

The town of Cumberland Gap.

BEYOND THE GAP

THE BREEDING GROUND OF FEUDS*

BY C. T. REVERE

MY introduction to the Kentucky mountaineer came on a hazy September afternoon two years ago. I was making a foot traverse alone through Harlan and Perry counties in advance of the regular surveying parties. I plead the rashness of youth for undertaking the task singlehanded, and had I known as much about the country and its people as I learned afterward I might not have tackled the job with as much composure as I displayed at the time.

Lugging a transit over the mountains of eastern Kentucky is not child's play. Climbing in the Rockies is easy compared with it. In the West you find plateaus and mountain meadows. In the Cumberland section of the Appalachians the earth is gashed as with the plowshare of the Titans, furrowed with gullies, ravines and cañons and separated by ridges whose precipitous sides are covered with tenacious underbrush and scrub pine. The slope of the hills is nearly always sheer to the beds of the creeks. A wagon road is practically unknown, and the traveler on horseback keeps to the spine of the ridges where the stingiest of trails marks the only highway that is possible.

Above me rose a hill which I wished to use as an elevation. I walked along the bed of a creek for a hundred feet before I could find an accessible point. I tucked my transit under one arm and made a running start up the steep incline.

"*Ee-O-e*," rang out down the creek bed in the direction I had just come. It was the most uncanny cry I ever heard, but from descriptions given me at Middlesboro a few days before I recognized it as the warning call of the mountaineer.

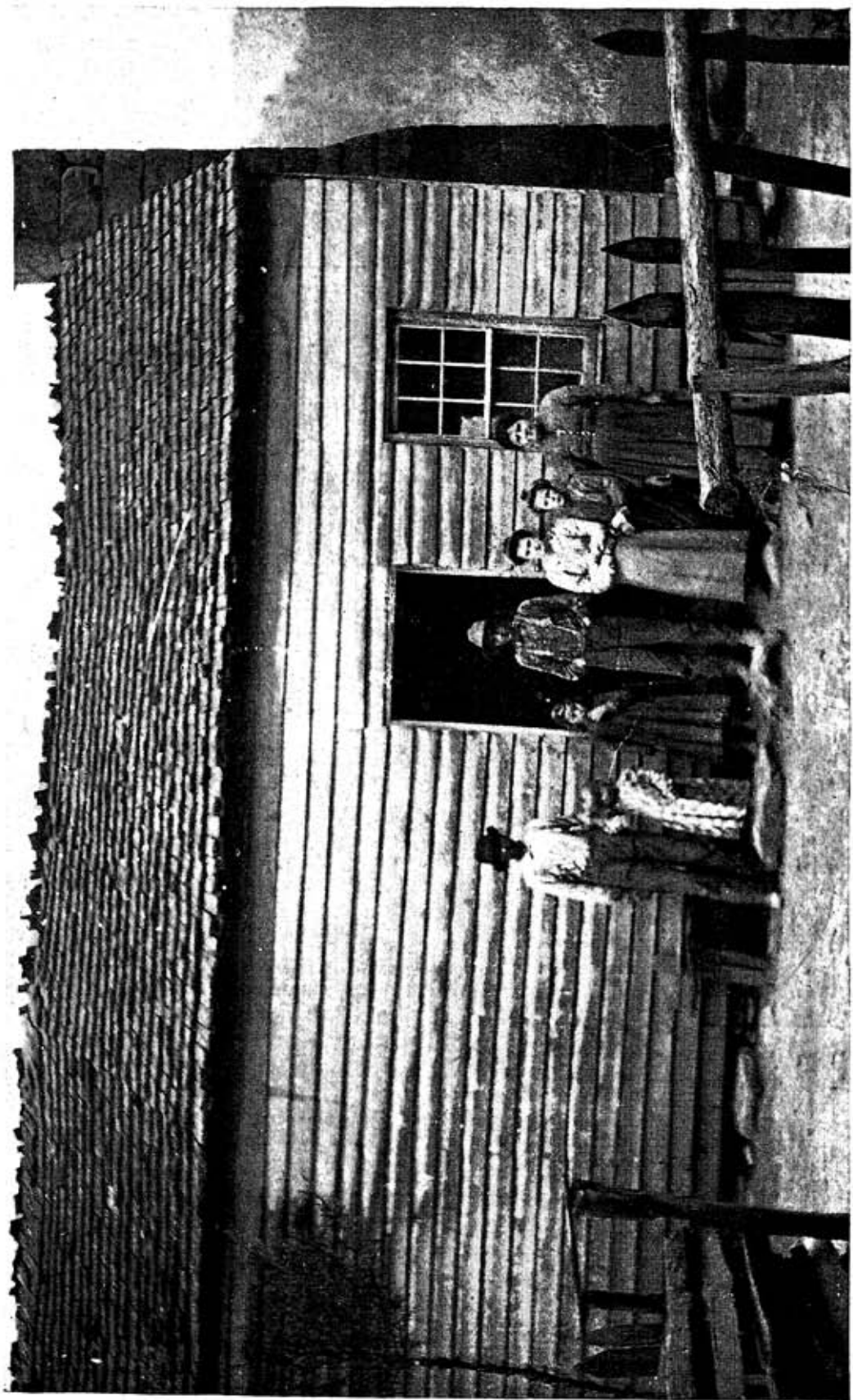
"Hol' up thar!" came the imperative command.

