinctive service to the commonwealth and particularly to her sisters of the southern highlands, inasmuch as she was first of her sex to actually voice before a legislature the problems and needs of the mountain woman. 263

Today with rural electrification the mountain woman ceases to be a drudge. She is on a par with her sister of the level land.

She no longer stumbles wearily to the barn after dark with a battered lantern, its chimney blackened with smoke. She has only to switch on a light and turn to milking. Or if her household has progressed to dairy farming, as many of them have, finding the sale of milk to the city creameries more profitable than raising vegetables, she has only to attach the electric devices and the cows are milked mechanically. She sits no more at the churn, one hand gripping the dasher, the other holding a fretful babe to her breast. Now that unseen juice, or 'lectric, comes along the wire and into the new churn and there! Almost before you know it there is a plump roll of butter.

The whole family benefits from rural electrification. The youngest girl of the household is not reminded of the irksome task of cleaning and filling the lamps, trimming the wicks. What if the single bulb swinging from the middle of the ceiling is fly-specked! It still gives ample light for the room. The hazard of the overturned oil lamp and the fear of burning the house down are gone too. "I'd druther have 'lectric than a new cookstove or a saddle mare," any mountain woman will tell you.

She is through with the back-breaking battling trough and the washboard. Her proudest possession and the greatest labor-saving device on the place is the electric washer. Carefully covered with a clean piece of bleach, it holds a distinguished place in the corner of the dining room when not in use. It is the first thing to be exhibited to the visitor. 264

But whenever progress brings, it likewise takes away.

The fireside gathering where the glowing logs provided light and cheer for the family circle, conducive to story and riddle and song, has almost reached the vanishing point. Instead, the young folks pile into the second-hand Ford and whiz off to town. They don't wait for court week, when in other days the courthouse yard was the market place of the hillsman. Though the old courthouse still stands as it did in early days, the scene has changed. There is one ancient seat of justice in the Big Sandy country within sight of the spot where the first settlers built their fort for safety against Indian attack, and over the door these words catch the eye—

READER, WHERE WILT THOU SPEND ETERNITY?

Young folks don't seem to give it much thought. Just across the road (it is paved now) the raucous sound of the juke box is heard playing I Understand, Hut Sut, You Are My Sunshine and Booglie, Wooglie, Piggy. The jitterbugs are at it early and late. They know all the hits on the Hit Parade. They know Frankie Masters' and Jimmy Dorsey's latest records and the newest step and shake. If they ever tire, which is rarely, there are booths and stalls where they may sip a soda, drain a bottle of coke, crunch a sandwich, a yard-long hot dog, a hamburger. Or, if he is real sophisticated and she "has been farther under the house hunting eggs than some have been on the railroad cars," he will cautiously draw his hip flask, when the waiter or proprietor isn't looking, and pour a snort of year-old or Granddad in the glass of cracked ice. Sure, you buy your cracked ice, what do you think this is? "Let's go on to the Rainbow," she suggests presently, when only cracked ice is left in the glass. "Rainbow? You got your rainbow right here in the juke box," he answers. "I don't mean no rainbow like's on the groan box, and you know it." Maybe they go, maybe they don't. But things are surely changing along the once quiet mountain trail. Now if the lad is real devilish he will try a slug in the juke box instead of a coin. Then the 265

proprietor drops his beaming smile and asserts his authority. A young stripling or two may drop in, stagging it. One gets an eye on a pretty girl dancing with her date. But just let him try to cut in. “Can’t you read?” With the proprietor’s husky voice the intruder feels at the same moment the proprietor’s firm hand upon his shoulder. “What’s eatin’ you? Can’t you read, I say!” The owner of the big voice and bigger fist points a warning finger to the sign on the wall—

NO STAG DANCING

The stag isn’t slow in being on his way. He and his pals pile into their car and head toward the next tavern.

The present generation of mountain youth may have lost their superstition but they will take a long chance on beating the pinball machine. They will play it for hours—until the last nickel is dropped in the slot because, “Yes siree, just last night at the Blue Moon I saw a fellow get the jackpot. Double handful of coin!”

A mountain girl once ashamed because her granny smoked her little clay pipe puffs a cigarette nonchalantly held between highly manicured fingertips. She will spend her last dollar for a 266
permanent and lipstick. She would not be interested in the simple fireside games, Clap In and Clap Out, Post Office and Drop the Handkerchief. Such things are far too slow for her highstrung nerves these days.

However, community centers are trying valiantly to bring back square dancing and community singing. The effort is successful in some localities, particularly through North and South Carolina. Old-time singing school with the itinerant singing master has given place to singing societies that meet sometimes in the summer months on the courthouse square or indoors.

Religious customs, too, are becoming modernized. The foot-washing of the Regular Primitive Baptists, while it is still carried on in some of the mountain churches, lacks much of the solemnity and imposing dignity of bygone days. The church house itself is changed, which may account for much of the modification of customs. The log church is replaced with a modern structure of native stone. The walls are painted. There is a gas chandelier suspended from the ceiling. While there is still no elaborate, elevated pulpit, the floor of the front portion of the church where the faithful wash each other’s feet is today covered with linoleum. The long spotlessly white towel used for drying the feet of the meek has given place to a brightly colored green and red striped bath towel (basement special, or such as are found on the counters of the five and ten). The singing, instead of being the solemn chant of the sixth century to which mountain folk for generations adapted the words of their traditional hymns, is in swift tempo, almost jazz such as can be heard at any point on your radio dial any day in the week. 267

The jolt wagon, with its rows of straight hickory chairs, carrying the whole family to meeting with a well-filled basket with victuals for all, is a thing of the past. At a recent foot-washing down in the Georgia mountains there was but one wagon in front of the little church. A string of automobiles of all sizes and makes was strung along the road for a mile.

The solemn funeralizing with its simple beauty is almost a thing of the past in the southern mountains. Today it is accompanied by the barking of the hot-dog vendor, “Get your hot dogs here. A nice ice cold drink of Coca-Cola here! Here’s your Doctor Pepper! Cold orange drink!”

The decorations on the grave—once paper flowers made by loving hands—are garish factory-made flowers in cellophane covers. Mother’s picture in the glass-covered box beside her headstone is gone long ago. The favorite hymn is sometimes sung and a few of the old-time preachers survive to weep and pray and sing and offer words of praise for the long-departed friend. The present generation do not speak of the funeralizing. Today it is a memorial. Strangely enough, however, only a few miles from the heart of the Big Sandy country, a memorial service was held for O. O. McIntyre for the second time on August 11, 1940. A twilight memorial it was called and his good friends and close associates came to hear him eulogized.

The mountain preacher of yesterday is passing fast. Then, his was a manifold calling. When he traveled the lonely creek-bed road with his Bible in his saddlebags, he was the circuit rider bringing news of the outside world to the families along the widely scattered frontier. He, like the mountain doctor, was truly counselor and friend. The people looked to him to tell of things 268
that would be happening in the near future. They hung upon his every word from the pulpit. His reasoning in spiritual matters was sound and his eloquence impelling. His sermons often combined quotations from the early writers of England, passages from Shakespeare, true echoes of Elizabethan English, as might be expected considering his ancestry. Words flowed freely from his lips. The mountain preacher to this day has a natural gift of oratory. It has been handed down through generations. He needs only the spur and the occasion to burst forth. The mountain preacher, as some may imagine, was not always untutored or illiterate—of the type we sometimes encounter today in remote mountain regions. In early days he was quite often both preacher and teacher, such as William E. Barton, father of Bruce Barton, who after preaching in the thinly settled parts of Knox County, Kentucky, became the pastor of a Chicago church in later years. Some of the early roving preachers even studied theology in the great centers of learning both in America and Europe.

At one time, even as late as the last quarter of a century, there were strait-laced Baptist preachers (my own blood kin among them) who would not permit an organ in the church. But today it is quite the vogue for young evangelistic couples to hold forth with piano-accordion and guitar. “It peps up the joiners,” the evangelist says. On the other hand, in remote churches, where preachers still hold that note-singing and hymn books with notes are the works of the Devil, these same fellows will play up the hysteria of the audience with the “Holy Bark,” the

"And-ah," "Yep, Yep," and the "Holy Laugh," chiefly at foot-washing ceremonies.

The number of young people, however, who cling to the custom of foot-washing is comparatively small. One reason may be that they are too busy with other things, or that they consider such practices old-fashioned. 269

Mountain Men

Old Virginia had its Patrick Henry, the Blue Grass its Clays and Breckinridges, but the Big Sandy produced from its most rugged quarter as fine and noble timber as could be found throughout the breadth and width of the Blue Ridge Country.

Early in his youth Hugh Harkins came from Pennsylvania to settle in Floyd County in the heart of the Big Sandy. That was far back in the 1830's. He knew the saddlery trade but the young man preferred the profession of law. So acquiring a couple volumes on practice and procedure he began to study for the bar. He built himself an office of stone which he helped to dig from the mountain side and with every spare dollar he bought more law books and timber land. He died in 1869, but by that time his grandson, Walter Scott Harkins, had a thirst to follow his footsteps. The boy, even before he was old enough to understand their meaning, listened avidly to the speeches of his grandfather in the courtrooms of the mountain counties. And when Walter Scott Harkins was only a strip of a lad he rode the unbeaten paths to courts of law with his law books in his saddlebags. If the day were fair he'd get off his horse, tether it to a tree and climb high on the ridge. There with statute or law reporter in hand he would read aloud for hours. Again he'd close the book and with head erect, hands behind him, young Harkins would repeat as much as he could remember of the text. Often he waxed enthusiastic. He longed to be an orator. 270
Sometimes thoughtless companions would jeer at the young Demosthenes, even pelt him with acorns and pebbles from ambush. But Walter Scott Harkins wasn't daunted by any such boyish pranks. He kept on orating.

In the meantime, as he rode the lonely mountain paths, he took notice of the fine timber, just as his grandfather had before him. He was admitted to the bar in 1877 and hung out his shingle at the door of his grandfather's office. Like Hugh Harkins, the grandson also began investing his earnings, meager though they were, in timber land.

One summer evening near dusk the young lawyer was riding toward the mouth of Big Sandy when he was startled to see in the distance a giant tongue of flame shooting skyward. At first he thought there was fire on the mountain but he soon discovered that the flame did not spread but continued in a straight column upward. He sat motionless in the saddle for a moment. By this time darkness had descended. The young lawyer was fascinated by the brilliant flame and determined to test its strength. Taking a law book from his saddlebags he opened the volume and, to his surprise, was able to read the small type by the light of the distant flame with as great ease as though an oil lamp burned at his elbow. Then he recalled the story of how Dr. Walker, the English explorer, had once read his maps by the light of a burning spring. Unlike the early explorer young Harkins determined to do something about it. The legal mind of the lad spurred his zeal to find the cause of the illuminating flame.

Walter Scott Harkins not only found the cause but he probed the effect with fine results. With the aid of other interested persons he acquired mineral rights of lands in the Big Sandy country which included the burning spring, the like of which in the next decade was to illuminate towns 271
and cities and operate industries as far removed as one hundred miles.

Moreover Walter Scott Harkins lived to see more than 75,000 acres of his own forest leveled, whereby he piled up a fortune that could scarcely be exhausted even unto the fifth generation of Harkinses.

On the window of his law office in Prestonsburg, Floyd County, Kentucky, appears in letters of gold, an unbroken line of five generations of Harkinses who have followed the practice of law. Likewise the Harkins' descendants hold unbroken title to the largest acreage of timber land in the country. The virgin forest brought its owner more than $160,000 and the second growth is ready to cut.

