

SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS OUR "CONTEMPORANEOUS ANCESTORS"

The Rev. Frank C. Button, Who Has Spent Twenty-Five Years in Kentucky, Tells of the "American Highland."

FEUD MURDER NOT REGARDED AS CRIME

"Rowan County War" Between Tolliver and Martin Factions Described by Man Who Witnessed Their Battles at Close Range.

SUPPOSE that some one had bottled up a section out of the life of the American colonies before the War for Independence, had set it aside in suspended development, and that you were now, in 1909, looking at that historic specimen. You would have there the actual, present living condition of some three millions of people to-day in the United States. They inhabit the mountain section of the South; one of their strongholds is the upland of Kentucky and one of their world famous in-

crushed at Exmoor. There is a sprinkling of Germans and more than a trace of the Huguenots. "Some of these immigrants remained for a generation or two in the coast colonies, notably about Charleston, until driven westward by the persecution of the British Governor, Tyron, the "Great He Wolf of Carolina." Enough of them remained behind to draft the Mecklenburg Declaration. To the others the glorious West was open, where there was no oppressor, and they moved onward. Another wave of immigrants entered the valley of Philadelphia and pushed over the mountains for the lowlands beyond. Cumberland Gap became the gateway to the new land and the flood followed "Boone's trace," or the Wilderness road.

The significance of this prime survival in the full stream of material advance, standing like a gaunt rock in the current of progress, is pointed out by the Rev. Frank C. Button, principal of the Morehead Normal School, of Morehead, Ky., who has devoted his life to the aiding of the last man in the American procession. "Our contemporaneous ancestors" are to his mind more surely worthy of attention than distant hordes of aliens. Mr. Button is now in New York in connection with the business of the institution which he has built up from the back room of a log cabin, with one pupil, to an efficient training school, with buildings and departments and an enrollment of more than five hundred. Probably there is no other man so well fitted to talk of and for the "American highlander" as this his teacher and his student.

ALMOST FORGOTTEN.

"How many of those who live in the trampled track of civilization are aware of the existence of this antique race in the heart and centre of our country?" asked Mr. Button. "Scarce one has given a thought to the romance of our most distinctively national remnant, the true sons and daughters of the Revolution. Here, in the two hundred counties of West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky that include the mountains of the South, live the real Americans, the only portion of the nation that has preserved in perfect purity the strain of the pioneers. Here are the same simple, straightforward, liberty loving, hard hitting first citizens, who wrenched an empire from the unknown and who feared no man above the ground.

"Strong, clean bodied, intelligent, they are the best rough material in the world, sadly handicapped by the inaccessible valleys in which they live and the fact that they have been forgotten. Their conditions of life are the same that their forefathers knew, the men who followed Daniel Boone into the wilderness. Fight? Of course they fight. They quarrel for the love of fighting.

"Their faults are the faults of the English and the Scotch-Irish everywhere. The Scotch-Irish stock predominates, although there are many families that trace their descent directly from the English dissenters, the Roundheads. It is a matter of record that Cromwell himself once engaged passage for America. Throughout the mountains names of families and localities read like the roll call of the devoted contingent that rallied about the banner of the Duke of Monmouth and was

BUILT AMONG MOUNTAINS.

"In the toilsome journey through the highlands many who had started with the purpose of reaching the ample plains beyond never found what they sought, but were content to make a clearing and build a cabin among the mountains. Illness, the death of a horse, a broken wagon wheel furnished the excuse for turning aside until a temporary halt was lengthened to permanent residence. Game was plentiful and the first dwellers on the 'knobs' and retired valleys were not so crowded as to test the scanty agricultural opportunities along the range. There they stayed and there their descendants live to-day. Out of every thousand mountaineers nine hundred and ninety-nine are of American birth and American descent.

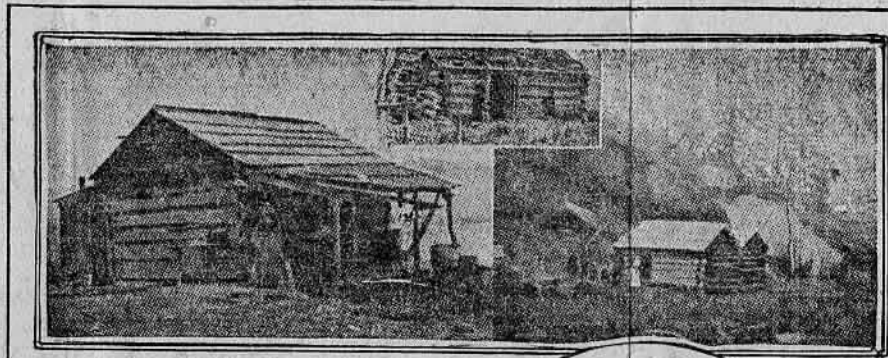
"They took with them and have retained, by reason of their highland homes, an intense, fundamental belief in human liberty. The mountaineers of Kentucky and Tennessee, under John Sevier, brought their long rifles to the aid of their struggling country and struck a mighty blow for independence at King's Mountain. Jackson learned their worth at New Orleans. They held no slaves, and in the civil war 200,000 fighting men poured from these mountains to throw their courage and efficiency into the scale for the Union. Their very resistance to the interference of revenue officers in the "moonshining" industry is an indication and an outcome of their belief in liberty.

