The book cover features a dark, textured background with a repeating pattern of globes. Each globe is framed by a circular border and contains a silhouette of a world map. The globes are arranged in a grid, with a central globe containing a black and white photograph of a soldier in a military helmet aiming a rifle. The title is written in a large, gold, serif font, with 'SERGEANT' and 'AND THE GREAT WAR' in smaller letters above and below the main title 'YORK'.

SERGEANT
YORK

AND THE
GREAT
WAR



Sergeant Alvin C. York, America's One-Man Army

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Preface

The story you are about to read is a three-fold perspective of *Sergeant York and the Great War*. The first consists of primary source material from Alvin C. York's own wartime journal. The second facet involves the contemporary author, Tom Skeyhill's recorded interviews with Alvin York after the *Great War*, World War I. And for further understanding the editor has included background research.

Mr. Skeyhill took up residence in Pall Mall, Tennessee, among the mountain folk who had known Alvin and his family long before World War I took place. While living in Pall Mall, Mr. Skeyhill was able to see firsthand the manner of life of these hardy mountain people and to write about them, thus bringing the nature of Alvin York to the American people outside the remote regions of the Tennessee mountains. Mr. Skeyhill followed the adage "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," adapting to the mountain people's way of life in order to bring the truest perspective to his writing.

After World War I, this one-time relatively unknown Tennessee soldier was thrust into the annals of living history. Whether Alvin York liked it or not, his war deeds as recorded in his own writing, and classic film by portrayed by Gary Cooper, brought him national and world attention. People wanted to know all about the shy and quiet Christian soldier, who, some enthusiastically said, "captured the whole German army."

As you read *Sergeant York and the Great War*, you will find Mr. Skeyhill did not alter or correct Alvin's colloquialisms and unique style in Alvin York's personal diary, but rather left his numerous grammatical mistakes intact. For a grammarian, the reading is a nightmare, with inconsistent spelling and punctuation errors throughout the diary. For the historian like myself, it is wonderful, and draws the reader into the life of Sergeant York. You will feel as if

CHAPTER 1

BOYHOOD

I was borned in Pall Mall, in Fentress County. Hit is under the mountain; that is to say, in the valley below. Hit is called the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf, because Wolf River forks into three branches not far from our home. Hit is in the Cumberland Mountains, in the eastern part of middle Tennessee, not far from the Kentucky line. I was borned in a one-room log cabin with puncheon floors, and the walls made of rough-hewn slabs. These walls was chinked with bark and mud, but jes the same, in the winter time the wind would whistle in through the walls and up through the cracks in the floor. Some of them-there floor cracks were so big we could look and see the chickens and pigs underneath. I was the third in a family of eleven children, eight boys and three girls. Most all of them were big and red-headed; and I was borned and growed up the biggest of them all. There was a whole litter of us and we jes sort of growed up like a lot of little pigs. I don't mean we was allowed to be dirty like pigs. I jes sorter mean that we were most always turned loose out-of-doors on the mountainside, kinder running wild, playing and hunting around. We was sort of brung up by the hair of the head.

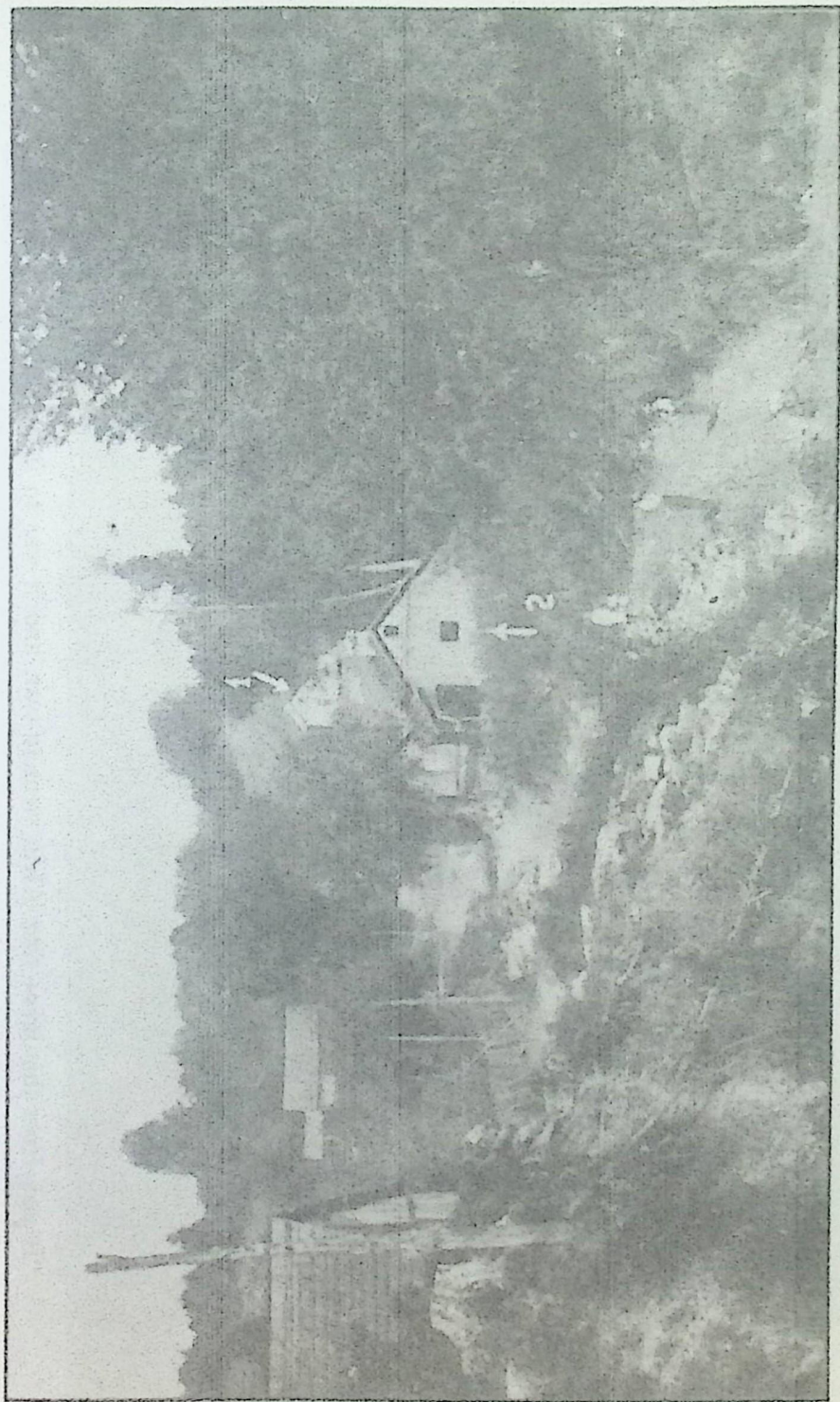
We weren't pampered. Mother and Father hadn't any time to pamper us. They was most awful hardworking people. They had to be to bring up eleven children like they did. Father was a blacksmith. His shop was in a cave or rockhouse, as we called it, at the head of the spring on the mountainside, just near our home. He knowed wonderful well how to handle mares and horses and never refused even the meanest of them. Some of the mules was most awful, but my father never backed up on them. I am telling you that shows character. But money was scarce in them times and he never made more than about fifty cents a