I steadied myself on the slope of the hill and looked around. Up the bed of the creek stalked as sinister a figure as ever a lonely, frightened youth gazed upon. Tall, loose-jointed and gaunt, he was the very picture of under-nourishment. A tattered cotton shirt hung like a bag over his stooping shoulders and sunken chest. A frayed rope performed the service of a belt to hold up the ragged trousers that flapped about his shrunken legs. The great, ugly flat feet were bare, and the spreading, prehensile toes looked as if they had never known the binding restraint of leather. Under the faded, bell-crowned hat peered the smallest and sharpest of black eyes, which seemed all the sharper and blacker because of the scraggly black beard that smoothed out some of the hollows in the sunken cheeks.

When he came up he looked me over with the furtive, suspicious stare of hostility. What made me all the more uneasy was the manner with which he handled his old "squirrel gun," an ancient piece fully six feet from stock to muzzle. I was somewhat surprised at the evident antiquity of the weapon, for I had heard that the mountaineers were equipped with firearms of the latest pattern.

"What mout you be doin', stranger?" he asked.

* This story deals with the experiences of a former member of the United States Geological Survey who spent more than a year in the Cumberland Gap region of Kentucky, one of the few dark spots on the map of the United States and concerning which probably less is known than of any other part of our country. It is the stronghold of moonshiners and the breeding ground of many noted feuds. The largest virgin deposit of coal in America lies in Harlan, Perry and Fletcher counties, Kentucky, but the bitter hostility of the natives has prevented the development of the field. Practically all the outside world knows of the region and its people has been obtained from newspaper correspondents at Middlesboro and Cumberland Gap. Until the advent of the Government surveying party no one not a resident of the vicinity had been in this part of Kentucky, away from the larger towns, for more than twenty years.—THE AUTHOR.



A typical mountain store in the Land of Feuds.

"I'm doing some survey work for the Government," I replied.

"Yas, I've done heerd 'bout you," he said with a softening of look and voice that surprised me. I had not expected him to take my statement for granted, but I was not then familiar with the system of mountain telegraphy and espionage.

"No," he went on, "I don't reckon you're the feller I'm lookin' fer."

I refrained from inquiry, for I knew that curiosity was resented in eastern Kentucky.

"A feller was up to my house 'bout a hour ago an' shot one o' my boys," he continued. The tone and emotion were about the same as he might have employed in making a statement about the weather. "Killed him. I was down the creek at the time. I jest come out to look fer him. He had on a blue shirt like yourn, an' I thought you mout be him. I was down the creek when you passed me jest now. I could ha' reached out an' teched you. Then I seen you wa'n't the feller. His name's Scott—from Vuhginia. He kain't git out o' here 'thout my seein' him, an' I'll git him—I'll shore git him."

Then for the first time the little black eyes blazed. He could not show grief for the death of his son, but vengeance—his gaunt frame fairly vibrated with it.

"I'm mighty glad you took a second look before shooting," I said with an attempt at a laugh.

"Oh, you needn't been afeered I wouldn't shoot fair," he rejoined with a show of pride. "I allers holler afore I shoot, an' I've never yet shot a man in less 'n a hundred yards. Ol' Molly," he said, tapping his squirrel gun, "she never misses when I got my finger on the trigger. An' I never yet shot a man in less 'n a hundred yards."

"Come along with me an' I'll show where I killed a man 'bout a year ago, down yander to the spring."

He took me by the arm and led me down by the side of the creek until we came to a spring that bubbled out of the base of the hill.

"The feller was tryin' to get out o' the country," said the mountaineer. "I was follerin' him an' seen him when he stopped at the spring fer a drink. I was down yander by that big rock. When I seen him stoop I hollered, an' then I let him

have it, an' he pitched head fummest into the spring. But I wasn't closer 'n a hundred yards. An' I'll git Scott too. He's a derned runagate from Vuhginia, an' they want him jest as bad over there as I do. He'll have to foller the ridges to git out o' yere. He kain't make it by the creek bottoms."

We were getting pretty well acquainted by this time, and the mountaineer told me his name was Hensley—Bert Hensley, to distinguish him from many other Hensleys in the county. There are not more than a score of names in eastern Kentucky—the most prominent being the Howards, Turners, Britts, Hensleys, Shacklefords, McCoys, Marcums and Morgans. Inter-marriages have been frequent and the clans have grown, but the names have undergone little change through union with outsiders. In our survey we not only tried to obtain the Christian name along with the surname, but even took photographs of the owners of the ground in order to make identification certain.

Hensley asked me where I was going, and I told him I wanted to work up toward the head of the creek.