"Their Colonial and Old World origin has not been subjected to the modification and development that the rest of the country has undergone. Stranded in their retreats, they are one hundred, or even one hundred and fifty, years behind our line of march. Their very speech is a forgotten tongue. They say 'holp' for help, 'soon' for early, 'pack' for carry, 'beastis' for beast, 'be gone' for go, 'light' for 'alight.' There is an Elizabethan flavor in their conversation. What are regarded as provincialisms are frequently survivals of Saxon dialects. 'I don't confidence him,' 'brickety' and 'hit' for it are some of the idiosyncrasies of their language.

UP TO DATE IN ARMAMENT.

"Types differ somewhat in different parts of this region, and even change from valley to valley. Neighbors living twelve miles apart on opposite sides of a mountain are more effectually separated than inhabitants of Chicago and New York,

TUMBLE DOWN CABINS. A FEW OF THE HIGHLANDERS OF KENTUCKY AND THEIR



TYPICAL HOMES OF THE "AMERICAN HIGHLANDER"



PLOUGHWOMAN OF THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS



A MOUNTAINEER OF KENTUCKY



KENTUCKY MOUNTAINEERS AT HOME.

But take an average mountaineer from one of the upland counties of Kentucky and examine his qualities and his possibilities.

"In appearance he is tall, spare, brown and sinewy. His hands are the hands of the woodman and the agriculturist. His eye is clear, his carriage erect, he has the free swing of the savage. His clothes are simple, his bearing that of a gentleman. He is the son of a pioneer, the descendant of Admiral Greene or Thomas Jefferson, spun on an ancient spinning wheel and woven on an ancient hand loom. The one modern note in his equipment is his Winchester rifle, or a sufficiently effective design and the deadliest of weapons when steadied by nerves of iron. And he is a dead shot.

"Know him better, as time and chance may perhaps allow you, and you will find a man singularly reserved, proud and sensitive. He is aware of his deficiencies in the presence of 'furriners' and has recourse to silence. Yet his brain is keen, it can pass with lightning swiftness to the point of a matter once understood, he has an unusual mental grasp for one so ill equipped.

"A man of serious mind, is this mountaineer, seeing life under a drab aspect, with few high lights. In his youth he never played a game. He knows little of pleasure or variety or the occupations that make for intellectual development. He is kindly, forceful, a valuable citizen in embryo, but he can contribute nothing to the race as he is. His one stimulant, mental or otherwise, is 'moonshine.' He lacks a sense of humor. He may know the garbled version of an old English or Scottish ballad, handed down through the generations, but he has no other literature. His religion is little aid to him. Professedly he is a Baptist, of the sect known as 'hardshell,' the stiffest Calvinist that has survived. His faith is based on predestination, he is a fatalist. His is a gloomy philosophy.

"The preacher to whom he listens once a week or a fortnight is a duplicate of himself, though perhaps more narrow and less tolerant. These clergymen do not believe in education, are themselves untaught and illiterate. They preach when 'called.' At other times they are farmers or storekeepers, or, perhaps their flock elects them to some office for their support. They draw no salaries. It is told of one of them he took the subject of Queen Esther as his Easter sermon, conceiving that to be the significance of the day.

"The greatest events in the mountaineer's yearly life are the two or three occasions when he attends a 'feet washing' or 'big meeting.' Here the members of two or three congregations meet to hear the untutored sermons of their shepherds or perform for one another the Biblical washing of feet.

"Besides this relaxation and 'moonshine' he has little to draw his attention from the hard facts of existence. This is bad for him, but it is worse for his children, unless we can have more schools. "One thing more he likes. He likes to

fight. Fighting of any kind appeals to him, though even his unsatisfactory degree of religion has sometimes had a restraining effect. As a general statement, however, drawing a generalization where there exist such wide individual differences, the mountaineer has always been willing to fight, particularly with deadly intent. He has always been ready to kill his man, kill quickly, from behind, from ambush, often and from generation to generation, provided that he has cause, as he understands cause. And his favorite cause is a feud.

"Contrary to general belief the feudist is not a criminal. By this I mean he is not a member of the criminal class. Feud killings and 'moonshining' have never been regarded as crimes in the mountains of the South. The feudist is frequently a respected and a respectable citizen, according to his lights.