day. I don't mean to say he averaged that much. He didn't. He was so fond of hunting that he would neglect his blacksmithing and go out over the hills for days to get him some deer or some turkeys. But he wasn't lazy and like the rest of us boys it wasn't natcheral for him to resist the baying of the hounds and the call of the woods. I guess we've got it in the blood. He was a right-smart woodsman. He could follow a trail anywhere, or go out through the wildest country on the darkest nights, and never get lost for a minute. He was the best shot in the mountains. Often I have seed him take the centre out of a target, shot after shot. I have seed him fire a dozen times at a target and put most all of the bullets through the same hole.

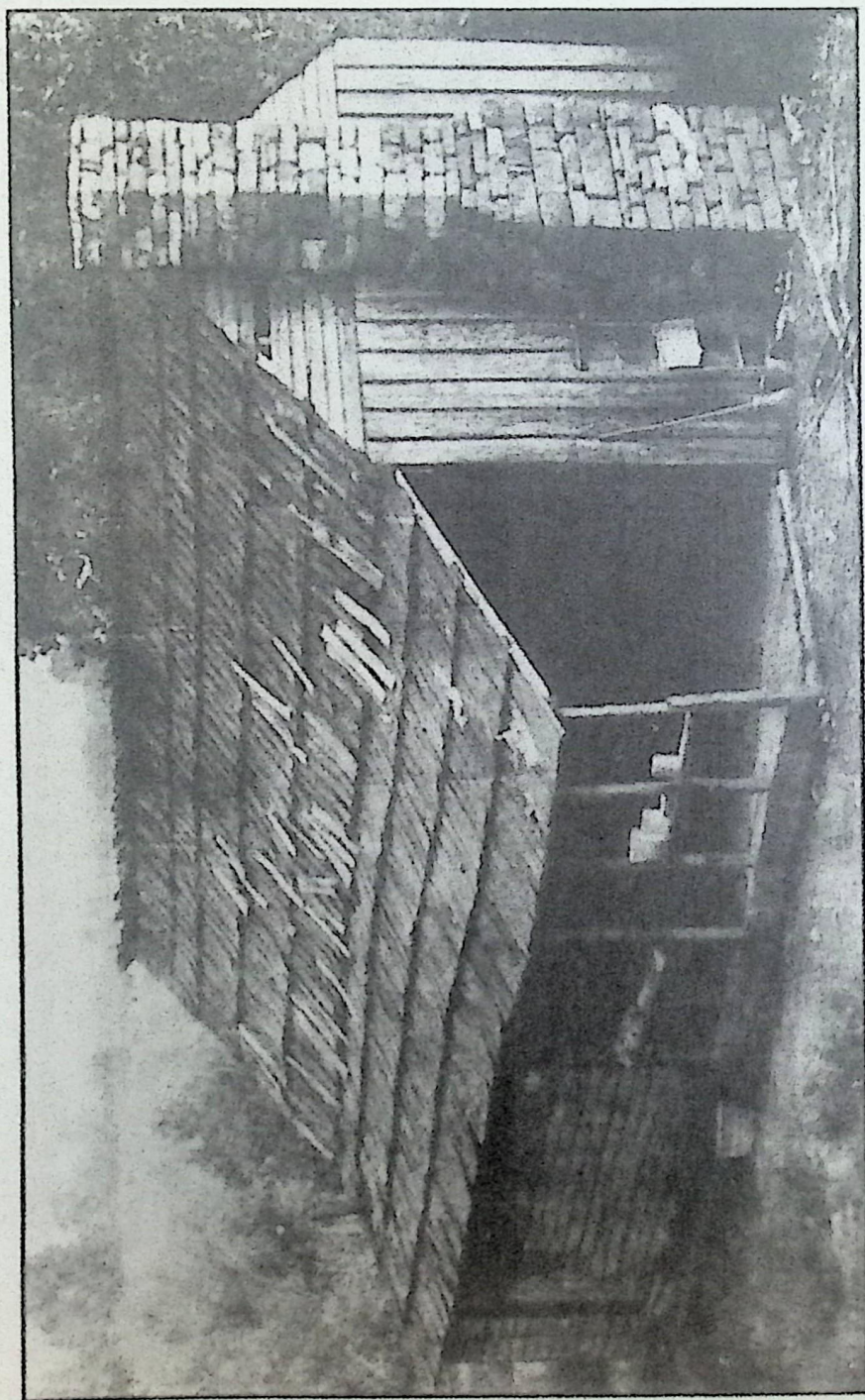
We most always had plenty of fresh meat from my father's rifle-gun. But jes the same, we was always poor. Mother used to hire out and work at other places, washing, spinning or weaving, or doing chores. She would earn about twenty-five cents a day.