"My house is up that-a-way," he said. "Come along, an' have somethin' to eat, fer it's nigh onto supper time."

I was hungry enough to accept his invitation and followed him to his home. It was a small log cabin of one room. When we entered we found the family still excited over the killing of the boy. I looked around the cabin but did not see the body. However, I abstained from questions. There were three women in the household and seven children. The youngsters were whimpering some, but more from fright than anything else. I was told that Scott had opened fire on the house more in a spirit of wantonness than anything else, and the boy was killed during the fusillade. Why the man should have done anything of this sort I could not understand. He was a fugitive from both Virginia and Tennessee, and in stirring up this hornets' nest had cut himself off from the only possible haven. The women were dry-eyed and vindictive. I did not hear one word of regret, to say nothing of grief, over the death of the boy, but there were threats enough to have given the murderer shivers if he had heard them.

Supper was ready before sunset, but the sight of it was enough to drive away hunger. The table was a door torn away from some barn or cabin, laid over a half barrel or "mash tub." Two rough benches served as seats for the adults of the family, while the children with the exception of the two youngest who were held by the women, were obliged to stand. In the center of the improvised table stood a huge yellow bowl which contained the food. This consisted of cabbage which had been converted into a species of sauer kraut by being soaked in water until it had fermented. Then it was boiled and put into the bowl, and over it was poured molasses and grease obtained from frying some rancid pieces of "sow bosom," as the "natives" snickeringly dub the fat salt pork which constitutes their principal article of diet in the meat line. This unsavory mixture was served on tin plates, and eaten with great relish. I pleaded lack of appetite and ate sparingly. I might state in passing that in the two weeks I was in the neighborhood and forced to partake of the hospitality of the mountaineers I lost fourteen pounds. I welcomed the arrival of the surveying party, and the gaunt appearance of Hensley and his neighbors did not puzzle me greatly.

The subject of conversation during the meal was the "gitting" of Scott. The women discussed the topography of the mountains and "lowed" this and that ridge might attract the fugitive. They all agreed that it would be impossible for him to escape. Hensley slunk out of the cabin after supper and I made a bunk for myself under a tree in the yard where I soon fell asleep. I waked early and was lying in a half doze after daybreak when a faint "Ee-O-e," with the accent on the middle syllable came to my ears, followed by the far-off crack of a rifle. In about half an hour Hensley came striding up to the cabin with a glint of triumph in his small black eyes. The women were waiting for him at the door with questioning looks.

"I told you I'd git him," he said simply. "I hollered fust, an' I wa'n't nigher 'n a hundred yards."

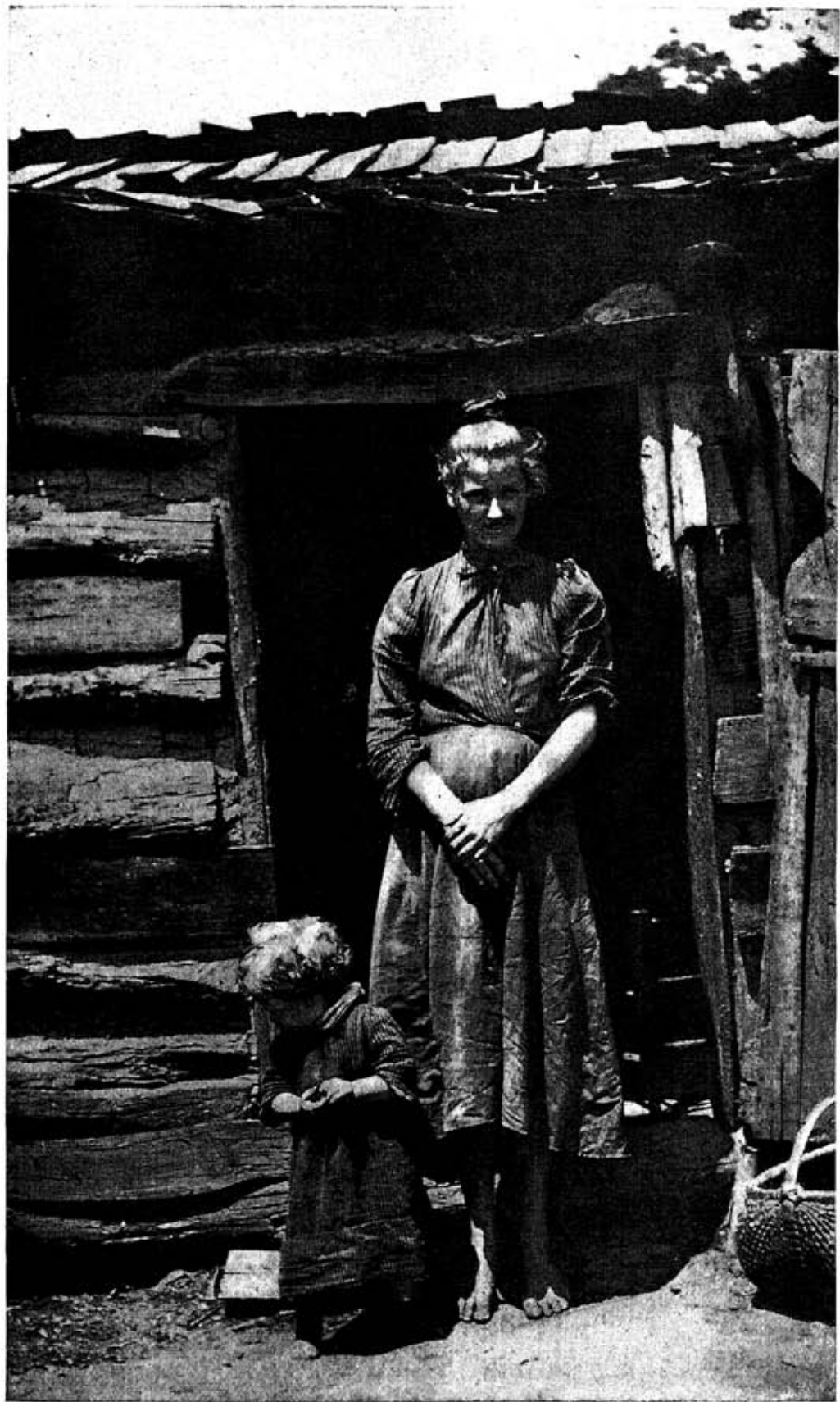
My work which kept me in eastern Kentucky for more than a year, with occasional details into the mountains of eastern Tennessee and western Virginia, made it quite