Lumber companies bought 70,000 acres of forest and constructed their own railroads to carry out the timber. They calculated it would take about twenty-five years to cull out all the big timber and by that time there would be a second growth. Wasteful methods of lumbering, together with frequent forest fires and man's utter disregard for the future, have already brought about the necessity for reforestation in many mountain sections. As far back as 1886 out of the Big Sandy alone was run $1,500,000 worth of timber.

Rafts of logs carpeted the Big Sandy River and at its mouth was the largest round timber market in the world. With its row of riverfront saloons Catlettsburg, between the Big Sandy and the Ohio Rivers, was then called the wettest spot on earth. Through its narrow streets strode loggers and raftsmen. Theirs was talk of cant hooks and spike poles, calipers and rafts. "You best come and have a drink down to Big Wayne's that'll put fire in your guts." The boss wanted 272
his whole crew to be merry, so the whole crew headed for Big Wayne Damron's Black Diamond.

Today the old riverfront lives only in memory. That part of the county seat is a ghost town. Timbermen and loggers gather no more for revelry at the riverfront saloon. And should you ask

the reason, the old river rat will answer with a slow-breaking smile, “See off yonder—locks and dams! Can’t run the logs through that!”

Forests that were felled a quarter of a century ago are once again ready for the woodsman’s ax.

The present generation of timbermen look upon a very different scene. Their dim-eyed grandparents complacently beheld the push boat, that crude ark which was urged along the stream by means of long poles. It gave way to shallow drift steamers. And in turn the steamers were shoved aside for the railroad which was quicker. The boats, *Red Buck*, *Dew Drop*, once the pride of the river, soon went to anchor and deterioration.

The county seat changed as well. Once women came to do their trading there with homemade basket, filled with eggs, butter, ginseng which they swapped for fixings, thread, and calico. They motor in now to shop.

Typical of the changing scene is the town of Prestonsburg in Floyd County. It became a county seat in 1799 and was once called Spurlock Station. Today it is a thriving city with a country club. Daughters of once rugged farmers and struggling country lawyers now have a social position to maintain.

Mountain women are becoming class conscious! More’s the pity.

273

Coal

It is often said, “Old mother nature must have laughed heartily at the pioneer, who in his mad rush to go west hurried down through the wide troughs between the mountains, hurrying on through the valleys, passing unheeded the wealth in forests on either side, the wealth in minerals under his very feet.” But there came a time when the mountain men discovered the treasure.

Over in Johnson County, adjoining Floyd, where Walter Scott Harkins had an eye for timber, his young friend was being twitted for a different reason. “John Caldwell Calhoun Mayo,” they’d string out his long name, “when you’re cooped up in the poorhouse or the lunatic asylum, you can’t say we didn’t warn you to quit digging around trying to find a fortune under the ground.”

But young Mayo, like his friend Harkins the lawyer, would only say, thumbs hooked in suspenders, “He who laughs last, laughs best.”

Some of his youthful companions continued to poke fun but John Caldwell Calhoun Mayo turned them a deaf ear. On foot he trudged endless miles when he was a poor lad, or rode a scrubby nag along the Warrior’s Path, always seeking coal deposits, pleading with landowners for leases and options on acreage he knew to be rich in minerals. He surmounted seemingly impossible barriers, even having legislation enacted to set aside Virginia land grants. He tapped hidden treasures, developed the wealth of the Big Sandy country that had been locked in mountain fastnesses for centuries. Through his vision, thriving cities blossom where once was wilderness.

The United States Geological Survey shows one eighth of the total coal area of the nation to be in this region; it supplies nearly one quarter of all the country’s bituminous coal. 274

Public Works

Only in recent years has the mountaineer begun to forsake his cove, however unproductive the earth may be, for the valley and public works. Indeed mountain folk long looked down on their own who sought employment at public works, mines, lumber camps, steel mills. They decried any employment away from the hillside farm, because it meant to them being an underling. No mountaineer ever wanted to be company-owned. Leastwise none of the Wellfords of Laurel Creek. But Clate, youngest of Mark Wellford’s family, lured by the promise of big cash money, decided to quit the farm and take his wife and little family down to the foothills. “There’s a good mine there, pays good money, and there’s a good mine boss on the job,” so Clate was told. Some two years later Clate, a weary figure, emerged one evening from the company commissary. His face was smudged with coal dust. A miner’s lamp still flickered on his grimy cap. He carried a dinner bucket and the baby on one arm. Over his shoulder hung a gunnysack that bulged with canned goods and a poke of meal. At his heels followed his bedraggled, snaggle-toothed wife, a babe in her arms and another tugging at her skirts. Her faded calico dress that dragged in the back was tied in at the waist with a ragged apron. There was a look of sad resignation in her eyes. Now and then she brushed a hand up the back of her head to catch the drab stray locks. She might have been fifty, judging from the stooped shoulders and weary step. Yet the rounded arms—her sleeves were rolled to the elbow—looked youthful. 275

Clate halted a few minutes to talk to another miner, a boy in his teens. “What’d you load today?” the younger asked after casual greetings. “’Tarnal buggy busted a dozen times, held me back,” Clate complained, shifting the dinner pail and the baby. “Always something to hold a man back.” “I’m figuring on going to Georgia,” the young lad sounded hopeful. “Got a buddy down there in

the steel mill. Beats the mines any day." He saw some young friends across the street and hurried to join them.

"Come on, Phoebe!" Clate called over his shoulder to his wife, "get a mosey on you. I'm hongry. And 'ginst you throw a snack of grub together it'll be bedtime. An' before you know it, it's time to get up and hit for the hill again." He plodded on up the winding path to a row of shacks. His little family followed.

The row of dilapidated shacks where the miners lived was clinging to the mountain side at the rear, while the fronts were propped up with rough posts. They were all alike with patched rubberoid roofs, broken tile chimneys, windows with broken panes. Rough plank houses unpainted, though here and there a board showed traces of once having been red or brown. Between the houses at rare intervals a fence post remained. But the pickets had long since been torn away to fire the cookstove or grate. There were no gardens. Coal companies did not encourage gardening. Miners and their families lived out of cans, and canned goods come high at the company's commissary.

A tipple near the drift mouth of the mine belched coal and coal dust day after day. When Phoebe —you'd never have known her for the pretty girl she used to be far back in the Blue Ridge— rubbed out a washing on the washboard, hung it to dry on the wire line stretched from the back door to a nail on the side of the out-building, she knew that every rag she rubbed and boiled and blued would be grimy with coal dust before it dried. What was she to do about it? Where else could the wash be hung? Once Phoebe thought she had found the right place. A grassy plot quite hidden beyond a clump of trees. She put the wet garments in a basket and carried them off to dry, spreading them upon the green earth. But no sooner had she spread out the last piece than a fellow came riding up. "What's the big idea?" he demanded, shaking a fist at the garments on the ground. And Phoebe, from Shoal's Fork of Greasy Creek, never having heard the expression, mumbled in confusion, "I'm pleased to meet you." 276

"Don't try to get fresh," the fellow scowled. "Don't you know this ground is company-owned? The big boss keeps this plot for his saddle horse to graze on. Pick up your rags and beat it!"

She understood from the gesture the meaning of beat it and obeyed in haste.

There was little room to stretch up a line indoors, though she did sometimes in the winter when the backyard was too sloppy to walk in. Clate Wellford's was one of the smaller shacks, a room with a lean-to kitchen. The others, with two rooms, cost more. Besides there were other things to be taken out of date's pay envelope before it reached him; there were electric light, coal, the store bill, and the company doctor.

"None of my folks have been sick. We've never even set eyes on the doctor," Clate complained to the script clerk on the first payday.

"What of it?" the script clerk replied. "You'd be running quick enough for the doctor if one of your kids or your old woman got sick or met with an accident, wouldn't you? The doctor's got to live same as the rest of us." 277

So the miner stumbled out with no more to say. Sometimes he'd vent his spleen upon his wife. "You wuz the one that wanted to come here! Wisht I'd never married. A man can't get nowheres with a wife and young ones on his hands." And the wife, remembering the way of mountain women, offered no word of argument.

When the owners of the coal operation came from the East to check up output and earnings they didn't take time to make a tour of inspection of the shacks. Certainly they had no time to listen to complaints of miners.

Lured by the promise of big money Clate Wellford, like many other mountain men, forsook the familiar life of his own creek for the strange work-a-day of the mining camp.

Back on Shoal's Fork of Greasy Creek there was always milk a-plenty to drink. Bless you, Clate knew the time when he'd carried buckets full of half-sour milk to the hogs. How they guzzled it! Here there was never a drop of cow's milk to drink. You got it in cans—thick, condensed, sickeningly sweet. Couldn't fool the children, not even when you thinned it with water. "It don't taste like Bossy's milk," the youngsters shoved it away.

What was more, back on Shoal's Fork there was always fried chicken in the spring. All you could eat. Turkey and goose and duck, if you chose, through the winter and plenty of ham meat. There was never a day date's folks couldn't go out into the garden and bring in beans, beets, corn, and cabbage. He'd never known a time when there were not potatoes and turnips the year round. The Wellfords had come to take such things for granted. But here in the coal camp you could walk the full length of the place from the last ramshackle house on down to the commissary and never see a bed of onions and lettuce. The shacks were so close together there was no room for a garden, even if the company had permitted it. 278

"That's company-owned!" the boss growled at Clate that time he was trying to break up the hard crusty earth with a hoe.

"I've got my own onion sets," Clate tried to explain. "My folks fetched 'em down."

"Who cares?" the company boss snarled. "What you reckon the company's running a commissary for? The store manager can sell you onions—ready to eat."

So the miner didn't set out an onion bed.

Again, Clate found some old warped planks outside the drift mouth of the mine; he brought

them home and was building a pigpen. The mine boss came charging down upon him.

“What you doing with the company’s planks?”

The frightened Clate tried to explain that he had supposed the wood thrown aside was useless and that he was making ready for the young shoat his folks meant to bring him.

“What you suppose the company would do if every miner packed off planks and posts that he happens to see laying around?” he eyed Clate suspiciously. “We’d soon shut down, that’s what would happen. And as for meat. You can buy sow-belly and bologna at the commissary.” There was something more. “If you want to keep out of trouble and don’t want a couple bucks taken out of your pay, you better get them planks and posts back where you found them!”

The miner’s shack was perched on such high stilts that the wind whistled underneath the floor 279
until it felt like ice to the bare feet of the children. It took a lot of coal in the grate and the kitchen stove to keep the place halfway warm. The children were sick all through the winter. Now and then the company doctor stopped in on his rounds of the coal camp to leave calomel and quinine.

With the birth of her last baby, Clate’s wife got down with a bealed breast after she had been up and about for a week. “I’m bound to hire someone,” Clate told his wife. So he hired Liz Elswick to come and do the cooking, washing, and ironing and to look after the children.

Out on Shoal’s Fork neighbor women came eagerly to help each other in case of sickness.

Though it was not much they had to pay Liz—she took it out in trade at the store, the makings of a calico dress, a pair of shoes—it was a hardship on the Wellfords. For Liz Elswick, like other women in a coal camp, never having handled real money, knew little of cost. Nor did she know how to supply the simple needs of the family. Phoebe was too ill to offer a word of advice, poor though it would have been. So, before long, Clate was behind with his store bill. Or to put it the other way around, for the company always took theirs first, Clate had nothing left in his pay envelope on payday.

Then, when he might have had a few dollars coming, something else would happen: shoes would be worn out, he’d have to buy new ones for the children couldn’t go barefoot in the winter. He himself had to wear heavy boots in the mine in order to work at all, for Clate had to stand in water most of the time when he picked or loaded. Another time the house caught fire and burned up their beds, chairs, everything. Even though he had steady work that month he had to sell his time to the script clerk in order to get cash to replace his loss. A buddy in the mine was 280
selling out his few possessions at a sacrifice because his wife had run off with a Hunkie. The Hungarian showed the faithless creature a billfold with greenbacks in it, promised her a silk dress and a permanent.