So we growed up. We had our own log cabin and a little land. We raised chickens and hogs and some corn and we had a couple of cows and a whole heap of fresh air and plenty of room outside, but not much inside the cabin. Eleven children and mother and father take up a most awful lot of room, and that little one-room log cabin was kinder crowded at night, when we were all tucked in; but we was all under one roof, growing up good, strong, and healthy, and loving each other. Jes a mountain family. We children would all lie in bed, tucked in for the night. Mother would sit in front of the big open fire carding, or spinning, or weaving; and Father would sit in the corner in the light of a lantern or a grease lamp and clean and mend his guns; and that's the way we growed up.

We shore were pretty rough scrappers, and among ourselves and with the neighbours' children we used to fight right sharp. Of course, a whole heap of children like that will get up to all sorts of mischief, but Mother jes knowed where the most stinging hickory sticks growed and Father had a mule whip, and they



"Where the road tumbles down to the solid log cabin 'Old Coonrod' Pile had built (2), to the spring and the York home (1). The roadway comes down from the top of 'The Knobs,' a thousand feet above, and it comes over rocks of high and low degree, a jolting, impressive journey for its traveler."



"It was from this home that Alvin went to war, and it was to it he returned."

both knowed how to use them. I guess the reason I growed up so big was that I was such a roughneck and Father had to whip me so much that he sorter kept my hide loose so that I could fill out. When I was sixteen I was nearly six feet tall and weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. Of course, they wanted us to go to school and we was most all anxious to get some larnin'. But we were very poor, and 'most all the other mountain people were poor too, and there was only money enough for the school to keep going about two and a half months each year, and that was in the middle of summer. It was too cold in the wintertime. The roads were bad. There were no bridges over the creeks and we couldn't get across; and we couldn't afford warm clothes neither. And even in the summertime they had to dismiss school for two or three weeks for crops and foddering. I went for about three weeks a year for about five years. I lamed to read and write. I had about a second-grade education. I don't think I could have passed the second grade. The schoolhouse was a little frame one-room building over on the hill. There were about one hundred pupils and only one teacher. We used to sit on benches made out of split logs with two pegs mortised in them. The benches had no backs. They were so high that when I used to sit on them I could scarcely touch the floor with my feet. During the last year we had two or three desks.

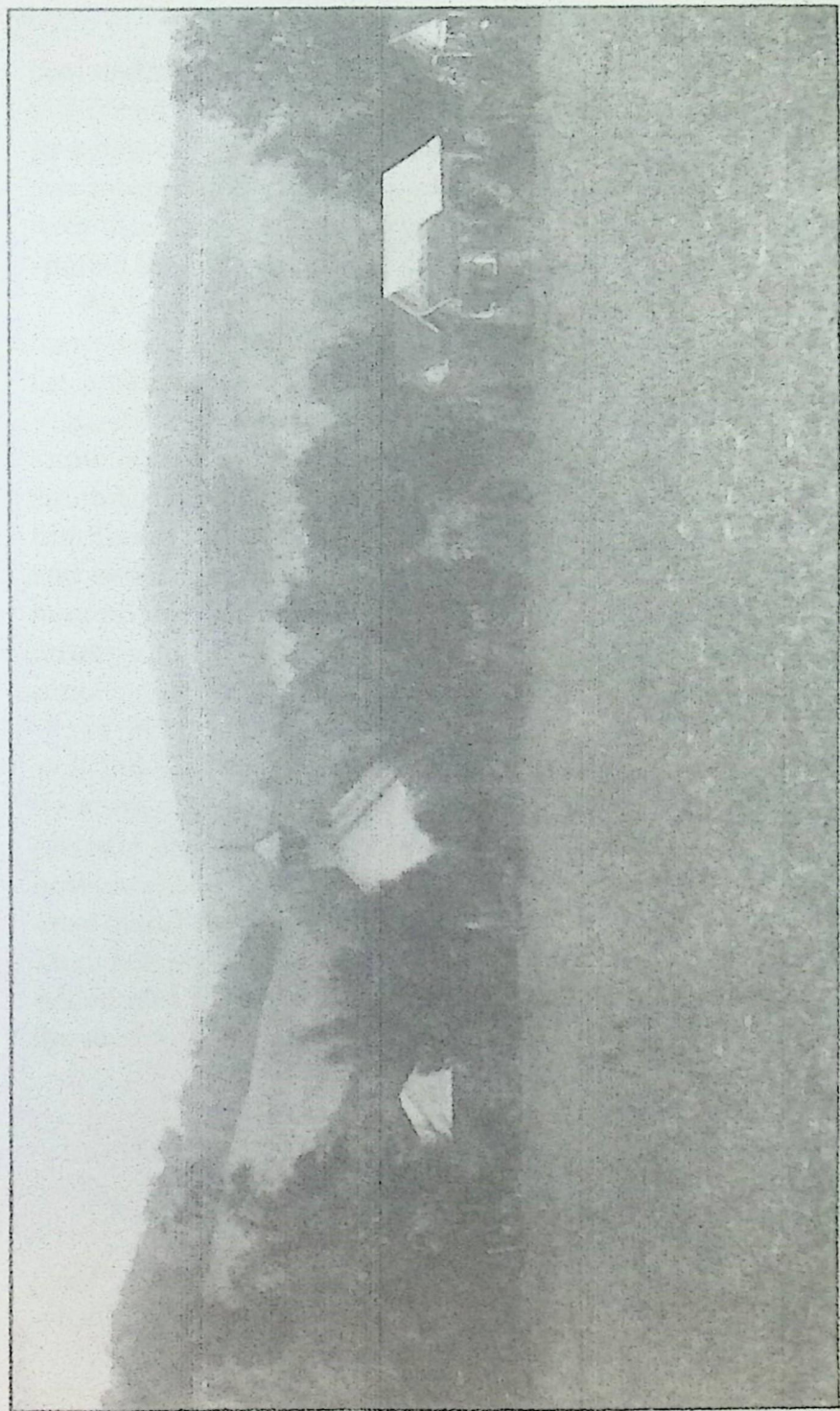
I never read no books till I was about twenty years of age. Then I read only one and that was the life of Frank and Jesse James.