clear to me why the denizens of those fastnesses take so easily to "moonshining," or illicit distilling, and why the death-dealing feuds thrive so in such environments.

According to the best information I have been able to obtain these people are the descendants of the convicts that were colonized in the Appalachian mountains by Great Britain before the War of the Revolution. They have never come in contact with the world, and are amazingly ignorant of anything which happens outside their immediate neighborhood. I have seen old men who had never been half a mile away from their homes—whose whole lives had been passed in the creek bottom where they had been born. There are a few schools, to be sure, but the territory is so extensive and the schools are so few that a relatively small number of children ever see a book.

There is comparatively little communication between the different parts of the country. Only the more prosperous own horses or mules. In some sections travel by horseback is impossible. Although the mountains are not high the country is probably the roughest in the United States. A meadow is a rarity, and land is too precious for pasturage. Here and there a few scrawny cows are to be seen, but they belong only to the comparatively rich, and they are forced to shift for themselves by grazing along the creek beds and underbrush. With pastoral life out of the question the inhabitants resort to agriculture in the most primitive and limited way. Patches of corn, seldom exceeding five acres in extent, are cultivated on the sides of hills where the slope is frequently at an angle of forty-five degrees. The land is tilled by the hoe, for no horse could drag a plow over such ground.

The corn, of course, is used principally for making whiskey, a fiery, colorless liquor that never is permitted to age sufficiently to acquire the golden-brown hue of the commercial product. The residue of the crop is used for bread. Except at the towns where there is a grist mill the meal is obtained by crushing the grain—mortar and pestle fashion—by using a hollowed rock as a bowl and a hard round stone as a pestle. In fact I never saw corn meal obtained in any other way.



A mother of three children at seventeen.



A little mountain cabin.

The stills are in the creek hollows, near the heads of the streams. They are always in secluded spots where the approaches can be carefully guarded. Sometimes they are in caves. There is a big still in an immense cave under the Cumberland Gap tunnel of the Louisville and Nashville road which has given the revenue officers no end of trouble. This cavern is nearly as large as the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky and it is doubtful if the Government agents ever will find the plant, whose output supplies half the bars of the towns within a radius of fifty miles. It is a labyrinth of subterranean chambers, many of which contain small lakes, connecting with others. It is possible to paddle for hours along the underground waterway in a "dug-out," but I should advise no one to attempt it without a guide, and if a revenue agent should try it even under those circumstances he would be likely to get lost.

You can't help feeling sorry for the men who are engaged in the task of running down illicit stills. They are up against a losing game in the Cumberland Mountains. The "moonshiners" have a perfect scout system. If you don't believe it you might hire a white horse at Middlesboro and take

a horseback ride through the mountains. As the sheriff always rides a white horse the chances are you will not get shot until you have been given a chance to explain yourself. But as soon as you have ridden well into the hills you will hear the blood-curdling "Ee-O-e," and then another farther on which sounds almost like an echo. And so from ridge to ridge you will hear your approach heralded, until the whole mountainside knows of your coming, and all the while you have seen nothing but the scrub pine on the ridges and the underbrush along the creek beds. The white horse is easily seen, and it is hinted that this is the reason the sheriff and deputy marshals always have mounts of this color. But afoot or horseback it would be impossible to enter the country without having the announcement spread broadcast.