“Why don’t you buy new furniture at the commissary?” the script clerk wanted to know of Clate. “There are beds and chairs, bureaus and tables. Get them on time.”

“I can’t afford it,” Clate said honestly.

So, after much bickering, the company’s script clerk offered to give the miner script for his time.

“My buddy has to have cash money,” Clate argued. “He’s quitting. Going back to his folks over in Ohio.”

Clate found out that when he sold his time he got only about fifty cents for a dollar.

“What you think I’m accommodating you for?” the company’s script clerk wanted to know. “I’m not out for my health. Course if you don’t want to take it”—he shoved the money halfway across the counter to Clate—“you don’t have to. There are plenty of fellows who are glad to sell their time.”

There was nothing left for Clate to do. He and his family had to have the bare necessities, bed, table, chairs.

Soon he was in the category with the other miners, always behind, always overdrawn, always selling his time before payday. Soon he was getting an empty envelope with a lot of figures marked on the outside. Clate was company-owned! If he lived to be a hundred he’d never be paid out.

Though Clate Wellford and the other coal miners never heard the word redemptioner and indent, they were not unlike those pioneer victims of unscrupulous subordinates. Men in 281
bondage like the sharecropper of the Deep South, the Okie of the West.

How different the children of the coal field looked to those along the creeks in the shady hollows of the Blue Ridge!

In the coal camps they were unkempt and bony, in dirty, ragged garments. They squabbled among themselves and shambled listlessly along the narrow path that led past the row of shacks toward the commissary. The path was black with coal dust and slate dumped along the way to fill the mud holes.

Why do they continue to live in such squalor and in bondage? Why don’t they move away?

If a miner should decide to move out, he has no means of getting his few belongings to the railroad spur some distance from the camp, for he has neither team nor wagon. All these are company-owned. The company, which controls the railroad spur, also has control too over the boxcars that are on the track. Only the company can make requisition for an empty boxcar. If a

miner wants to move he cannot even get space, though he is willing to pay for it, in a boxcar to have his goods hauled out.

He stays on defeated and discouraged.

If, however, he does quit one coal camp and get out he is unskilled in other labor and if he should try to evade his store and other obligations with one coal company, the office employees have a way of passing on the information to another operation. There are ways of putting a laborer on the blacklist.

But why should he try to move on? Word comes back to the miner from other buddies who have tried other camps. “They’re all the same. Might as well stay where you are.” 282

Behind every shack is a dump heap of cans, coal ashes, potato peel, coffee grounds, and old shoes.

Rarely was the voice of the miner’s wife raised in song as she plodded through her daily drudgery. Now and then the young folks could be heard singing—but not an ancient ballad. Rather it was a rakish song picked up from drummers coming through the mining camps who sold their inferior wares to the commissary manager.

There was a church propped up on the hillside. But meeting usually broke up with the arrest of some of the young fellows who didn’t try hard enough to suppress a laugh when the camp harlot went to the mourner’s bench, or when some old creature too deaf to hear a word the preacher said went hobbling toward the front. Sometimes an older miner, who for the sheer joy of expressing a long-pent-up feeling, shouted “Praise the Lord!”, was dragged out by a deputy sheriff, along with the young bloods, on a charge of disturbing religious worship.

The limb of the law usually knew who had a few dollars left from the week’s pay. The law knew too that a miner preferred to pay a fine rather than lie in jail and lose time on the job next day.

There was no pleasant diversion around the coal camp for womenfolk and children, no happy gatherings such as the play party, a quilting, an old-time square dance. In their drab surroundings, little wonder men and women grew old before their time.

That was yesterday. Today there are model mining towns throughout the coal fields. Holden in West Virginia even has swimming pools and modern cottages for its miners. A miner can work on the side too—it is not uncommon to see signs over his cottage or barn door reading, “Painting and Paper Hanging,” “Decorating.” There are thrifty vegetable gardens, and miners’ wives vie with each other in the product of their flower gardens. Holden is sometimes called the Model Mining Town of America. It has welcomed visitors from all over the land. 283

In Harlan, Kentucky, once the center of many stormy battles between miners and operators, the county crowned a Coal Queen on August 23, 1941, commemorating the first shipment of coal thirty years previously. The queen, a pretty eighteen-year-old high school girl, won the title from six other contestants, enthroned on a replica of the railroad car which hauled out the county’s first coal. As part of the celebration a $1500 public drinking fountain was dedicated and speakers hailed the economic progress of Harlan County since 1911. Each day 1200 railroad cars loaded with coal leave the county.

It was an all-day program being sponsored by the Harlan Mining Institute safety organization in co-operation with the County Coal Operators Association.

Not only were mining officials present from many points but politicians as well were present, including Mrs. Herbert C. Cawood, Republican nominee for sheriff, a sister of the crowned coal queen.

Back to the Farm

For those who do not have a hankering for work in the foothills and industrial centers there is today a greater incentive to go back to the farm or to stay there than ever before in the history of our country. For the young mountaineer there is the Future Farmer Association which not only trains him in soil conservation, guides him in what is best for his type of farm, or what stock he can best produce, but also holds out the spur of reward. It is a fine plan for promoting 284 friendly rivalry and spurs the future farmer to excel his young neighbor. Each fall there is a great state fair in a leading city of each of the Blue Ridge states, where the young future farmers of America gather with their exhibits in livestock, poultry, exhibits of their own crops. There is even a revival of the prettiest baby contest so familiar to the old county fair of the long ago. However today the contest has expanded beyond mere beauty; there is a health baby contest. The grand champion rural child is given an award with much pomp, and to complete the spirit of friendly rivalry and to bring about better understanding and fellowship between country and town there is also a contest for the champion rural and city baby.

The mountain boy, because he is no longer isolated by rugged roads, meets his city cousin on common ground.

The scene has changed along the once rugged creek-bed road. In place of the saddle hung on a wall peg on the front stoop for passersby to view and perhaps envy, a new saddle once the joy and pride of the mountain lad, today there is a spare tire and there is an auto in the foreyard or

in the garage, a garage which is often bigger than the little cabin itself.

The mountain farmer is being taught by skilled leaders to help himself.

Even if the mountaineer's farm is on a forty-five-degree slope there is hope for him today, thanks to the Farm Security Administration. A workable plan for soil rebuilding was the first step. To reclaim wet land the mountain man digs drainage ditches. Stone, heretofore hidden in the mountain side and unused, is now utilized for building barns and houses. On fourteen acres a man and his family, including a couple of grown sons and their families, can today raise a 285
living and be comfortable. With a loan of $440 from the Farm Security Administration a once unproductive miserable farm can be made liveable and productive.

The farmer of the hill country is being trained to put to use the things at hand.

Second-growth timber is coming on and is conserving the productive qualities of the hillside soil which was drained away by ruthless cutting of timber a quarter century ago. Today the farmer is taught to treat his farm and pasture land with lime and phosphate, a thing unheard of in the early days. And the greatest of all his blessings today, the mountain farmer will tell you, is the good road.

Why then should he want to leave the mountains he knows and loves so well?

It was tried by the young folks, but finding themselves ill fitted for work at coal camps or steel and iron mills or factories or industrial centers, they returned eagerly to the hills, at least during the first five years of the thirties.

To this day, though some have remained in the mill towns, it is not uncommon to hear the womenfolk—whose men have provided them with modern conveniences, a frigidaire, a gas range, an electric washer and iron, a spigot of running water—say, "Wisht I had back my cellar house, my cedar churn, the battling block to make clean our garments. All these here fixy contrapshuns make slaves of my menfolks at public works to earn enough cash money to pay for them." And again, "I'm a-feared of that 'mobile. I'd druther ride behint old Nell in the jolt wagon."

Recently a Harvard sociologist, Dr. C. C. Zimmerman, has suggested that, because the Appalachian and Ozark farmers are producing children in excess of the number "required to 286
maintain a population status quo," they pull up stakes and settle in "declining rural New England."

However, those in a position to know, through long years of close contact with the southern mountaineer and his needs, point out that no resettlement or colonizing plan can be worked out until a better program of regional analysis is first accomplished. They point out that many a mountain farmer would not earn in a whole lifetime of toil enough money to make a down payment on "even a rundown New England farm."

Besides there is still in the makeup of the mountaineer that spirit of independence. He does not want to rent. He wants to own outright, even if his property is no more than a house seat. There are few sharecroppers in the southern highlands. A mountaineer would rather suffer starvation than be subservient. Though he may be illiterate he still remembers, because the story has been handed on by word-of-mouth, the suffering and mistreatment of his forbears across the sea.

To add to his security today there is the Tenant Purchase program for rehabilitation through the United States Department of Agriculture, and mountain men themselves are selected as members of the committee. It is a part of the FSA. The *Big Sandy News*, July 25, 1941, carries this story to the mountaineer: "The Tenant Purchase program provides for the purchase of family type farms by qualified tenants under the Bankhead-Jones Tenant Purchase Act. Farm Security Administration rehabilitator loans are available to low income farm families, ineligible for credit elsewhere, for the purchase of livestock, workstock, seed, fertilizer and equipment, in accordance with carefully planned operation of the farm and home. About 150 farm families in 287
Lawrence county have already been helped by this program.

"The services of debt adjustment committeemen are available to all farmers, as well as to FSA borrowers. The committeemen will assist creditors and farm debtors to reach an amicable adjustment of debts based on the ability to pay."

In this particular section of the Blue Ridge, while some are looking to the soil, others have an eye on the waters above the earth. There is being revived the plan of twenty years ago for the canalization of one of the best-known and most important rivers of the Blue Ridge Country—the Big Sandy. As a means to that end there is an organization called the Big Sandy Improvement Association and, with a mountain man, Congressman A. J. May, to espouse its cause, things look promising for the project.

The mountain men and their city co-workers get together and speak their minds and exchange views at dinner meetings down in the Big Sandy Valley. A survey is being conducted to show to what extent a navigable river would aid industry, especially the coal business. Mountain men are joining their practical knowledge with the scientific knowledge of men of the level land who are putting the plan of canalization of the Big Sandy River before Uncle Sam for consideration and backing.

The people of the Blue Ridge mountains are learning slowly and surely to mingle and to work with others. That again is due to good roads.

Once there was the simple manner of making sorghum, whereby the mountain man paid for the use of the mill in cash or cane; today there is the Sorghum Association which helps the

mountaineer market his product. There is even a Blackberry Association whose trucks drive to the very door and load up every gallon a family can pick.

Conservation is evident on every side and mountain people are realizing the benefits in dollars.

Where once timbering was carried on in an appallingly wasteful manner, reforestation under the guidance of trained leaders is under way. Camps of the CCC dot the whole southern mountain region and fruits of their efforts can be seen in the growing forests on many a mountain side. In Mammoth Cave National Park alone 2,900,000 seedlings were planted to stay gulley erosion in an area of 3,000,000 square yards.

Mountain boys who have entered CCC camps are rated high in obedience, deportment, and adaptability to surroundings. Some of them have never been away from home before. Many have been no farther than the nearest county seat.