I begun to work almost as soon as I could walk. At first I would help Mother around the house, carrying water, getting a little stovewood, and carrying and nursing the other children to keep them from yelling around after Mother while she was trying to get a bite of dinner for us all. I would go out to the field with Father before I was six years old. I would have to chop the weeds out of the corn. Father would be ploughing with the old mule, and I and my brothers would follow after until he was out of sight, and then I we would steal off and play and scrap

around; and then when we would get home he would give us some hickory tea, as he called it.

And it didn't take much of it to make a fellow wish there never was no hickory in these-here mountains. Our clothes was very poor. When I first went to school I wore a home-made linsy dress, and I guess I warned it that long it couldn't stay on me no longer nohow, and jes dropped off as if by itself. As I "rowed older and larger Mother would get some clothes from the neighbours, old ones for washings she done for them, to make us boys britches and coats to keep us warm in the winter months. We had clean cotton shirts which we were only allowed to wear on Sunday mornings, but we had no coats. I shore do remember the kind of shoes we wore in the winter-time. Father made them. They was brogan shoes with brass on the toes, and when we would get up in the morning our shoes would be cold and stiff and we would have to warm them around the old log fire before we could put them on. They were most awful hard and stiff and would take the hide off our heels and they slipped up and down when we walked.

When I was sixteen Mother went to the little country store and bought me a pair of dress shoes. I called them Sunday shoes, for I only wore them on Sunday. They were number ten men's shoes. They were the first dress shoes I ever had. I was most awful proud of them. The next Sunday morning Mother and I started to the little church meeting. Of course, I put on the new shoes. I shore felt good in them. I kept looking down at them, and I kinder thought that everybody else was admiring them. Before I got to church it come up a rain and got muddy and the red clay was very tough and pulled off one of the heels. I scraped in the mud, got it, and put it in my front pants pocket. I kept on a-going with one heel on and one off. When I got almost to the church the other heel come off and I got it and put it in my other front pocket. My, what trouble I was with my with first pair of Sunday shoes with both heels off even before I got to church where I could really show them off, and I had no



"The little church which sits by the road with no homes near it is the geographical as well as the religious center of the community—it is the heart of Pall Mall."

coat and my shirt was all wet and muddy too I And there was a girl friend there that I kinder admired. So there I was with my first pair of Sunday shoes and my first time to wear them, and this trouble had to come, and I was slipping all over the road with those number tens with no heels on them, and that shore spoiled the pleasure of the day.

As I growed up I begun to look around for some work, but there wasn't much of it in the little valley. Father took me into the rockhouse, where I helped him to blacksmith. He taught me to handle them there mules and not to back up on them. I got to know horses and mules right smart, and I picked up the blacksmith business. But I most loved getting out with Father to help him shoot. We would hunt the red and gray foxes in the daytime and skunks, possums, and coons after dark. Often we would hunt all day and do the blacksmithing at night. I did a heap of farming too. I worked for Mr. E. J. Williams and others for forty cents a day.

In 1911 when I was 24 years old my dear father takened sick and died of typhoid fever. He was kicked most awful bad by a mule he was trying to shoe. She lashed out and got him. She was the only one that ever out-smarted him. She would not have done it nohow, only he didn't know she was mean. He was most awful sick for some time and I think it led up to his death. That left my mother with a family of eleven small children. Although I was only a young boy, I had to go out and work with the men to help support Mother and the smaller children.



Mother York, the wonderful pioneer mother of America's most distinguished soldier

CHAPTER 2

GONE HOG-WILD

When my father died I sorter went to pieces for a few years. I know I shouldn't have. I ought to have hewed to the line closer than ever, but I didn't. I was at that age, too, when a young man thinks that it's right smart to drink and cuss and fight and tear things up. I sort of felt that was the right-smart way to come into my manhood. And coming into your manhood is like suddenly coming into a lot of riches—you may not appreciate it at first, and sorter squander it.

I begun to drink and gamble jes a little at the start, but it gowed on me. I got in with a crowd of gay fellows and before long I sure was drifting. There was plenty of liquor around. It was very cheap; about sixty-five cents or seventy-five cents a quart. Poker and other gambling games were pretty popular, and smoking and chewing was supposed to be the things. I was a big fellow, strong and hard, too, from black smithing and farming and hunting. I didn't know my own strength. I thought I could whip anybody.

At the beginning we used to have a few drinks of a week-end and sit up nights, gambling our money away; and of course, like most of the others, was always smoking and cussing. I don't think I was mean and bad... I jes played with these things at first, and thee' they got a-hold of me and began to play with my life. I went from bad to worse. I began really to like liquor and gambling, and I was 'most always spoiling for a fight.

There was a bunch of us. There was Everett Delk, Marion Leffew and Marion Delk, who is dead now, and a couple of my brothers. We were a wild crowd; wilder then wild bees when they're swarming. Of a week-end we would go across the Kentucky line and get drunk and look for trouble, and we shore enough found it.

Back in the days before the World War the Kentucky-Tennessee state line was a tough place. There were drinking shacks, "blind tigers" we used to call them, most every few miles. I am a-telling you Sodom and Gomorrah might have been bigger places, but they weren't any worse. Killings were a-plenty. They used to say that they used to shoot fellows jes to see them kick. Knife fights and shooting were common, gambling and drinking were commoner, and lots of careless girls jes used to sorter drift in. It shore was tough. They used to build these wooden shacks right on the line, half in one state and half in the other. If you come from Tennessee and wanted to buy liquor and booze you went across to the Kentucky pare of the building. If you come from Kentucky you crossed over to the Tennessee side. That was to befoul the law and sorter protect yourselves and the people who were running the places. We used to go over there 'most every week-end and after we was filled up with liquor we would go back in the trees and gamble and roam around, or go dancing and looking for trouble.

The liquor we used to drink in those days was most often jes plain Tennessee or Kentucky moonshine. That's powerful liquor. There was plenty of it; and we jes natcherly knowed how to put it away. We would often drink over a quart each a night, and two or three quarts each over a week-end. That's a lot of liquor. We used to think it right smart to drink each other down.

I ricollect oncet a bunch of us got us each a quart of moonshine whiskey and a quart of apple brandy, and we had a sorter drinking bout. We would drink so long as we could stand up, but when we fell over or passed out we would what you might call disqualify.