The best shots in the world are the Kentucky mountaineers. The West has nothing to compare with them. When it comes to "pulling a gun" quickly and shooting accurately the most expert of frontier bad men would appear slow and clumsy by the side of many of these mountain outlaws. They learn to shoot almost as soon as they graduate from the cradle. Many of their

sports relate to shooting. The proprietor of the crossroads store has a shooting gallery in his establishment, where in other localities you might find a slot machine. In one store I saw a wheel about half the size of a spinning-wheel with pieces of cardboard containing numbers on the different spokes. The charge was "nipence" (ten cents) a shot, and the participant picked his number. The prizes ranged all the way from a box of cartridges to a bag of corn meal or a side of "sow bosom," according to the size of the piece of cardboard selected. The wheel was given a swift whirl by the storekeeper, but judging from the shooting I saw I could not find out wherein he derived any profit from the contrivance.

During feud times the combatants are regular walking arsenals. I saw old Shackleford when trouble was brewing between himself and old Lije Howard which threatened to involve the clans, but finally was settled peacefully. He carried a Winchester .45-90, and his supply of six-shooters would have stocked a pawnshop window. He had one in each bootleg, two in leather holsters at his belt, one in a holster under the left armpit and another

in a holster inside his shirt just where it buttoned in front over his chest—six revolvers in all. Thus accoutered he could draw a gun in any position in which he might be surprised. I was told that the holster in the shirt front was the favorite one, as the weapon could be flashed out with incredible rapidity.

As a usual thing the firearms are of the latest pattern. These mountaineers may be a little slow when it comes to modern methods of farming or grinding corn, but there is little they don't know about up-to-date guns. The automatic Colt's .38, model of 1903, had made its appearance among them within two months after it had been turned out of the factory. We were offered any price we chose to name for two Luger magazine pistols which we had in our surveying camp. This was the time when it looked as if there would be a clash between Shackleford and Lije Howard.

I saw Abe McCoy, of Hatfield-McCoy fame, do some shooting that would make anything in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show look cheap. A fellow surveyor and myself had left camp the day before and the following night we rode up to one of the more prosperous mountain farm houses



A country of steep hillsides and few pastures.



The mountaineer families are huge, hospitable and hungry.

and asked for supper and lodging. Soon after our arrival another man rode up. It is probable he would not have stopped had he seen our horses for that would have warned him of the presence of strangers. Once in the house he did not care to draw back. He interested us greatly, although we did not learn until the next morning that he was Abe McCoy, one of the leading members of the family that had impressed itself so indelibly on the bloody history of three states. He ate supper with us in silence, eyeing my companion, a Harvard graduate, and myself in a sly, suspicious manner. He sat opposite us at the table, and never was his back turned to us. There was the danger that we might be deputy marshals or revenue agents, and he took no chances.

It seemed to me that his distrust might fade after a while, but it did not. He brought his horse around to the front of the cabin, saddled and bridled, with the bit slipped out of the animal's mouth. At the slightest alarm he could have been in full flight in a few seconds. He sat around with the rest of us, but talked little, and never once did his eyes leave us two—the strangers in the group. That night my comrade and I went to bed in the room with the rest of the family, but McCoy sat in a chair tilted against the side of the chimney, with his hat pulled down over his eyes. The two six-shooters at his belt were in plain view, and I saw the butts of two others peeping from his boot tops. As I found out afterwards he had two more, one in the armpit holster and another in the shirt front holster.

It was not an entirely restful night. Every time I stirred in the bed I saw McCoy move slightly. His arms were folded across his chest, and I believe if he had seen the least suspicious movement from us the revolver under his left shoulder would have leaped from its hiding place.

He got up before we did, and before we ate breakfast we were told who he was. We instantly tried in every way to get acquainted with him, and succeeded in convincing him of our harmlessness to the extent of getting him to ride with us when we left. But his watchfulness never deserted him, and he politely but firmly insisted that we ride ahead. By degrees we drew him out, and in his quiet way he became

almost talkative. He told us he had been mixed up in the feud with the Hatfields.

"It's ben so long sence it begun though, I don't know what it started 'bout," he admitted in response to a question.

"I suppose you are quite a shot," said my companion as we came to the creek where we were to part company.

"Yas, I kin shoot some," said McCoy modestly.

Then we importuned him to give an exhibition of his skill. He seemed a trifle reluctant, and once more a shadow of distrust flitted across his lean face. But we urged him frantically and finally he yielded.

"Ary one o' you boys got four bits?" he asked.

The Harvard man raked out half a dollar. McCoy then placed us about thirty feet apart, and it looked as if he was making arrangements to take care of us one at a time in case he saw any signs of treachery on our part.