Frequently the mother back home can neither read nor write but she shows with pride a letter from her son. “My boy’s in the Three C’s. He’s writ me this letter. Read with your own eyes.” You see her glow with genuine pride of possession as you read aloud—perhaps the hundredth time she has heard it—the boy’s letter. The mother shows it to everyone who crosses her threshold there in the Dug Down Mountains of Georgia. There is another letter too. “Johnny’s captain writ this one.” She knows them apart even though she does not know A from B. “Johnny’s captain has writ moughty pretty about our boy.” So well does the old mother know the content of the letters she is ready to prompt if the visitor omits so much as a single word in the reading. And when Johnny came home, after his first months of service were ended, he was hailed as a conquering hero by family and neighbors alike. The mother was proudest of all. “Look at this-here contrapshun.” From the well-ordered case in the boy’s trunk she brought out a toothbrush. “He’s larnt to scrub his teeth with this-here bresh and”—she added with unconcealed satisfaction—“he don’t dip no more. ’Pon my honor he’s about wheedled me into the notion of givin’ up snuff. But when a body’s old and drinlin’ like I’m getting to be dipping is a powerful comforting pastime.”

The mountain boy’s older brothers and father too have come to understand co-operation. They can work with others. They know the meaning of WPA folklore. When the boss calls out jovially, “Come and grab it, boys!” they, who have never heretofore worked by the clock, know dinner time is up and they must start back to work. When the head of the work crew calls out “Hold! Hold! Hold!” they know a fuse of dynamite is about to be lighted to blast the rock from the mountain side and they hurry to safety. “Dynamite is powerful destructuous!” one tells the other, and they remain at safe distance until again the boss of the crew calls out “All right!” and they are back with pick and shovel.

The mountaineer has become a good steel worker, a dairyman in the foothills, a good mill hand.

The old folk, however, still cling to the old order of things. Once there was an old schoolmaster in the southern mountains who refused to give up teaching from the McGuffey Readers despite the fact that legislation had ruled out the old familiar classics. So persistent was he in his decision it eventually brought on a heart attack which caused his death.

Men of the hills have been quite baffled by CIO and other union cards. Young men first joining the CIO were heard to boast, “We can have anything we want. The CIO is going to buy me and my woman and the kids a nice, fine, pretty home. Pay all our bills if we get sick.”

Only a few short years ago in a coal camp in West Virginia a mountain man, who was then working at public works for the first time, found himself haled into court at the county seat on some misdemeanor charge. When asked “Who is the President of the United States?” he unhesitatingly gave the name of the sheriff who had arrested him. So long had his family lived apart that he knew nothing of the workings of his own government and nothing about the various offices, high and low. Yet in the family burying ground of that mountain man inscriptions on the tombstones of his ancestors show that three of them served with distinction in the War of the Revolution.

Lest the coming generation forget the ways of their forbears and the America for which men struggled and died—the America of yesterday—the scene is being faithfully reconstructed in various ways in national parks. The boys of the CCC camps are having a very important hand in reconstruction and conservation.

Some years ago a nephew of Fiddling Bob Taylor of Tennessee met with several friends on hallowed ground in that State, not for a patriotic celebration but merely for the joy of roaming in the great out-of-doors. The ex-governor’s kinsman, like his forbears, had been born on the site where in 1772 the first step was made in American independence by the Watauga Association. This autumn day these sons of those early patriots fell to talking of the country, its scenic beauty, its resources—particularly in the mountain region. “Fitting shrines set in the beauty of the great out-of-doors are the finest monuments to our patriots, it seems to me,” said one. Another said, “The world’s history shows that from the time of creation the successful men were those who really loved the out-of-doors. Abraham was a nomad whose home was wherever he pitched his tent. Moses sought the silence and solitude of Midian before God could speak to him. David was a shepherd boy on the Judean hills. Elijah dwelt in a cave. In the New World we see Washington, the surveyor, a lover of the out-of-doors; Thomas Jefferson, finding happiness and contentment in roaming the hills of Virginia; the immortal Lincoln, coming from the backwoods of humble parents; Theodore Roosevelt, cowboy on the plains of our western country.”

With a smile Fiddling Bob’s nephew turned to his friends. “Fellows, I’ll wager there’s not one

among them from Abraham down to Teddy but would enjoy a canter over a good highway to take a look at the Blue Ridge Country. The most beautiful forests and parks in the world. Ought to link 'em up with a highway."

"Not a bad idea," chorused the friends, and they took another round of mint juleps to celebrate the birth of a thought.

"Ideas grow and thoughts travel fast," Fiddling Bob's nephew remarked some years later when setting out on a cross-country journey. "The Park-to-Park Highway grows annually and this Skyline Drive, which is a part of the plan, is one of the most alluring of all modern roads." Starting at Front Royal, the northern entrance to the Shenandoah Valley Park, it continues to Rockfish Gap near Waynesboro on the south, a distance of 107 miles. It is a broad mountain highway following the crest of the Blue Ridge, invading a world that was remote and known only to mountain folk. Today over its smooth, paved surface cars climb quickly to airy heights from which may be viewed innumerable vistas of the Piedmont plateau and the Shenandoah Valley. 292
At strategic points parking overlooks have been constructed, from which are seen tumbling waterfalls, deep and narrow canyons, cool shady forests, open meadows, and wild flowers of every shade and hue throughout the summer. Autumn presents a boundless riot of color and winter a snowy, sparkling blanket pierced by tall green pines.

The Skyline Drive links with the Blue Ridge Parkway at Rockfish Gap which will at last connect the Shenandoah National Park with the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee.

"In case you don't know," Fiddling Bob's nephew likes to remind a stranger, "Shenandoah Valley Park was presented by Virginians to the nation in 1935 and more than three million dollars have been spent on the Skyline Drive alone—a drive that hasn't a parallel in America. Through this wilderness the Father of his Country once trudged on foot as a surveyor and looked down upon the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley from the lofty peaks of the Blue Ridge. His was the task to survey lands for the oncoming settlers. He had no moment to explore under the earth. That was the task of later men. Today for good measure, after you have beheld the breathtaking beauty from the heights, just travel seven eighths of a mile from Front Royal to the Skyline Caverns where you'll see the most unusual cave flowers that man has ever looked upon. Why"—Fiddling Bob's nephew puffs vehemently on his corn-cob pipe—"do you know that Dr. Holden, he's professor of Geology at VPI, says these Hellicitites, that's what he calls 'em, 'these weird, fantastic, and pallid forms' warp scientific judgment. And, friends, it's nature's work, these inconceivable structures hidden from the world for millions of years down under the ground." 293

He turned with a beaming countenance when we had emerged from the cavern of matchless wonders. "Young Americans don't have to study geography books these days. All they have to do is get a second-hand car, fill it up, and strike out on the Park-to-Park Highway. They'll get an eyeful and an earful too from native sons, and learn more about America than they can dig out of the dry pages of a book in a year. Why, right down there at Charlottesville there's Ash Lawn where James Monroe lived and meditated. His friend, Thomas Jefferson, set about building the place in 1798 while Monroe was in France looking after Uncle Sam's business. Even great and busy men in those days were neighborly. Thomas Jefferson did a good part by his neighbor James Monroe when he built that house, and the ambassador thanked him generously when he came back to occupy the place. The two used to roam the grounds together and spent many happy hours there. They visited to and fro; you see Monroe lived across yonder within sight of his friend's home. The great of the past take on reality when you actually set foot upon the ground they have trod. Places come to life when we see them with our own eyes. That's the purpose of these great highways, the Park-to-Park highways that connect the scenes of American history."

As the terrain changes there is a great variety in the scenes along Skyline Drive. Sometimes the road leaves the crest to tunnel through a rocky flank of mountain and you come unexpectedly upon sparkling streams tumbling down the mountain side to the valley below. The eye follows the cascade to the very edge of the drive. It disappears beneath the wide surface and reappears beyond a rocky wall, cascading down and down to fertile valleys below. 294

Virginians, and people of the Blue Ridge generally, count one of their greatest prides the restoration of the capital at Williamsburg through the generosity of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Old and young who pass through the graceful wrought-iron gates to the Governor's Palace thrill at the sight of the restored colonial capital named for King William III, a scene which all in all reflects old England in miniature, "as the state of mind of its citizens reflected the grandeur that was to be America." Here are the stocks in which offenders were locked while they suffered jibes from passing tormentors. Elegant coach-and-four remind the visitor of days of grandeur of Old Virginia when the FFV's were entertained at the royal palace. Across the way is the wigmaker's shop, and the craft house, displaying the Wolcott Collection of ancient tools and instruments. Here too is seen the Wren building, oldest academic structure in English America, "first modeled by Sir Christopher Wren."

Even a youngster of the Blue Ridge knows about Yorktown where Lord Cornwallis surrendered in 1781. "Here's where we fit and plum whopped the life outten the redcoats," we overheard a mountain boy from a mission school boasting to his companions.

Within a few short hours I had left behind Old Virginia and its reminders of colonial days and crossed into the Mountain State.

“There’s plenty of beauty and culture in Old Virginia, I’m not denying that—” Bruce Crawford looked over his spectacles at his inquisitive visitor—“but there’s just as much on this side of the Blue Ridge. We’ve got as many wonders under the earth as above it. And”—he turned now in his swivel chair in his quarters in the Capital to look far up the Kanawha River—among the many duties of this Fayette County man is that of letting the world know about his state—“I’m not 295
forgetting Boone roved these parts. Trapped and hunted right here on the Kanawha. But what I started to talk about was not the hills, the rivers, and the caves, but the people.” He spoke slowly, deliberately, this sturdy, well-groomed hillsman. Like Sergeant York of the Tennessee Mountains Bruce Crawford can, if need be, drop easily back into the dialect of his people. And he is an accomplished writer. “I don’t care enough about it to follow the profession of writing,” he said, and fire glowed in his gray eyes. “But as old Uncle Dyke Garrett used to say, ‘I takened all I could a while back from furriners’ so I cut loose and wrote my notions about it and it was published in the *West Virginia Review*. Take it along with you on your travels through the Mountain State and see if I’ve come near hitting center.”

It seems to me he came mighty near hitting center and with Bruce Crawford’s permission, here are his sentiments:

“In recent weeks two ignorant jibes were flung at the State of West Virginia, one by a Southern editor and the other by a Northern cartoonist.

“The editor, a Virginian, moaned that rude mountaineers had routed Democrats of the ‘old Southern type’ from the Capital on the Kanawha and that the Lost Cause was lost all over again. He was still sad because Senator Matthew M. Neely had been elected Governor on a platform to restore democracy to the Democratic Party, and government to the governed, in West Virginia.

“The cartoonist represented us by a stock hill-billy character with bushy beard and rifle in hand, gunning for someone around the mountains.

“Both editor and cartoonist have their heads in the sands of the past. 296

“West Virginians are Mountaineers by geography and tradition, and proud of it. Originally they were induced by wily Virginians to come into these mountains and form a buffer back-country against Indians, French and British. Here they grew sturdy, self-reliant and independent. They fought the first and last battles of the American Revolution, as well as the first land engagement of the war to preserve the Union. They were shooting for liberty while Patrick Henry was still shouting for it among appeasers of King George. A continental commander, it is told, refused to enlist more volunteers from the Colonies, saying he had plenty of West Virginians. General Washington, too, thought these mountaineers were tops, for in a dark hour of the Revolution he said: ‘Leave me but a banner to place upon the mountains of West Augusta, and I will gather around me the men who will lift our bleeding country from the dust and set her free.’

“These mountaineers saved piedmont and tidewater Virginia from Indians, helped win the American independence, and made possible the opening up of Kentucky to the West. They then expected a fair deal from the Virginia Government, but they did not get it. So when Virginia seceded from the Union, they seceded from Virginia. And proudly they adopted the motto, ‘Mountaineers are always free,’ a sentiment so generally subscribed to that it appears over the entrance to our penitentiary.

“The slurs persist through ignorance.