The one who drunk the most and stayed on his feet the longest got all of the liquor that was left. We bought the liquor at Ball Rock, which is right on the line, and then we come back around Caney Creek and went to it.

There were six of us and we shore put away a lot of that-there liquor. My brothers Henry and Albert didn't last long.

They each put away about three quarters of that apple brandy, and that was the end of them. Everett Delk and me guzzled up a quart each, and then I am a-telling you we were rarin' to go. We started out for Jim Crabtree's house. There was some right-smart girls there; fine girls and good looking too. And though we could hardly stand nohow, we kinder thought we would like to have a little dance with them. We crossed over through a sage field and drunk some more liquor. I guess that old field was pretty flat country, but it seems most awful hilly to me. I knowed I was a-going; and sure enough, another drink and I was flat on my back; but Everett kept a-going and a-drinking.

He went to the house and swallowed a most awful lot of buttermilk, which sorter brought him around. He then went back around the field and collected up all the liquor that was left and took it back to the house and hid it upstairs. Then he kinder kicked and shook us awake. We was scattered here and yonder, jes wherever we give up. We began to come to and go into the house all the way from seven o'clock till midnight. Next morning we didn't none of us know what we had done with our whiskey. We thought we drunk it all. We felt like it, too. But Everett went upstairs and got it and we went to it again. That was the kind of drinking we used to do.

Another time we had to light out from home and go over near the state line and hide us from the grand jury which was after us. They wanted us for liquoring up and fighting and carrying weapons. They didn't have any specific charges against us. They jes wanted to get us before them and question us. And we jes knowed if they ever got us before them and got to questioning us we shore would give each other away and be indicted. So we went over there near the line and jes dranked and gambled and played around until it kinder blew over.

Once they got me for being mixed up in carrying and selling a weapon. I used to always tote a gun around with me and a knife, too. I went before the jury and got out of it right smart. I pleaded my own case and proved to them that it was not my

gun, that I was jes delivering it for somebody else. But hit shore was close and they come near getting me. Another time I was riding home on a mule, drunk as a saloon fly, and sorter wanting to shoot things up. It was in the very early morning. I saw some turkey gobblers sitting on the fence and up in a tree. I had a pistol with me. I jes couldn't resist seeing if my nerve was all right. I jes fired six shots from a long way off, and the air was full of feathers, and there was six dead turkeys stretched out on the ground. Now that was one time that my marksmanship got me in bad. I was brung up before the court, but was able to buy out of it. Turkeys are pretty valuable around our way, especially when it's near Thanksgiving, and it's a pretty serious offence to muss them up.

Once Everett and I were full of booze and riding home on the same mule, both of us, one behind the other. How we done it I don't know; neither of us could sit up straight. But we done it. In the darkness we saw something white sorter floating on Caney Creek. Everett thought it was a white pillow, and I didn't know what it was. We were that full that we couldn't see straight. I got out the old gun again and let fly and we heard an awful squawking and fluttering about in the water, and whatever it was begun to float off. Everett went down to investigate. He said there was feathers and blood all over the water. Then we knowed I had killed a tame goose. I had shot it plumb through the breast. So we thought we had better get out while the going was good, and we did. It was Mr. Moody's goose, and I guess he doesn't know to this day who it was that bumped it off.

Not having no money never bothered us much. We could make it all right at shooting matches. I sure could bust a turkey's head at 'most any distance and cut the center out of a target and win the prize money most any time. I used to do the shooting and Everett would do the betting and then when we won we would buy us some more liquor.

I am a-telling you I kept going from bad to worse, drinking

more and more, and gambling whenever I had the chance or the money, and fighting a whole heap. I was never oncet whipped or knocked off my feet. I jes kinder thought I could whip the world and more than oncet I set out to do it.

I was in a couple of shooting frays too. You see the only book I had read was the life of Frank and Jesse James. It made a big impression on me. I used to practice and practice to shoot like them James boys. I used to get on my mule and gallop around and shoot from either hand and pump bullet after bullet in the same hole. I used to even throw the pistol from hand, to hand and shoot jes as accurate. I could take that old pistol and knock off a lizard's or a squirrel's head from that far off that you could scarcely see it. So you see I was kinder handy when it come to hitting the mark. I never did kill nobody. I never did really fire at anybody; that is, not to hit them. I often shot a few bullets in their direction to frighten them off. Once we hired to a fellow to take some cattle from Wolf River to Chanute. We got four dollars for that. . So we took it to Lick Creek and bought us that much whiskey. That was enough to make us pretty full. We was riding along on our mules and we met up with Will Huff, and we decided to have some fun with him. I got out my little pearl-handle revolver and began to shoot at the ground underneath his mule's belly. That sorter knocked the rocks loose and they flew up and hit the mule and it got to bucking and thronged Will off. He was not hurt, but he was most awful mad.

Then we got to firing under my mule and it bucked me off. I was that wobbly I couldn't sit straight and I jes sorter fell off, and I lay where I fell, too. Everett got him a paling off'n the fence and proceeded to bring me around by slapping me with that old wooden paling. I come to and, thinking somebody was after me, I jumped on the old mule and galloped like an express train through the trees. I guess an express train couldn't have catched me. I lost my hat, but I kept on a-going, shooting and hollering and cussing as I rode. After a few miles I fell off and

went to sleep again. I got into a knife fight, too, with one of the boys in our valley. It was on a Sunday morning after church and that made it worse. We were both full of moonshine and that started it. We sure would have cut each other up, but some of the other boys got between us and separated us. It was over a girl. I am a-telling you that wine and women make a bad mix-up.

Then there was a fellow named Maxey. We had a most awful argument down at a stave mill, and he said next time we met he was going to get me. A few days later I decided to wait for him on the road and run him off. So when he come along I fired a few shots near his feet, and knocked up the dust, and told him to go; and he done went, too. I never seed him again.

I ain't a-boasting of these days. I am kinder ashamed of them now. They was most awful bad. They couldn't have been worser without me killing or hurting somebody; but I never did that. I did enough just the same. I drunk liquor whenever I could get it. I was drunk most every week-end. I gambled away most of my hard-earned money. I was always chewing and cussing. I was always wanting to whip somebody.