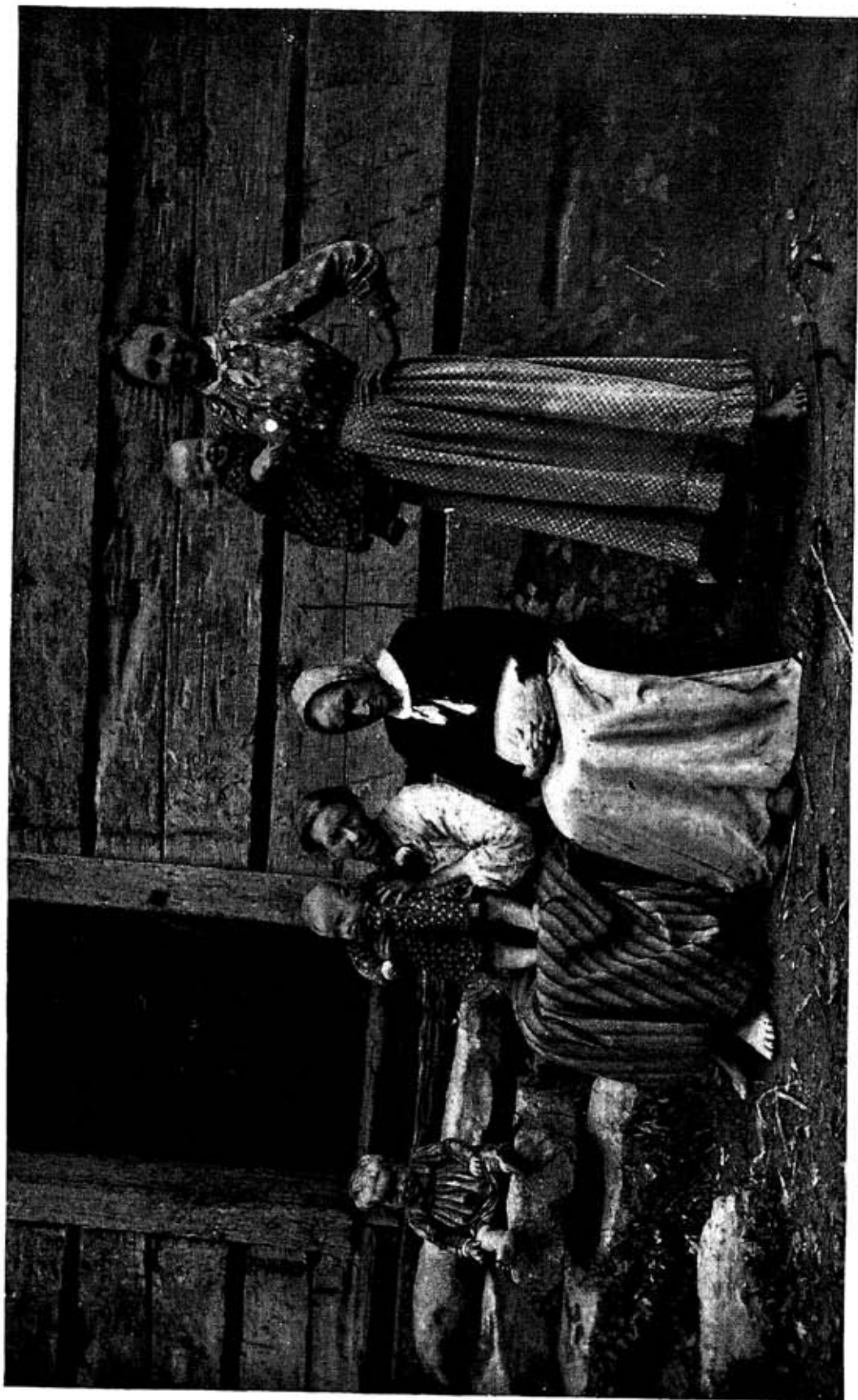
"Pitch up the coin," ordered McCoy.

My companion obeyed. Two shots cracked out. There stood McCoy, smiling grimly, unarmed so far as we could observe. Neither one of us had seen him draw a gun or put it back, so marvelously quick had he been. Nor could we find the coin. But McCoy went right to the spot and picked it up. It had a hole almost through the center and another near the edge where the milling had been shot away. The first shot must have knocked the coin a considerable distance and that he should have hit it the second time seems unbelievable. It is still a mystery which revolver he used, although he probably employed the one in his shirt front holster. We tried to get him to tell us but he evaded the question.

"Thar's tricks in all trades, boys," he laughed. "This is mine, an' it's done took me a long while to larn it."

We rode away and he was still by the ford watching us when we turned and waved good-by.

Probably the most respected citizen in the mountainside is old Shackleford, who lives at the head of Poor Fork Creek, in Perry County. Shackleford is getting old now—he must be about seventy, but there is no adventurous, fire-eating youth who cares to try conclusions with him. Too many have attempted that and died. He



A few samples of Bill Hensley's family.

has a record of thirty-eight "killings" to his credit, a record that no Western desperado from Las Vegas to the Canadian line has ever equaled. He has been shot from ambush, but he has survived his wounds, although this much cannot be said of the man that shot first. His neighbors stand in awe of him, and he is said to bear a charmed life. His cabin is decorated with coon skins, and over the front door is nailed the skin of the biggest rattlesnake ever killed in the Kentucky mountains. Shackleford's most dreaded antagonist in a fight was his wife, and he killed her several years ago in a domestic brawl. The militant old lady was given an imposing resting place. She was buried on the top of Harlan Peak, and her grave was dug eight feet deep. Shackleford has directed that he be buried just above her when he dies.