“True, we have had all-out clan wars. We have had violent chapters in our industrial story, under state governments apparently considered benevolent by the Virginia editor. We tolerated waste of both human and material resources under wild individualism. But a new day has come, promising the greatest good to the greatest number, and we shall have much to advertise, as 297
envisioned in Governor Neely’s inaugural address when he said:

“‘Fortunately impoverished land can be reclaimed; denuded areas can be reforested; unnecessary stream pollution can be prevented; and in our purified watercourses fish can be made to thrive.... For our posterity and ourselves, we must restore as much as possible of the matchless heritage which we wasted as improvidently as the base Indian who threw away a pearl that was richer than all his tribe.... If to West Virginia scenery, which is surprisingly diversified and transcendently beautiful, we add the lure of fully restored forests, fish and game, the State will eventually become a happy hunting ground for the sportsman; a paradise for the tourist; and the home of prosperity more abundant than we have ever known.’

“Progress toward these aims is being made under the direction of various heads.

“In addition to mining areas producing more soft coal than any other state, plus our varied manufactures, we have fertile valleys and slopes from which ... an increasing harvest is reaped. The State’s diversity of activity should, in the fullness of time, make West Virginia the most progressive, the most socially balanced, and therefore the most truly civilized State in the Union.

“Our road system is being rapidly improved.... Many of our historic and scenic spots and recreational areas, hitherto locked in the uplands, are easily reached as more and more tourists travel pioneer trails on modern highways.

“All these things now are being discovered, or soon should be, by the whole Nation. Ours is the Vacationland at the Crossroads of the East.

“Just as in other times of national peril the human and material resources of this region figured 298
indispensably, so today its great strength will be used against the Hitler menace.... West

Virginia, with its industrial development and strategic isolation from attack, may become the Defense Hero of a war in which states little and large have fallen before the juggernaut of tyranny. Again, as in the time of Washington, the Nation may look to these West Virginia hills, and plant here the oriflamme of freedom.

"Let us sing of the soft, folded beauty of the Alleghenies; of rivers roaring with primeval discontent and streams crystal-clear (save those running red from wounded hills); of Edenlike forests in Monongahela's million acres; of Ohio's fertile valley, placid and hill-bordered, where once 'warwhoop and savage scream echoed wild from rock and hill'; of clean-trimmed rolling landscapes of Eastern Panhandle, famed for history and old houses; of lovely pastoral valleys of the South Branch, Greenbrier and Tygart; of wild, boulder-strewn New River Canyon; of Webster's forest monarchs and her deep, cool woods; of the 'brown waters of Gauley that move evermore where the tulip tree scatters its blossoms in Spring'; of the green hills mirrored in starlit Kanawha; of white-splashing Blackwater Falls, awe-inspiring Grand View, enchanting Seneca Rocks, and the remote Smoke Hole region with its Shangri La inhabitants.

"Sing of our rhododendron and its dark-green, wax-like leaf and purple flower; of Mingo's mighty oak that weathered six hundred winters; of our highest peak, Spruce Knob, bony above the lush forest; of Cranberry Glades and their strong plants native to Equator and Pole; bracing altitudes, averaging highest east of the Mississippi.

"Sing a lay for the strawberries of Buckhannon, buckwheat of Kingwood, our lowly but uprising spud, tobacco at Huntington, and the wine-smell of orchards in Berkeley; for the horses of Greenbrier, Herefords of Hampshire, sheep on Allegheny slopes, deer in a dozen State Parks, and bears in the pines of Pocahontas.

299

"Sing of timber, iron and steel; of coal heaved by brawny miners into the bituminous bin of the Nation; of oil gushers and gas flow; of vitrolite and chromium, plastics and neon, rayon and nylon; of glass stained for cathedrals of Europe; of billions of kilowatts from coal, and potentially more water power; of fluorescent bulbs at Fairmont, and poisonous red flakes in the Kanawha sky from metallurgical plants—fire poppies blooming in the night.

"Sing of deeds and events of deathless renown; of Morgan Morgan and his first white settlement at Bunker Hill; of James Rumsey and his steamboat on the Potomac; of Chesapeake and Ohio's epic completion across the State in '73 to the tune of legendary John Henry's steel-driving ballad in Big Bend tunnel; of turnpikes, taverns and toll houses long abandoned; of our leaders, Negro and white, in business, industry, education, religion and government; of our stalwarts of union labor whose vision, social comprehension and courage helped to bring a new day for all; of our cherished democracy, flexible and self-righting in a world where popular rule is a rarity.

"I have catalogued in clumsy prose what a Thomas Dunn English or a Roy Lee Harmon could peel off in crisp, singing lines. Surely we have gifted souls who can illumine our story in song—the story of Mountaineers Always Free, of West Virginians always Mountaineers—for a better understanding by the country at large ... of this land of heroic past, exhilarating present, and promising future."

300

A journey through the Mountain State convinces the traveler that on her side of the Blue Ridge West Virginia offers as many wonders under the earth as above it, if one is not a claustrophobe. There's Gandy Sinks where my friends of the Speleological Society were trapped by a cloudburst on August 1, 1940; and Seneca Caverns, in Monongahela National Forest, once the refuge of Seneca Indians about twenty miles west of Franklin on U. S. Route 33, and six miles from Spruce Knob. Caves as unbelievably beautiful as the Luray Caverns of Virginia, where the great council room of the Seneca tribe remains as it was in the day of the redskins. There is even a legend about Snow Bird, the only daughter of Bald Eagle and White Rock, his wife. Inside the cavern, if you look carefully, there is to be seen the outline of the lovely face of Snow Bird on the great stone wall. There are a Wigwam, and an Iceberg, an Alligator, and the Golden Horseshoe and Balcony of the Metropolitan, all in natural stone formation.

West Virginia has developed 84,186 acres in its state-park and forest system. Sparkling rivers flow throughout the state. At the junction of the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers where Daniel Boone once roamed there is a monument commemorating the battle of the Revolution between colonial troops and Indians. Here too are the graves of a woman scout, "Mad Anne" Bailey, and a Shawnee chieftain, Cornstalk. There are hundreds of miles of trails, safe underfoot, but flanked by as wild and rugged lands as ever infested by the Indian.

301

Valley of Parks

If Dr. Walker, the English explorer, should return to the earth today and visit the Big Sandy country near the point where he first entered the state of Kentucky, he'd be amazed at the sight which would greet his eyes. Cities have sprung up where once was wilderness. Yet one natural beauty of the country remains unchanged: the great gorge made by Russell Fork of Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy, breaking through the mountain at an elevation of 2800 feet—The Breaks of Big Sandy. Here in the days of the Civil War many thrilling episodes took place and through The Breaks a Confederate regiment trekked back to Virginia leaving behind a string of Democratic counties in its wake.

Recently added to Jefferson National Forest, another link in the chain of Park-to-Park highways, The Breaks of Big Sandy is the most picturesque and historic spot in eastern Kentucky. It is located on State Route 80, just thirty miles from Pikeville where many of the McCoys live peaceably today. Kentucky, with the mother state Virginia, is planning a better and broader highway to The Breaks, which will readily connect it with the Mayo Trail. And the native sons still dwelling in the hills, aided by their neighbors representing them in state and federal offices, are busily planning an improvement program for the area in which The Breaks are embraced.

Once the Dark and Bloody Ground, Kentucky today is fairly teeming with reawakening. Her people are hastening to bring from hidden coves things once discarded as fogey. “We aim for this generation to know how thrifty and apt their forbears were,” is frequently heard from their 302
lips. In historic Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park (U. S. 25), near London, there is an old cider press. Far back in 1790 William Pearl, one of the early settlers in Laurel County, made and set up the crude press for making cider, or brandy if he chose. The press rests on a stone base five feet wide. Happily, Pearl’s great-grandson was wise enough to preserve the relic and present it to the park. Within the park also is Frazier’s Knob, the highest point in the state of Kentucky. On the banks of Little Laurel flowing through the park one may see an old-time watermill in full operation. And if you have a bit of imagination you’ll wait your turn and take home a poke of meal and have cornbread for supper.

Through this region—now The Valley of Parks—Boone blazed his famous trace and Governor Shelby built the first wagon road through the wilderness from infant Kentucky to Mother Virginia. Along the way a pleasant reminder of an almost forgotten past is that of the Wilderness Road Weavers busy at loom and wheel. They process cloth from wool and flax before your eyes and explain with care the art of making homemade dyes from herb and bark. An older woman pauses with shuttle in hand. “See the hollow tree off yonder, a mother and her babe hid there to escape the Indians. And the cabin over there with the picketin’ fence around, that’s our library now and we’ve got all sorts of curiosities there too.” A visit within reveals the curiosities to be relics of early home arts and mountain industries.

Cumberland Falls, Kentucky’s Million Dollar State Park, of 593 acres, was a gift of T. Coleman du Pont and family of Delaware; its chief attraction is the Falls, once called Shawnee, with the profile of an Indian plainly to be seen in jutting rock over which the roaring cataract plunges 303
near Corbin and Williamsburg. In this once Dark and Bloody Ground there is amazing beauty; on July 1st, 1941, Mammoth Cave, the twenty-sixth National Park, was dedicated with imposing ceremonies, adding another link to the Park-to-Park plan. If it had not been for the saltpeter from this cave the Battle of New Orleans would have been lost, for from this mineral gunpowder that saved the day was made. So vast is one of its caverns, the Snowball Dining Room, 267 feet underground, that hundreds of members of the Associated Press held a dinner there in 1940. Mammoth Cave is reached by U. S. Highway 70, west from Cave City, and one hundred miles south of Louisville. The vast national park of which it is a part is watered by the Green River, known to early explorers.

Kentucky’s most talked-of cave in recent years is that in which Floyd Collins lost his life in 1925. The tons of rock in Sand Cave under which he was trapped did not cause his death, however. Collins died of pneumonia. His body now lies buried in Crystal Cave, which was Floyd’s favorite of all those he had spent his life in exploring.

One travels cross country from Crystal Cave to the Blue Grass on Russell Cave Road, along with some of the 45,000 other people who have come within a single year to see Man o’ War, the most famous race horse of all times. “The Blue Grass region of Kentucky,” says Prof. E. S. Good, head of the department of animal husbandry of the University of Kentucky, “is the premier breeding ground for light horses because of its ample rainfall, mild climate, abundance of sunshine and a soil rich in calcium and phosphorus, so necessary to produce superior bone, muscle and nerve.”

Though mountain men are proud to own a good pair of mules and will praise the merits of this lowly beast without stint, they generally know or care little about blooded race horses. They 304
take pride in less glamorous possessions. For instance, they are proud that in their midst the McGuffey Readers were still taught by an aged schoolmaster in defiance of legislation which barred the classics and that the little log school in which he taught is the first and only shrine in Kentucky to the illustrious educator, Dr. William Holmes McGuffey, who compiled the Eclectic Readers which gave the children of America a different, brighter outlook upon life back in those dark days of Indian warfare. The McGuffey Log School shrine stands not far from the mouth of Big Sandy River in Boyd County. Each year hundreds of McGuffey enthusiasts make a pilgrimage to the humble shrine of learning.

“We’ve got no end of fine sights to see.” Mountain folk are justly boastful. “Down at Bardstown is the Talbott Tavern built 162 years ago, one of the first such taverns where travelers could tarry west of the Alleghenies. On the walls there are the marks of bullets left by the pistols of Judge John Rowan, who fought a duel with Dr. Chambers and mortally wounded him. There’s Audubon Memorial State Park with all manner of paintings, books, and pictures left by Audubon, kin of a French King, who spent many a happy day roaming the hills of Kentucky and studying the ways of wild birds. And no country can claim a greater man than was born right here at Hodgenville, and even if we didn’t have a memorial built out of stone to Abraham Lincoln he will live in our hearts as long as the world stands.” The mountaineer who sings the praises of his native land eyes his listener attentively. “Bless you, folks are so friendly and kind of heart in Kentucky they even have a refuge for turkeys. There is a sanctuary for this native American fowl in the Kentucky Woodlands Wildlife Refuge just west of Canton. And to make 305

sure the wild creatures do not starve there are vast unharvested crops grown on the cleared land and left for them to feed upon. Here too, if travelers will drive slowly along the wooded trails, they are most sure to come upon a startled deer, for there are more than 2000 roaming in the woodland."