I am a-saying again that old Kentucky line was a tough place, and the boys around there was tough too, tougher than hickory; and I was one of them. I was always in trouble, or looking for trouble, and it looked as if sooner or later I would get it and get it right smart. I tell you I was hog-wild.

CHAPTER 3

ROUGH LIVIN'

I ain't had much of the larnin' that comes out of books. I'm a-trying to overcome that, but it ain't easy. If ever you let life get the jump on you, you have to keep hiking to catch up with it again, and I never knowed the truth of this like I do now. It ain't my fault. It ain't nobody's fault. It jes happened. We were most all poor people in the mountains when I was a boy. We hadn't neither the time nor the money to get much larnin'. The roads were bad. There were creeks to cross. So I "rowed up uneducated. And I never will stop regretting it. Only the boy who is uneducated can understand what an awful thing ignorance is. And when he is suddenly pushed out into the world and has to live with educated people and has to hear them discussing things he can't understand, he then sorter realizes what he has missed. And I'm a-telling you he suffers a lot.

When I joined the army I immediately knowed what a terrible handicap my lack of schooling was. When I went over to Paris and visited all sorts of places and seed things I didn't know nothing about nohow, I jes wished I could have had my early life over again. I jes knowed I would have got some larnin' somewhere. Then when I come back home again and found so many people knowed and wanted to meet me, I kinder felt all mussed up about it. But until I begun this book I never fully understood how necessary an education is and how little chance you have to get anywhere without it. When I sit down to write I know what I want to say, but I don't always know jes how to put it down on paper. I jes don't know how to get it out of me and put it in words. I ain't had the training. Hit's no use kicking about it. I suppose I have to do the best I can. I can't do no more. All the same, I do wish I could have had the advantages of good schools and books and teachers.

I have promised myself that I am going to get these things for my children; and for a heap of other children too. I'm a-dedicating my life to building schools in the mountains. If it is necessary I'm going to build good roads and bridges and provide transportation so that the children can get to these schools too. If they can't afford it nohow, I'm a-going to give them a chance to work their way through.

Mountain people are not great readers. I don't mean the people in the towns and more settled communities in the mountain country, I mean we-tins right in the mountains. It is hard to get books and there ain't no libraries. But we're most all good storytellers. And we repeat our stories over and over again until they become sort of household news. Whenever you get two mountaineers together you 'most always get a story. Around the old blacksmith shop, at the store, or at the shooting matches you are most certain to hear a whole mess of them; and when we visit each other and sit around the old open fireplaces on long winter nights we tell a right-smart lot of them. Hunting and shooting stories are the most popular.

And the best of them are remembered and handed down from father to children, jes like the muzzle-loading guns and the old dresses. We never seem to tire of hearing about old Davy Crockett's bear hunts and Daniel Boone's fights with the Indians. And we have all kinds of stories of Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston. They used to get around these parts. There's a whole heap of Crocketts living in Jimtown to this day. These old-timers must have been right-smart men. We don't find the like of them around nowadays. But times have changed. Maybe we don't live the sort of lives which make great men.

Since I was knee high to a duck I've heard tell of these men. I guess what outsiders call history is jes plain story-telling with us.

So you see we mountaineers, without having read many books or studying the subject are tol'ably well informed of what has done been in these parts since the time of the first set-

tlers. The records have been repeated in story form and handed down year after year until it comes to us.

These-here mountains of old Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky were once the hunting and fighting grounds of the Cherokees and Creeks. They was jes about the fightinest Indians that ever put on the war paint. I guess the panthers and wild cats must have studied their methods. Them-there Indians must have been kinder fond of these-here parts. The bears and buffaloes must have attracted them. There sure must have been a mess of them around here. It was nothing for the early settlers to shoot a hundred bear in a single season. They say that Davy Crockett shot ten in one day. I'm a-telling you that's a lot of bear.

Daniel Boone once saw so many buffaloes grazing in the valleys of these-here Cumberland mountains that he shouted, "I am richer than the man mentioned in the Scripture, who owned the cattle of a thousand hills; I own the wild beasts of more than a thousand valleys." And there must have been a lot of deer on the hoof. Some of the old settlers in the mountains still have the fringed deerskin shirts and moccasins of their pioneer ancestors. And there were coon, fox, and panther and all sorts of other varmints. There still are.

But the white settlers come in and started things. The first to come were the fighting Scotch-Irish. They come from the borders of Scotland and from the north of Ireland. They were followed by the Cavaliers from the hills of Scotland and by the Covenanters from England, the Huguenots from France, and a number of Germans. But the Scotch-Irish outnumbered all the others. They were the first. They stayed right on and these mountains are full of their descendants to-day. These old settlers were the most independent, God-fearing and God-loving people in the world. They left the other side rather than bow down to kings and dictators and accept political and religious beliefs they didn't believe in nohow. So they come over here where they hoped to be able to govern themselves and worship

God according to the dictates of their own conscience. They followed the Quakers over into Pennsylvania and then hiked down the Shenandoah Valley to the mountains of North Carolina, and from there they fought their way through the Smokies over into the Cumberlands and Kentucky. That's how Daniel Boone travelled.

He was a kind of trail blazer. Wherever he led others followed; that is, if they got past the Indians. They fought it out all over this country. It was tough fighting from the start to the finish. They tomahawked and shot and scalped each other until nigh every inch of these mountains and valleys was stained with human blood. "The Dark and Bloody Ground" begins only a few miles from where I live. There was no stopping them there early pioneers. They gave the Indians the best they had. It was enough. When they started anything they stuck it out until it was done finished. They believed the only good Indian was a dead one; so they proceeded to make them all good. And they did a right-smart job of it. There are not many redskins left today; and them that are live by themselves on Government reservations. The trouble was there wasn't room enough for both to live in this-here country. What happened is what always happens, when two people fight the strongest won. And the new settlers happened to be the strongest. That's the way of nature.