"I want folks to know that I come out on top," he said in giving his instructions.

Lije Howard, the head of the Howard clan, is another bullet-scarred veteran. He has a record of twenty-nine "killings." He is at least eighty years old now, but when he was seventy-five he led his followers against the Turners and performed as valiant service as any of his grandchildren. I have stopped frequently at his house on Skin Quarter Creek, and seldom have met a more genial old chap or one that could tell a better story.

Pat Morgan, an adherent of the Howards who lives on Still House Creek, lays claim to twenty-six notches on his gun; Bill Hensley of Jesse's Creek to twenty-four. In fact the prominence of a man in the community seems to be regulated by the number of men he has killed in feud.

Even the women give a pretty good account of themselves. Several years ago the owner of some valuable coal lands hired "Shot Steve" Daniel and his wife to remain on his land as tenants to keep the squatters from taking his title away from him. It was a bitter struggle for Steve and he died from wounds received one day when he wandered too far from the house. His wife took up the fight and held the fort. Her children were killed, but she stayed on, giving as good as her foes sent. One day while she was washing clothes down at the creek a man stole up behind her and struck her over the head with the stock of a rifle. She grappled with him,

threw him and held his head under water until he strangled to death. She stayed long enough to give her employer clear title, but she paid for it by losing her whole family.

One night I stopped with another member of our party at the house of Marcus Howard. He was not at home but his wife gave us supper and we went to bed in a room adjoining the kitchen. Late that night Marcus Howard returned, and his first inquiry was about the strange horses in the barn.

"Oh, they belong to a couple o' them surveyor fellers," she replied.

"How do you know they are surveyors?" he sneered.

One word led to another and soon there was a quarrel. Howard picked up the lamp and hurled it at his wife. Above the crashing of the glass I heard her shout:

"You make another move an' I'll put a bullet through yore old thick head. I tell you I know them fellers is surveyors."

"Well, mabbe they are," was his sullen reply. "Put up yore gun an' go git a taller dip. I don't like to set in the dark."

It looked very much like a back down on the part of the head of the house, and it was all the more impressive because his brother, Jim Howard, is the man who was accused of killing Goebel.

I had another experience with a member of the Howard family that came near resulting seriously for me. Britt Howard had a pack of worthless fox-hounds that used to stream out and howl and snap at the feet of our horses every time one of us passed. One day I was going by riding a vicious Government mule. Two hounds ran out and began barking and snapping at his heels. My mount probably was related to the brute that gave rise to the proverb bearing on the kicking qualities of the Government mule. He laid back his ears and let fly with his hind feet. He crushed the skull of one hound and caved in the ribs of the other so that he died after giving a faint whine. Britt Howard's wife saw the whole performance and she called out to me as I started to ride on.

"How come you to shoot them dawgs?" she cried.

"I didn't shoot them," I replied.

"Yas, you did, fer I seen you pull yer gun," she asserted brazenly.

"I haven't any gun," I said.

"Well, I have," she shouted. "You come back yere an' pay fer them dawgs."

I didn't care to argue with her and rode on as fast as I could urge my mule.

That night the cook told me that Britt Howard was around camp looking for me and swearing he would "git" me. I tried to pass it off as a joke, but the next day it looked more serious. Howard had paid another call and his proposition was this: Either I was to eat the dogs or he would "git" me. It was not a pleasant position, for I knew the temper of the man I had to deal with. That day while I was out on field work I saw a man in the valley below, following the very trail I had taken up the mountain. It was Howard tracking me. As he had not seen me I made haste to get back to camp. That night the chief of our party had a talk with Howard and detailed to him the circumstances of the killing of his hounds. Howard went home and examined the bodies of the dogs and found that they had died from the hoofs of a mule instead of bullets. I was absolved from blame. The next day was Sunday and Howard came to our camp with his family and shook hands with me. I took their photographs and we became good friends from that time on.

As might be inferred, the social graces are not assiduously cultivated. Dances are numerous—the "natives" call them "knockdowns." The waltz and two-step are unknown at these gatherings, and the sole number on the programme is a mixture of the old Virginia reel and a quadrille. The ladies are not ungraceful, but the gentlemen seem to vie with one another to see who can "stomp" hardest on the floor going through the figures. I have looked on at several of these functions, but the music always consisted of one tune, called "Sourwood Mountain." Sometimes as many as three fiddles would be squeaking, but they always ground out the same dreary lilt.