Along with other traditions there survives in Kentucky the medieval rite of blessing the hounds which takes place usually on the first Saturday in November. In his clerical robes the Bishop of Lexington, in the heart of the Blue Ridge, performs the ceremony much in the manner of the prelates of ages past. With proper solemnity the bishop bestows upon each huntsman the medal of St. Hubert, patron of the hunt, while the gay-coated hunters stand with bowed heads and the hounds, eager for the hunt, move restlessly about the feet of their masters.

Across the Blue Ridge in the Carolinas fox hunting and horseback riding are sports as popular as in Kentucky. But above all the things in which the people of the Carolina mountains lead are their matchless handicrafts, weaving, spinning, and their skill in play-making.

Who hasn't heard of "Prof." Koch, Director of the Carolina Playmakers and of the group's plays? And the thing about the Playmakers which sets them apart is that they are chiefly of the mountains. Their plays are made out of the life of mountain folk. Archibald Henderson declares, "Koch is the arch-foe of the cut-and-dried, the academic, the specifically prescribed. All his life he has demanded room for the random, outlet for the unexpressed, free play for the genius." Nowadays he travels by caravan with his Carolina Playmakers from coast to coast that the world may see for itself what genius unrestrained can turn out. If one wishes to see them, in their own 306
setting, which thousands of us do every year, there is The Playmakers' Theatre at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the first theater building in America to be dedicated to the making of its own native drama.

"This love of drama is in the blood of Carolinians," they themselves will tell you. "Get three of them together and before you can say Jack Robinson they're building a play. A folk play, each one with an idea, a situation. Why, right over to Kernersville in North Carolina the first little theater was born. And say, if you want to hear ballad singers, stop wherever you're a-mind to in the Blue Ridge in the Carolinas and keep your ears open. There's a fellow over on South Turkey Creek, little more than a dozen miles as the crow flies from Asheville, and you'll hear the finest singing of old-time ballads you ever listened to. Mostly menfolks like best to sing. Womenfolks turn to the loom, particularly in North Carolina."

A visit to the Weave Shop at Saluda convinces the visitor of the skill of mountain women. Fabrics of unbelievable beauty are turned out at handlooms and it is mountain women who lead in the work.

Much has been written on the subject of handicrafts but perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of the diversified subject is Allen Eaton's *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*.

Through Allen Eaton's knowledge of handicrafts and his untiring efforts a great service has been rendered the mountain people of the Blue Ridge in marketing their wares. For he has been instrumental in organizing a handicraft guild which serves the entire southern mountain region. The co-operating units cover various phases of handicraft. The Shenandoah Community Workers of Bird Haven specialize in toy making, while The Jack Knife Shop of Berea College, the 307
Woodcrafters and Carvers of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, the Whittlers at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, embrace most every type of handicraft in their output which is the work of mountain boys and girls.

It was to mountain people that George Washington looked for hope and help in the hour of our country's need, and two later presidents held the same opinion. The mother and the wife of a president of these United States have done likewise.

One winter day more than a score of years ago a group of children huddled about the pot-bellied stove in a little log church in the mountains of Georgia. They had trudged through snow and mud and a cold, biting wind to reach this one-room church house. Though the older folk were eager to teach the children lessons of Scripture, few of them could read or write. A mountain child, like every other child, delights in hearing an older person read, whether it be a make-believe story or a real story from the Bible. "Wisht you could read the Word," an eager little girl this winter day said to the old woman who, though she could neither read nor write, was doing her best to explain from a small colored leaflet the meaning of the Sunday School lesson.

The story reached the ears of a lady not far away. After that she began reading Bible stories to the mountain children gathered at a little log cabin near her home. "Martha Berry didn't need eye specs to see how eager the children were for learning," one of her mountain friends remarked, "and then and there she began to ruminate through her mind a way to help them help themselves. 'Not to be ministered unto, but to minister,' that was what Martha Berry said 308
from the very first and that is still the motto of the great institution that has steadily grown up from the humble beginning in a little one-room log house."

It is an unusual institution of learning with a campus equally unique, for in its 25,000 acres are a forest, a mountain, and a lake and more than one hundred buildings which were not only erected by Berry students, but built from materials also made by them. Here mountain boys and girls express the fine spirit of independence inherited from their forbears. Once they enter the Gate of Opportunity, they *earn* their education. The mountain boy, with his carpentry, brick-making, stock-raising, hand-carving, matches his skill in friendly rivalry with the girl, in her spinning and weaving, making dyes and canning fruits. In one year the girls canned 50,000 gallons of fruit grown within the boundary of the Berry Schools.

Boys and girls of the Georgia mountains need not despair nor be backward while the “Sunday Lady of Possum Trot” keeps open the Gate of Opportunity to the Berry Schools.

“There’s a heap of change here in these mountains for our children. If a child’s afflicted in its nether limbs, it don’t need to lay helpless no more, a misery to itself and everyone else. There’s the waters of Warm Springs and doctors with knowing that are there to help them on foot,” a mountain mother told me last winter when I stopped at her cabin. “Take the night,” she urged. “You can get a soon start in the morning, if you choose.” I accepted her hospitality and she told me much of her early life there and of crippled children of the mountains who had been restored through bloodless surgery. Of one boy in particular she told who for long years had never walked a step until he had been brought to the healing salt waters. “He can drive a car now and 309
climb a mountain on foot. He drove an old couple that had bought a new car all the way from Warm Springs plum acrost the State of Georgia and back again so’s he could travel the Franklin D. Roosevelt Highway. It give him something to brag about when he got back home.” The old woman lifted her eyes to the hills reflectively. “There have been a heap of people in this country who stood in the light of their afflicted children claiming it was the Good Lord’s will that they were so and that it was a deep-dyed sin to try to change them. Some claimed it was a sin against the Holy Ghost to carve upon their crooked little limbs and shed their life’s blood even though it might make them to walk. Folks with such notions as that are plum in benighted darkness. But times have changed and it’s learning and good roads that make it. Nohow, there are doctors now with a heap of learning who can straighten twisted joints of crippled children and never shed their life’s blood. Not nary drop!” The old woman’s eyes widened with incredulity. “I’ve seen crippled children packed away on a slide plum helpless and come back home on foot as spry as a wren and never a scar on their flesh. They’ve got knowing ways off yonder to Warm Springs where the doctors and nurse women, to lend a hand, straighten out the twisted little bodies of many a crippled child. They do say it is a sight to the world how them little crippled fellers can cavort around in the salty waters in no time, playful as minner fish in a sunny mountain brook. And they never shed a drop of their life’s blood. So you see there’s always a way around a mountain if you can’t climb over it. And by these new ways of learning the doctors and the nurse women are not breaking faith with the belief of mountain people. It’s a great and 310
a glorious gospel, I tell you!”

If you climb to the top of a peak in Dug Down Mountains, a spur of the Blue Ridge that dwindles to a height of 1000 feet in southeastern Alabama, and take a look at the state—provided the binoculars are strong enough-you’ll see why there’s a saying down in that country to the effect that “Alabama could sleep with her head resting upon the iron-studded hills of her mineral district, her arms stretched across fields of food and raiment, and her feet bathing in the placid waters of Mobile Bay.”

This Cornucopia of the South is not sleeping, however; she is on her feet and bestirring herself and aware of her almost limitless resources.

“She could dig beneath her surface and find practically every chemical element required in the prosecution of modern war.... She could fire her guns with 7,529,090 pounds of explosives produced annually in her mineral mines.... In her hour of victory, she could declare herself the Queen of the Commonwealth, mold her diadem with gold from Talladega, and embellish it with rubies from the bed of the Coosa that drains the Dug Down foothills of the Blue Ridge.”

In short, her native sons like to boast, “Alabama could isolate herself from all the world and live happily forever after.”

And lest they forget the past, the first White House of the Confederacy, where Jefferson Davis lived and ruled, still stands, a grim reminder of the old South.

How amazed the pioneer dwellers of the Blue Ridge would be if they could stalk down the mountain side and take a look at what Uncle Sam has been doing the past eight years! Strange 311
words too would fall upon their ears, modern-made to suit modern things. What with good roads and autos, hotels have sprung up thick as mushrooms; so have motels. There’s the Zooseum, combining living curiosities and relics. Pleaz Mosley got together in a corner of his farm a lot of Indian relics, petrified oddities, and a few rare varmints, a five-legged calf and a one-eyed ’possum, and housed them in a shack down by the new road that cut through his bottom land and drew sightseers day after day.

“But Pleaz’s Zooseum can’t hold a candle to the curiosities down in the Holston and Tennessee River country,” his neighbors say. “Looks like they just naturally turned loose the briny deep in that country. When they started in on the job old Grandpap up and spoke his mind. Said he, ‘Sich carryings on is destructuous of the Master’s handiwork and I don’t countenance it.’ He’d set there by his log fire in his house all his endurin’ life. The fire had never went out on that hearth since he was borned and he told the goverment he didn’t aim the embers should die down whilst he lived. Well, sir, to pacify the old man they up and moved him, house, log fire and all, up higher in the mountains and him a-settin’ right there by the fire all the time. Now he can look down to them mighty waters and them public works with his door open and never jolt his chair away from the hearth.”

If Daniel Boone could retrace his steps along the Holston and Tennessee Rivers perhaps he would gape, too flabbergasted to utter a word. Or he might ask in dismay, “What’s become of my elbow room?” The country he once roamed with gun and dog has been transformed into a mighty flooded area to make way for the world’s largest project of its kind. At first much was 312
said back and forth about the Tennessee Valley Authority. Some viewed it with a dubious eye,

called it names—a New Deal experiment, a merchant of electricity, a threat to private ownership of business, or again merely a new series of letters in alphabetical government, the TVA. To isolated mountain folk who came to look as time went on, it was the plum biggest public works they had ever set eyes on.

Eight years after it was begun—by the middle of 1941—with war threatening the civilized world, the TVA has become a defense arm.

Uncle Sam at once cast his discerning eye down Tennessee way and his National Defense Advisory Committee designated the TVA as one of its defense industries, and an appropriation of $79,800,000 was granted the Authority, and a call from the defense power program went out for TVA "to add to its system of ten multi-purpose dams the Cherokee Power Dam on the Holston River, to build another near the Watts Bar Dam and to advance work on the Fort Loudoun Dam on the Tennessee River."

"About the only things unchanged are the caves under the earth and the forests, I reckon," an old mountaineer observes. "They won't never dig away them Great Smoky Mountains, I'm satisfied, though they've got a roadway on the very top from Newfound Gap Highway to Clingman's Dome. And they've got what's left of the Cherokees scrouged off to theirselves in Qualla Indian Reservation."

Wise and far-seeing men have looked to the preservation of much of nature's beauty through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which embraces Little Pigeon Gorge, and Chimney Tops, which command a breathtaking view of the surrounding country.

"My grandfather journeyed miles on foot over these mountains," a young man told me one day 313
when I tarried at the Mountaineer's Museum in Gatlinburg on U. S. Highway 71. "Look over yonder is Le Conte, the Grand-pappy of Old Smoky Mountain as we say here in Tennessee." He turned about in the other direction. "And off there the rushing waters of Little Pigeon turn an old-time mill wheel."