They were the fightinest men. They were always at it. If it was not the Indians, it was the English or French or Spanish. The Tennessee Sharpshooters were in the thick of it at King's Mountain. They went up the slopes and sharpshotted Ferguson and his Red Coats until there was nigh on none of them left. That-there Ferguson was a tol'able hard-fighting man himself, and he and his troops were great favourites with Cornwallis. And our mountain men shot them all to pieces. That was one of the turning battles in the Revolutionary War. The Tennessee Sharpshooters were Andrew Jackson's favourite troops. Their old long-barrelled muzzle-loaders did a whole heap to whip the English at New Orleans.

They were up against it there too. They were fighting the pick of Wellington's veterans, the ones who helped to bust Napoleon. And the mountaineers out-fought and out-shot them. They were well in it, too, at Pensacola and later on in Mexico. My grandfather, Uriah York, was in the Mexican War and took part in the storming of the heights of Chapultepec. Them-there old pioneers was always fighting. Whenever their liberty was threatened they went right at it. And once when they figured their own Government was not doing the right thing by them they up and founded the free and independent State of Franklin, which was in eastern Tennessee. If you step on a rattler he will strike, and if you step on a Scotch Irishman or a Highlander he will jes natcherly hit back until somebody gets hurt.

The descendants of them-there old pioneers are the mountaineers of to-day. We haven't changed so very much. Of course, we don't wear deerskin shirts and moccasins and coon-skin caps. We get on tol'ably well now in overalls and jeans. The old muzzle-loaders are givin' way to the modern high-powered rifle and shotgun—but jes the same there are a right-smart lot of hog rifles, as we hunters call them, in the mountains even to-day. Most all of us know how to load them, with cap and ball; and up to one hundred yards prefer them to any other rifle in the world. The modern home is drivin' out the little old log cabin with the rough-hewn logs and puncheon floors, but they ain't all gone. You see them here and there through the mountains. My brother George still lives in the one in which we "rowed up."

Even if our clothes and guns and homes are changing, we still sort of hang on to the old pioneer's love of political and religious liberty. We haven't much use for rituals and prayer books. Our God is still the God of our ancestors—the God of the Old Testament. We still believe in His word as it has been revealed to us in the old Bible. In politics too we still hang on to the old ideals of liberty and states' rights. In our family life too we are much the same. Blood is still pretty thick around

these-here parts, and we still stick together much like the clans of our ancestors.

The mountains have sorter hemmed us in along with our own beliefs and ways of living. We kinder live an Eighteenth Century life, in the middle of the Twentieth Century. You can kinder trace our pedigree in the names of the towns all through the mountains. There is Pall Mall, where I live; and Jamestown, the county site; and Livingston, close by; and Cookeville, and Crossville, and Rugby. Them's good old Anglo-Saxon names. And to kinder balance things, there is Possum Trot, Coon Gap, Wolf Valley, Wolf River, and Burrville. There's the pioneer side of us. And jes like the towns which are a mixture of old Anglo-Saxon and the spirit of the frontier days, so we-tins are a mixture of old Anglo-Saxon stock, kinder seasoned and hardened in the roughness of this-here new continent of ours.

So we people in the mountains claim that while we are good Americans, the sons and daughters of early pioneers, we are also the old Anglo-Saxon type and among the purest in America. We still sing many of the old border ballads and speak a heap of old English words, like "ain't," "we-uns," "you-uns," and "afeared." We are big and rangy and raw-boned. And there are 'most any number of red-headed people all around. We have a saying that you may see a red-headed man in the penitentiary, but you will never see one in an insane asylum.

CHAPTER 4

GUNS A-PLENTY

Most all of the mountain people have jes natcherly grewed up with rifles. From the cradle they are sorter used to the smell of powder and the presence of the old muzzle-loader, powder horn, and doeskin shot pouch hanging in a corner of the cabin. The mountaineer's arm has a sort of natural crook for an old rifle-gun.

The rifle played a big part in the conquering and developing of this-here mountain country. I ain't got much poetry in me, but any I have I sorter spill out on rifles and shooting and hunting. I am sorter used to these things. I understand them. I know how to make the most of them.

I am telling you I would much sooner take up my muzzle-loader than a pen or pencil, and I am much more useful with it, too. The early pioneers not only knowed how to use their rifles, but they knowed how to make them. The long-barrel, muzzle-loading type of rifle made in the mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky was the best and most accurate shooting gun in the world, and up to one hundred yards it still is. At the two last turkey-shooting matches held in our valley, seven out of ten of the turkeys had their heads busted with the muzzle-loaders and only three with modern rifles. The distance was 'most always sixty yards, but the old muzzle-loaders also brought down turkeys at one hundred fifty yards, although they are not so good as the modern rifle at that distance.

Before the American pioneers made and sort of perfected these-here muzzle-loaders there was really no accurate rifle-guns in the world. The old flintlocks, muskets, and blunderbusses which they used over therein Europe were not much account nohow. They were never sure of hittin' the mark. They were never even sure of goin' off, and even when they did they

made a noise like a cannon. They often done more damage to the shooter than to the one he was shootin' at. Most often the powder flared back into the eyes of whoever was squintin' down the barrel. Them-there guns might have been all right over there on the other side where a miss didn't matter so much and there was plenty of time to reload and the more noise the better, but they never would have got nothin' nohow over here. The hunters who come into the American wilderness fightin' Indians and shootin' game for food jes couldn't afford to miss. They had to have a rifle-gun that they knowed would shoot straight; that would shoot 'most every time they fired it; that they could reload pretty quick, and that wouldn't make too much noise for the Indians to hear. They couldn't get these guns nowhere. There weren't any. So they begun to make them themselves. And they made the first accurate, dependable guns in the world. I guess the first real good guns that come down here to the mountains were the Decherds in Pennsylvania, but soon the mountaineers begun to get busy and made their own.