Illicit distilling, feuds and dances, however, do not interfere in the least with the religious side of their lives. The mountaineers are all Baptists, but the clashes between the different sects would keep a dozen denominations in hot water. The three divisions are known as the "Feet Washers," the "Muddy Heads" and the "Soup Eaters." The "Feet Washers"

perform the humble task of washing one another's feet at stated periods. The "Muddy Heads" get their name from the custom of anointing the head with wet earth, and I was told that the "Soup Eaters" partook of broth at communion. During the winter season "protracted meeting" is held and the whole community indulges in a carnival of church going. The ordinary services are conducted by a local preacher or "exhorter" who is not a licensed minister. No collections are taken up except when the visiting circuit preacher comes once a year. Instead of the church offering the local preacher has the exclusive privilege of selling whiskey at the conclusion of services. It is not considered etiquette for any member of the congregation to interfere with this perquisite.

As the "exhorter" has not the right to hold funeral services, the formal obsequies over the dead are conducted only once a year unless the circuit minister happens to make the rounds more frequently. With the natural death rate accelerated somewhat by feuds and quarrels at dances a goodly roll of names frequently figures in the blanket funeral sermon when it finally is preached.

One day a funeral party passed one of our camps. It was composed of a man and his wife—a mere girl of fifteen—riding on a "jug-head," as a mule is called. The man, who rode in front, carried a small box on the pommel of the saddle, while the weeping child wife held in her hand a mattock, or grubbing hoe. They went on up the creek where they dug the little grave, and returned about an hour later. The name of the child was mentioned in the general funeral service which took place three months afterward.

We had a good chance to see how religious controversies are settled when we moved up into Perry County. The "Feet Washers" and "Muddy Heads" had joined forces and built a church on the crest of a ridge, the usual site for public edifices. Everything went well until it came to the question of dedicating the place of worship, and on this point the jarring sects could not agree. Word of impending trouble had reached our camp which was about half a mile away from the new church, and we were on the lookout for developments. The people began streaming by our tents

by daybreak although the hour set for the services was ten o'clock. It was a beautiful Easter morning, and there was no lack of color in the print frocks of the women, while the men were loaded down with enough "hardware" to have awed a regiment of militia.

What amazed us was the utter lack of timidity shown by the women. They knew there was likely to be a clash, but the possibility of wholesale shooting did not prevent their going or check their gayety.

And there was plenty of "trouble." The "Feet Washers" captured the church at the start and began services. Then the "Muddy Heads" registered a protest. The shooting kept up for thirty minutes by the watch, but the execution was not as great as might have been expected. Three "Feet Washers" and two "Muddy Heads" were killed and about a dozen wounded altogether. The "Muddy Heads" came out victorious, but they were magnanimous. They postponed the dedication and proposed a dance instead, to which their opponents were invited. The dance lasted until early Monday morning.

Admirers of feminine beauty would do well to hunt elsewhere for objects upon which to bestow their adoration. The mountain Venus is a being I never saw in eastern Kentucky, and it is probable that she exists only in the imagination of those who write entertaining fiction stories about "moonshiners." Early marriages are the rule, and I have seen one girl of seventeen who was a mother of three robust children, and the case was not considered uncommon.

Families are large, and it is not a rare thing to see fifteen or sixteen children in one household. Aside from the fact that they seem to be an ill-nourished lot, unkempt and ignorant, they compare favorably with the poor whites in the mountains of the South. They are vastly superior to the natives of extreme eastern Tennessee where idiocy is so prevalent owing to indiscriminate marriages in the same family—if such a term as marriage can be applied to the slipshod ceremony by which the union of the sexes is celebrated. It is an error, however, to make the same charge against the Kentucky mountaineers,

for mismating is no more the rule among them than in any community where ignorance is widespread.

Although they are a sociable people among themselves when not at feud, there are certain rules of etiquette which it is not wise for any one to transgress. When a family goes away for a day the door of the cabin is closed and a sock or a handkerchief is hung over the lintel. This means that the family will return before nightfall, and you are at liberty to wait for them if you please. If a shirt or some larger garment is suspended it signifies that the occupants have gone away for a long visit, and they don't care to have visitors prying around in their absence. It is a gentle hint to move on.

During our stay among the mountaineers we were treated with consideration and at times hospitably. We always took care, however, to say or do nothing that would give offense. It is true that we were protected by the prestige of the Government, and satisfied their suspicion as to our not being allied in any way with the revenue service. If we stumbled onto a still we shut our eyes, and manifested an utter absence of curiosity.

Other intruders have not been treated so well. A little more than twenty years ago a corporation owning some coal lands sent a surveying party into the mountains under a guard of one hundred and fifty United States troops. They got a withering reception. The springs were poisoned and their men were picked off from the cliffs and underbrush. The milk sold to them was poisoned. The cows were fed on a weed that grows in the mountains and those who partook of the milk were stricken with a fatal malady known as "milk sick," with convulsions similar to the symptoms of strychnine poisoning. One night the man in charge of the party had the camp pitched at the foot of a cliff in a sheltered place. The mountaineers gathered in force and rolled bowlders down on them and nearly wiped the party out of existence. The venture was abandoned in despair and it was not until the United States Geological Survey undertook the work that any attempt was made to ascertain the mineral resources of the country.