Leaving the alluring sights of Little Pigeon I turned the nose of my antiquated car toward U. S. Highway 25E to visit Cudo's Cave. It is electrically lighted and bright as day. A cave that appears to be an endless chain of rooms. Within are all manner of rock formations, a Palace, a great Pipe Organ, even a reproduction of Capitol Dome not made by mortal hand; Petrified Forests, Cascades that seem to be covered with ice, and a Pyramid said to be eighty-five million years old. And in the midst of these ageless wonders the names of Civil War soldiers carved on the stone walls.

"If all this had been on top of the earth," my mountaineer guide declared, "destructuous man would have laid it waste long ago. Look about," he urged. "There's every sort of varmint by the Master's Hand, from a 'possum to an elephant, and even the likeness of the American flag."

Outside the caves which lie under three states, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, you look down upon the town of Cumberland Gap to the right of which are remains of Civil War trenches.

"There are wonders no end to be seen around this country," mountain people say, "and things maybe never thought of anywhere else."

Perhaps that is not an unlikely statement, considering the stirring event a few years ago that 314
took place at Dayton, Tennessee, when Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan argued the question of evolution pro and con. Or when you know that at the little town of Model across the Tennessee River from Calloway County, Kentucky, a quiet minister by the name of James M. Thomas, prints his little paper from his own handmade type on his own handmade press. It is a tiny paper called *The Model Star* and it reaches the far corners of the earth. Most of its content is of a religious nature, though there are a few advertisements. While it brings the minister little in financial return he finds his recompense in the enthusiasm of readers scattered from Pitcairn Island to Cairo, Bucharest, and Shanghai.

Tennesseans have a way of doing unusual things. And they are a religious people, especially those who have spent their lives in mountain coves. There's Sergeant York. He admits he sowed his wild oats in his youth. "We drinked and gambled," he says, "and we cussed and fit." But when this giant mountaineer's eyes were opened to the evil of his ways, after the death of his father, Alvin C. York forsook his old habits once and for all. When the World War came he declared himself a conscientious objector. His church—the Church of Christ in Christian Union—held that war was a sin. York had a terrific struggle deciding his duty between God and patriotism. He loved his God. He loved his country. He made every effort to obtain exemption because he firmly believed it a sin to fight and to kill, even for the sake of one's country. But for all that, he could not gain exemption. Whereupon York went alone into the mountains and fervently prayed for guidance. When the voice of God pointed the way he followed, with the result that all the world knows.

"You might call my escape from death purely a matter of luck, but I know different," he says. "It 315
was faith in God that kept me safe. I prayed that day alone on the mountain and asked Him to bring me back home alive and well and He did. I knowed He would. That's what faith in God will do for a man."

Alvin York is a true mountain man. He seeks neither praise nor self-glory. Upon returning from the World War he spurned a fortune in pictures and vaudeville appearances, refusing steadfastly to commercialize his war record. And with the same determination he declined to sell out to small politicians who tried to use him when he undertook to raise funds to start a school for mountain boys and girls. Knowing the need of the young people of his Tennessee

mountains, York has made his life purpose to give them “a heap o’ larnin’.” This he has continued to do year after year through the York Agricultural School near Jamestown, Tennessee. Mountain folk call it Jimtown. Now there’s a highway running through the town called York Highway.

Sergeant York likes to sing. He “takened lessons in Byrdstown,” and being especially fond of singing hymns, he acquired the name of “The Singing Elder.” He teaches a Sunday School class and did even before he went to war. He admits smilingly that his fight with “small politicians” who wanted to use him and his war record was a worse battle than that of the Argonne Forest. Alvin York married his childhood sweetheart, Gracie Williams, upon returning from war, and the Governor of Tennessee performed the ceremony at Pall Mall where the mountain hero was born. He is the father of seven children. For some time he served as project superintendent at a CCC camp in the Tennessee mountains. He is president emeritus of the school he founded and has written his life’s story in a simple, straightforward way, with never the slightest hint of boastfulness. 316

When it came to putting in parts of official records and commendation of his heroism, Sergeant York did so reluctantly. “But it has to be put in, I reckon.” He finally had to give in.

Sergeant York’s achievement, capturing single-handed 132 Germans, killing 20 others, and destroying 35 machine-gun nests stands unparalleled.

This tall, red-headed, freckled mountain man says modestly that he always was a pretty good shot and that he kept in practice by hunting in the Tennessee mountains, shooting turkeys and going to shooting matches that required a pretty steady nerve to hit center of a criss-cross mark.

“I’m happiest here in the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf,” says the Singing Elder, “here in Fentress County just across the Kentucky state line, once the happy hunting ground of Creeks and Cherokees. Hit’s the place I love best with my family, my dogs and my gun. Hit’s where I belong.”

Looking backward, history shows that mountain men, such as Alvin York, have always led their countrymen in time of war, as I have pointed out earlier. In the Civil War the southern highlands sent 180,000 riflemen to the Union Army. In the Spanish-American War they rushed to the defense of our country. In the World War, Breathitt County, known for its fighting blood, had no draft quota, so many of her valiant sons hastened to volunteer. Though mountain people have suffered the stigma of family feuds, they have lived to see old rancors forgotten. Hatfields and McCoys, Martins and Tollivers shoulder their muskets and march side-by-side when they have to defend their native land. 317

The Big Sandy country is still filled with patriots. In Floyd County, the father of eleven sons is not worried about the draft, according to the *Big Sandy News*, November 15, 1940: “Frank Stamper, Prestonsburg Spanish-American War veteran, isn’t worried about the draft ‘catching’ any of his eleven boys, six of whom are of draft age. Five of the bra’ laddies already are infantrymen in the U. S. Army—enlisted men. The sixth, Harry, from whom the family has not heard in nine years, may also be in the army now, and not subject to conscription later. Two of his sons—Everett of Jackhorn, Kentucky, and Avery of Ronda, West Virginia, were in the World War as volunteers, and when you take in consideration that Mr. Stamper himself was a volunteer in the Spanish-American War, it makes the adult population of the family about unanimous in the matter of patriotism. The five sons in the army now are: Frank, Jr., Paul, Damon, John and Charles. Mr. Stamper is the father of twenty-seven children, seventeen of whom are living.”

When Singing Comes in, Fighting Goes Out

Mountain folk, especially those who have had the misfortune of being mixed in troubles (feuds to the outside world) believe earnestly that “when singing comes in, fighting goes out.” “Look at the Hatfields and McCoys,” they say. “They make music together now at the home of one side and now at the home of them on t’other side. They sit side-by-side on the bench at the Singing Gathering down on the Mayo Trail come the second Sunday in June every year. Off yonder nigh the mouth of Big Sandy, across the mountains which once were stained with the blood of both families. What’s more, Little Melissy Hatfield and Little Bud McCoy even sing together a ballad that tells of the love of Rosanna McCoy for Devil Anse’s son Jonse. And their elders sing hymn tunes long cherished in the mountain church, whilst tens of thousands gathered on the hills all around about listen with silent rejoicing over the peace that has come to the once sorry enemies.” 318

To be sure, there is the singing of folk songs handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. When the mountain people are asked the origin of their music, the usual reply is “My grandsir larnt me this fiddle tune,” or “My Granny larnt me this song-ballet.”

Since mountain people have brought their music out of the coves and hollows for the world to hear through their Singing Gathering and Festivals, the nation is fast becoming aware of the importance of folk music in the life of Americans today. Great singers have taken up the simple songs of our fathers. “Wipe out foes of morale with music,” says Lucy Monroe, New York’s “Star

Spangled Banner Soprano," director of patriotic music for RCA-Victor, when she sang on September 11, 1941, before the National Federation of Music Clubs in New York. "Let's make certain that when the present crisis is passed, music will have done its full job of defense," she said enthusiastically. The singer urged federation members to become soldiers of music. "Let us enlist together to form a great army of music!" she urged. Miss Monroe was commissioned by Mayor LaGuardia to devote her efforts to the cause of music for the Office of Civilian Defense. Whereupon she outlined a four-point program: 1. To visit large plants and industrial centers connected with defense work to give musical programs and to suggest that the plants begin 319
each day's activities with playing the Star-spangled Banner—to tell the men what they are working for. 2. To conduct community sings in large cities. 3. To collect phonograph records for the boys in army camps, establishing central depots in every locality in the country. 4. To give talks, with song illustrations, on the history of the United States of America in colleges, high schools, women's clubs, and music clubs.

Though some may see folk song, the basis of all music, endangered by motion pictures, Kurt Schindler, authority on ancient European customs and collector of folk music in other lands, believes the danger lies in another direction. "The young students, the modernists, in their great desire to keep up with the times wish to kill the old things."

All the forces working in America to preserve folk song should share Kurt Schindler's fears. The press is cognizant of the farflung effort throughout the land. The *Atlanta Journal* (September 19, 1928) says, "The collection and preservation of mountain folk music is a singularly gracious work and one of rare value to history. Collected in its natural environment, it is perforce authentic both in tune and idiom, and sincere collectors are not content with this alone—they complete the record by tracing the songs to their origins. Such is a most gracious work and one which lovers of beauty, whether music or in legend or in local history, throughout the South, would do well to imitate."

Far removed from the metropolitan area where great singers interpret the simple songs of our forbears and urge the necessity of their preservation, an untrained mountain minstrel is lending his every effort to aid not only in conserving but in correlating as well the folk lore of the Blue 320
Ridge Country. He is a kinsman of Devil Anse Hatfield and lives just around the mountain from where the old warrior lies buried. "Sid Hatfield never was mixed up in the troubles in no shape nor fashion," anyone can tell you. "He'd not foir a gun if you laid one in his hand. But just give him a fiddle! Why, Sid Hatfield is the music-makinest fellow that ever laid bow to strings. What's more he puts a harp in his mouth and plays it at the same time he's sawin' the bow. I've seen him and hear-ed him, many's the time."

And so have thousands of others. For Sid Hatfield spends his spare time, when he's not working for the Appalachian Power Company in Logan County, West Virginia, making music first at one gathering, then another. Sid's repertoire is almost limitless. He plays any fiddle tune from Big Sandy to Bonaparte's Retreat. And when it comes to the mouth harp, Sid just naturally can't be beat. "I love the old tunes," he says, "and they must not die. You and I can help them to live. Let old rancors die, but not our native song."

To that end he has become a prime mover in a folksong and folklore conservation movement called American Folkways Association. "There are a lot of McCoys," he says, "who can pick a banjo and sing as fine a ditty as you ever heard. There's Bud McCoy over on Levisa Fork. Never saw his betters when it comes to picking the banjo. We've played together a whole day at a stretch and never played the same tune twice. We just stop long enough to eat dinner and then we go at it again. Bud's teaching his grandson, Little Bud, and he's not yet five year old. Little Bud can step a hornpipe too. Peert as a cricket!" A slow breaking smile lights Sid's open countenance. "Reckon you've heard of our Association," and, not giving anyone time to answer, 321
Sid is off on the subject nearest and dearest to his heart. "We've got the finest Association in the country. Got a nephew of Fiddling Bob Taylor in our Association and by next summer we aim to hold a Singing Gathering down in his country—the Watauga country in Tennessee. Folsom Taylor, that's his name and he's living now in the far end of the Blue Ridge in Maryland. He helped us with the Singing Gathering we held in the Cumberlands in Maryland this past summer. We've got another helper down in Tennessee. His name is Grady Snead. He was in the World War and about lost his singing voice but he's not lost any of his spirit for mountain music and old-time ways. Why, every summer ever since Grady got back from the war he's gathered his people around him in Snead's Grove—he owns quite a few acres down in Tennessee—and they have an old-time picnic and they have hymn singing and ballad singing and fiddle music. This past summer our Association joined in with them at the Snead picnic and you never saw the like that day in Snead's Grove. People thick as bees and pleased as could be. We started off a-singing a good old-fashioned hymn all together and that put everybody in good heart. Never saw such a picnic in all my born days. There's nothing like a good old-fashioned all-day picnic to make friends among people and then mix in a lot of good old-time music. That's what Americans were brought up on and that's what they're going to live on more and more through these troubled hours and as time goes on."