Most all around this-here mountain country there was blacksmiths and gunsmiths in them-there days who learned how to make rifles that jes knowed how to shoot straight. To this day there are men who can make them. And if you roam around for a while you can still see the ruins of the crude old blast furnaces they used. I spent a heap of my time as a boy black smithing with my father. I never made any guns but I often doctored sick ones. I know the heap of trouble and care you have to take when you are fooling around with guns. And yet, these old Southern gunsmiths with crude forges and cruder home-made equipment turned out guns that served the purpose and revere in their time the best guns in the world and are even now thought a heap of by our mountain marksmen. These old mountain guns were made from ore dug out of these-here mountains. Even the barrels were bored or welded and then rifled on the ground. The trigger, trigger guard, firing pan, flint chops, sights, and all the other fittings were also made right in

the mountains and the stock was generally carved out of "rained and seasoned woods, such as bird's-eye maple, or curly cherry, or black walnut.

Some of the best known of these old mountain guns were the Gibsons, Beans, or Duncans. Later on, of course, the barrels and the locks were bought outside and shipped in; and to-day nearly all the other parts are bought and assembled. But jes the same there are a heap of them old pioneer guns around, and there arc a few mountain gunsmiths still left who can turn them out almost as good as ever. We don't use the flintlocks to-day. Hit is too hard to keep them dry. Out in the woods we always had to keep them covered with a sort of sleeve which we slip over the barrel. This sleeve was generally made from the skin of a steer or a deer's leg. Armed with these old mountain guns, not more than nine hundred mountain sharpshooters whipped and shot to pieces Ferguson and his twenty-six hundred trained men at King's Mountain. And it was these same old guns which made it possible for the six thousand men under Andrew Jackson down there at New Orleans to stop ten thousand British soldiers who once fought under Wellington and mussed up Napoleon.

Allowing for the times and the conditions and the purposes for which they were used, them-there native made guns were the best rifle-guns that was ever made. I myself have used the Army service rifles and most of the modern high-powered rifles, but when I go hunting or take part in the shooting matches up to one hundred or even up to one hundred and fifty yards I much prefer my old muzzle-loading rifle-gun to any other in the world, and that's what I think of it.

They are very cheap to keep up. Loading ain't no bother if you know how. First of all, you stand the old gun upright with the butt resting on the ground. Then you pour the powder out of a powder horn, made from the horn of a buck or a steer, into the charger, which is generally carved out of the tip of a buck's horn. The amount of powder you use, of course, depends on the

distance you expect to shoot. Natcherly, a long shot takes a bigger charge of powder than a short shot. You pour the powder out of the charger down the muzzle of the gun. Many shooters are so expert that they can measure off the powder in the hollow of their hands and empty it into the muzzle, scarcely losing a grain. Then the patch is placed over the end of the muzzle. This-here patch is generally a piece of blue denim or bed ticking and it is best when it is greased or tallowed. The ball is then taken out of the shot pouch, which is made of soft doeskin and placed on top of the patch and pressed with the thumb into the barrel. Then the ends of the patch are trimmed off and the bullet and the patch are rammed hard down against the powder. The ramrod is generally a straight piece of hickory whittled into shape. A couple of whangs with this-here ramrod packs the ball into place. The patch lies on top of the powder and sorter packs the ball tight in the barrel so that the explosion can't escape. Last of all, the little percussion cap is put in place. Then the gun is ready for firing. All this takes jes a short time. Many of the old-timers can reload these old guns on the run.

Of course, if you're a hunter you have got to know all about guns and how to handle them. Guns are like hounds, they have a lot of this-here temperament, and you have got to kinder get acquainted with them. Sometimes you have got to kinder kid them. A gun will shoot a certain way one day and altogether different the next day. You have got to know whether they shoot fine or full, or to the left or to the right; how the wind affects them, and the sunlight and the clouds; even how they shoot on damp days and dry days. I have a whole collection of them at home. I have an automatic shotgun and a twenty-five-twenty rifle and that old muzzle-loader of my father's. It's the cap-and-ball type. My father done used it in the shooting matches, and that's what I use it for now. It's a sure gun for that sort of work. It jes don't know how to miss nohow. And I have a forty-five pistol. I sure would like to have the one I used in the fight with the machine guns in the Argonne. I tried to get it. The War

Department searched through about fifty thousand pistols for it, but I guess somebody got a-hold of it and knowed it was a good one and decided to keep it.

I kinder think that the reason why the mountaineers are among the best shots in the world is because they have "rowed up with rifles. They know all about them. They know how to take them to pieces and put them together again. They know how to doctor them when they're sick, and many of them even know how to make them. I am a-telling you that's understanding a gun. Then they are always using them out in the woods shooting at all sorts of game. Of course, that's great practice. Then 'most all of them live pretty healthy outdoor lives and go in for regular hours, natcheral food, and the right amount of sleep. So their sight and their nerves are 'most always good.

And then there's the shooting matches which are always very popular in the mountains. Busting a turkey's head and cutting the centre of targets makes for expert marksmanship. A right-smart heap of the men who went to King's Mountain and whipped Ferguson went right from one of these-here shooting matches. They were a-having a big time of it. They were shooting for beeves and turkeys at a big match at Gilberttown, N. C., when they received word from Ferguson, telling them if they didn't lay down their arms and return to their rightful allegiance he would come over them-there hills and smash their settlements and hang their leaders. They was jes about the best shooters in the mountains and they went straight from that shooting match and connected with the backwater men and went up King's Mountain and showed Ferguson how American mountaineers, armed with American muzzle-loading rifle-guns, can shoot.

SERGEANT
YORK
AND THE
GREAT
WAR

There was a time that Sergeant Alvin C. York was a household name in America. Perhaps many of you recognize the name from the motion picture of Sergeant York as portrayed by Gary Cooper.

Needless to say the movie won Cooper his first Oscar and gave Sergeant York even more notoriety, helping to retain his status as a true American hero.

This book details the early days of Alvin York, a backwoods Tennessean who lived in obscurity until he was drafted and trained to fight for Uncle Sam overseas during the Great War, World War I. Alvin York kept a war diary that was published in 1928 by Mr. Tom Skeyhill. This book is a unique reproduction of Sergeant York's war diary. Added to the events of the war diary are pictures and general information about World War I which allow the reader to experience, perhaps for a moment, the feeling of what it was like to walk alongside Alvin York in the early 1900's.

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