That day at Snead's Grove, Sid Hatfield told them about the Association and how already different organizations had united with it. He told of a preacher over in Maryland who had joined in whole-heartedly. "He's adopted the great out-of-doors for his temple in which to 322
worship with song and prayer. Robinson is his name. Reverend Felix Robinson, as fine a singer and as fine a preacher as you'd ever want to sit under."

Then Sid put down his fiddle and his mouth harp and drawing from his coat pocket a crumpled paper, he began again. "My friends, I want to read you this piece in the *Chicago Daily News*.

This is the place to read it. We ought to be warned about what can happen in this country to our music, by what has happened to some of our people. Though maybe sometime it's been for the best. This piece was writ by a mighty knowing man. His name is Robert J. Casey and he flew from Chicago for his paper the *Chicago Daily News* to hear with his own ears the music of the mountains from the lips of mountain singers at Traipsin' Woman cabin on the Mayo Trail the second Sunday in June, 1938."

There was a moment's breathless silence over the great gathering there in Snead's Grove. The look of fear and apprehension gave way to that of eagerness and hope as Devil Anse Hatfield's kinsman read with quiet dignity:

"'One breathes a sigh for the Hatfields and McCoys who maintain the Democratic majority in cemeteries along the West Virginia line. One voices a word of commendation for the Hatfields and the McCoys who drive taxi-cabs in Ashland or run quiet, respectable and legal beer parlors in Huntington. And looking from one group to the other, one realizes that something has happened to the hill country.

"'A person of imagination standing on the tree-shaded porch of the Traipsin' Woman cabin up in Lonesome Hollow probably still can hear echoes of "the singing gathering" which only a few hours ago demonstrated the essential durability of the hill folks.... Where a day or two ago there 323
was only a neutral interest in such proceedings, now people are talking of Elizabethan culture preserved completely for a matter of centuries by people who lived on the wrong side of the tracks, just a few rods from the fence of the rolling mills.

"'There is a tendency in some quarters to look upon the sing-festival as a permanent and predictable community asset. But that is because the sophisticated and urban population is ignoring the present status of the McCoys and the Hatfields, as for many years it has ignored the crack-voiced "ballet" singers and the left-handed virtuosi in its own backyard.'"

Sid Hatfield paused in his reading to say a few words on his own. "There is one, not calling any names, who discovered a forgotten England in the Kentucky uplands." He turned again to read from the paper. "'One who set down the words of the amazing ballads and studied music in order to capture the changeless arrangements for psaltery, dulcimer and sakbut, who has no such illusions. The music of the hills today is a thin echo of tunes that were sung on the village greens in Shakespeare's time. Tomorrow it will be gone!'" Sid Hatfield's voice lifted in warning. "'And with it will vanish the early English idiom of the hill folks—their costumes, their customs, their dances, the singing ritual of their weddings. Pretty soon there aren't going to be any more hill folk—if indeed, there are any now.

"'"The Hatfields and McCoys, they were reckless mountain boys," whose history is now as stale as that of the Capone mob. Their feud, which ... threatened to provoke a civil war between two states, gave rise to the general belief in the lasting endurance of the hill dwellers. A race must 324
be hardy as the ragweed when it could not be exterminated even by its own patient effort. The tenantry of the flatlands might be excused for believing that a special Providence intended it to survive, despite poverty, malnutrition, bad housing and wasting disease forever and ever.

"'And so it might have survived, for the hill people had "the habit of standing." They had set a precedent of fertility and hardihood and the will to live for a matter of centuries.... But there had come influences over which not even the carefully nurtured stubbornness of 300 years could prevail.... The railroad and the concrete highway and the automobile and the black tunnels of the coal mine.

"'... The day of isolated communities and isolated culture in the United States is already past.... The hill folk have been known to the flatland people chiefly for feuds and moonshine. Perhaps tempers are no less quick, but it's less trouble to get to court and have grievances adjudicated according to law. And the music is going—and the traditional dances. It is one of the defects of all educational systems that they make it easier for a person to forget by removing the necessity for his remembering.'"

Sid Hatfield again voiced his own observations. "Time was when old folks could recall every word of hundreds of ballads." He turned once more to read from the newspaper in his hand. "'... and every note of a music whose disregard for melodic rule made it exceedingly difficult to remember. Now, when such things can be written down, no "grandsir" will bother to repeat them to the youngins and the youngins will get their music from the radio. By that time there 325
will be no doubt that Queen Elizabeth is dead.'"

Devil Anse's kinsman surveyed his listeners. "My friends, we've got a-bound, me and you and you," he singled out a lad here a man, a woman there, "to put our shoulders to the wheel and save our old ways and our old music."

Then he told about the American Folkways Association and its purpose. "We aim to unify efforts to conserve and cultivate the traditions and customs of the Blue Ridge Country where conditions are ideal for a renewed emphasis on living a simple and natural life ... to preserve the past and present expressions of isolated peoples in the Southern Appalachians which are untainted by any form of insincerity or make-believe. There is growing interest among city-bred people in the folk-ways, and through research and actual experiences, they are learning to appreciate the simple folk-life that is still intact."

Sid, like Devil Anse, understands crowd psychology, though neither calls it by that name. Sid had the attention of his hearers and he told them more. "We're getting our eyes open more every day to the boundless treasures in America. People all through the Blue Ridge don't aim to stand by and see things disappear because new ways have come in. They've started all sorts of

gatherings and festivals to keep alive the things that mean America!”

With quick gesture he enumerated upon his fingers as he named some of them: “There’s the Forest Festival held in October at Elkins, West Virginia, with a pretty mountain maid for its Queen; the Tobacco Festival in Shelbyville, Kentucky, that pays homage to the leading product of the Blue Grass country, next to the race horse, of course; there’s the Mountain Laurel Festival at Pineville, Kentucky, in May, glorifying the beauty and profusion of the mountain 326
flower; the Virginia Apple Blossom Festival in April in the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester, Virginia—a wilderness of blossoms that has made beautiful a once lonely valley; the Rhododendron Festival in Webster Springs, West Virginia, in July, that vies in charm with a like event in Kentucky; the Sweet Potato Festival in Paris, Tennessee, that pays tribute to the yam; the American Folk Song Festival in the foothills of Kentucky. Then there’s the Snead Picnic that our good friend Grady Snead has been carrying on every summer ever since he got back from the war across the waters; there’s the Mountain Choir Festival over in Oakland, Maryland, in the month of August, when hundreds of mountain boys and girls gather together to sing hymns and old ballads too; there’s the Arcadian Folk Festival and the Poet’s Fair and the Arcadian Guild all bunched together at Hot Springs National Park and McFadden Three Sisters Springs where down in the Ozark Country folks welcome the advent of ‘the Moon of Painted Leaves’ and pattern new dreams in the valley of pastoral fancy, listen to the Pipes of Pan, meet old friends, and make new ones in a sylvan environment, where poetry slides down every moonbeam. Every sort of gathering right where it belongs, where it was cradled through all these long generations.”

Sid paused a moment for second wind. “When we look about we’re bound to own this is a mighty changing world. Time was when the mountain people rode to the gatherings in Brushy Hollow in jolt wagons. They kept it up a while, loading the whole family in the jolt wagon. But times have changed.... A body has to sort o’ keep up with the times, like Prof. Koch. Bless you, he loads his whole pack and passel of boys and girls in a bus and packs them hither and yon 327
’crost the country to show out with their play-making. The Carolina Playmakers just naturally fetch the mountain to Mohammed.” Sid flung wide his hands, brought them slowly together. “To get all such folks to work together that’s why we formed the American Folkways Association. What’s more we’ve got us a magazine to tell about what we’ve done and aim to do—the *Arcadian Life* magazine, with our good friend Otto Ernest Rayburn as editor, ’way down in the Ozarks.” Sid Hatfield smiled pleasantly. “There’s no excuse for folks not being neighborly nowadays. No matter where they live, what with good roads and the automobile—we’ve just got a-bound to be neighborly. To sing together, to make music together, to show out our crops and our posies and our handiwork together. Here in Snead’s Grove today is the third time we’ve bore witness that our Association is not just a theory. We made our first bow in the Kentucky foothills in June, the second in Maryland in August, and now in Tennessee. In October we aim to join hands and hearts and our music in Arcadia under the Autumn moon.”

That day in Snead’s Grove in Tennessee they wanted Sid Hatfield to keep right on but taking a squint at the sun sinking in the west, he said in conclusion, “I’ve got a long ways to travel back to the West Virginia mountains but I hope we’ll all be together again here in the Grove next summer, this day a year, the Lord being willing.”

Vanishing Trail

Perhaps it is merely the result of evolutionary process, economic rather than intentional, that man has wiped out many reminders of the past; that the forest primeval has passed to make 328
room for blue grass, tasseled corn, and tobacco; that forts and blockhouses gave way to the settler’s log house encircled by a garden patch; that the windowless cabin has gone to make room for the weather-boarded frame of many rooms and glass windows; that the village has vanished for the town—the industrial center.

The Wilderness Trail broken first by mastodon, then panther and bear and frightened deer, has been transformed into a modern highway. The Shawnee Trail along which Indians lurked and tomahawked white men has become Mayo Trail, taking its name from a country schoolteacher. He was a far-seeing man, who stumbled sometimes hopelessly along the lonely way, when he needed help to bring out of the bowels of the earth the treasure in coal he knew to be hidden there. Mayo Trail is an amazing engineering feat that connects mountains with level land. Limestone Trail in Mason County has left along its course only a vestige of vegetation to remind us it was once the path of buffalo and Indian. To motorists hurrying onward it is merely U. S. 60 that leads to another city.

The rugged, unbroken path once pursued by the lad Gabriel Arthur, a Cherokee captive, called on Hutchins Map in 1778 the “War Path to the Cuttawa Country,” uniting today with the Wilderness Trails, has become the open gateway to the West. Boone’s Trace, or Boone’s Path, leading from Virginia through Cumberland Gap, to the Ohio River, still is called Boone’s Path. Since 1909 it has been a national motorway, being a part of the Dixie Highway which runs from Michigan to Florida. It was over this same path that Governor Duncannon of Virginia built the first wagon road in 1790. During the Civil War the region of the Gap was fortified and occupied by Confederate and Union soldiers in turn. Later, in 1889, the first railroad entered the Gap. 329
Today Skyline Highway—U. S. 25 and 58—leads from the saddle of the historic Gap to the top of

Pinnacle Mountain, commanding a view of six states, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama.

And the scene has changed.

Spring has come to the Blue Ridge. The hum of industry echoes along once lonely creeks, through quiet hollows. We see no more the oxcart lumbering, creaking laboriously along, higher and higher up the rugged mountain side. The latest model motor glides swiftly over the smooth surface, winding its way upward and upward. Off yonder the TVA has harnessed the waterpower of the Holston and Tennessee, made a great valley to burst into a miracle of man's genius. Modern industrial plants steam along the banks.

Good roads, the automobile, schoolhouses, the airplane have wiped out all barriers between mountain and plain. The Blue Ridge casts a long, long shadow across blossoming valleys. The mountaineer of yesterday with his Anglo-Saxon speech of Elizabeth's time, his primitive plow and loom, has vanished before the juggernaut of progress. But the children of the hills are blessed with a rich, a priceless heritage in tradition, song, and love of independence that will not die as long as mountains stand and men of the mountains survive to defend and preserve it.

INDEX

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