FEUD OUTGROWTH OF CLAN SPIRIT.

"It has been suggested by some that the Kentucky retainers of the Houses of York and Lancaster renewed the quarrels of their forefathers, after immigration. This is, of course, a highly romantic and interesting view, but I rather should accept the feud as an outgrowth of the old clan spirit. The days of the claymore have not grown away from these people. The intense loyalty to family, to name, to locality, burns as intensely as ever within them. Here are the Stewarts and the Campbells, the McDonalds, the McNells,

the McAfees and the McKenzies, not submitted to the chastening influences of civilization, but still isolated in their pristine savagery among the highlands, ripe for jealousies and violence. Their spirit has spread through all.

"No just conception of the reasons for that strange remaining relic of barbarism, the feud, can be gained without bearing dominantly in mind the geographical disadvantage under which these people live. The mountains are savage, forbidding, restricting. A man knows only the inhabitants of his own little valley or 'knob,' and he has a predisposition to regard all others with suspicion and aversion. This segregation of small communities has led in extreme instances to inbreeding, with its terrible resultants of degeneracy, intemperance and vice. But this condition by no means obtains throughout the region.

"Here you have this mountaineer, active, proud, narrow and loyal to his relations and close friends, bitter to his enemies, caring little for life, his own or another's; forgetting, with the untempered blood of clan fighting, red coat fighting, Indian fighting ancestors in his veins. He quarrels and kills. His victim's son kills him. A feud is started.

"The slaying goes on, involving cousins, nephews, distant branches of the families, close friends and their relatives, while the original cause of the quarrel is completely forgotten. The accident of birth that gives one man a certain name has thereby made him the natural and unrelenting enemy of

all men bearing a certain other name. Babes in the cradle are dedicated to the purpose of mutual annihilation. The match is made in heaven, the extermination of one or both sides to the struggle. Boys are considered eligible as participants in the feud as soon as they can fire a gun. Women have never taken an active part in feuds, their interest in the proceedings being limited to that of widows, orphans, the fatherless and the brotherless.

DEATH PENALTY SELDOM INFLICTED.

"There is a criminal class in the mountains quite distinct from the feudists. They are the descendants, chiefly, of early settlers who committed some crime along the line of advance in the pioneer days and sought safety in the upper mountain fastnesses. These men frequently commit murders under cover of a feud, trusting that in the general reign of violence their own part will be overlooked. It is a singular commentary on the strange race of the highlands that these transgressions have been sternly punished whenever discoverable. The death penalty is seldom inflicted as punishment for the taking of life. Let families fight to the death, but let the unauthorized murderer keep his rifle cool.

"In the Tolliver-Martin feud in Rowan county about thirty men have been killed. There has been no hanging. The longest sentence for murder imposed was twenty-one years, and the man was not a feudist.

"Feudists have been subjected to the form of a trial, but none of them ever has been convicted. If he has met retribution it has come from the bullet of an opponent. The 'Rowan county war,' one of the most sanguinary instances of the American version of the vendetta, was only stopped with a massacre. As has been the case with some other feuds, this struggle began with and retained a political complexion.

"Craig Tolliver was the police judge of Moreland and a democrat. He was boss of the town, though sentiment in the county was almost evenly divided. It was his general custom to station himself at the polls on election days with a Winchester on his arms and watch his cohorts. Voting in those days was by the living voice. The voter approached an open window and after announcing his name to the clerk within called out his choice for the office at issue. Tolliver's rifle was a first rate election argument, but the opposing party was strong and scenes of considerable excitement attended the voting.

"On August 4, 1884, Solomon Bradley, a republican, was shot and killed during an election by Floyd Tolliver. It was said afterward that the shooting was accidental, but here was the match to the train that political feeling, joined to clan feeling, had laid. Soon afterward John Martin, a rel-

Three Million Americans Live as Did Their Colonial Forefathers.

STILL WEAR HOMESPUN

Savage and Illiterate, but Naturally Intelligent and Valuable Citizens in Rough.

FORGOTTEN BY CIVILIZATION

Feuds the Result of Clan Spirit, a Survival from Days of Highland Quarrels, Perpetuated Here.

ative of Bradley, killed Floyd Tolliver in a saloon.

"At this quick blow in revenge the tardy machine of justice, rusted from long disuse, broke into a semblance of activity and hung a hand upon John Mar-

tin. Officers had Martin on a train en route from Winchester to Morehead. When the train was a few miles out of Morehead it was boarded by a band of Tolliver followers. Martin sat handcuffed and helpless between the officers and there his enemies coolly shot him and then went their ways. From this dated a carnival of murder. It was interrupted for a brief space by the famous 'treaty of Morehead,' negotiated by Governor J. Proctor Knott. He called the chiefs of the factions, Cook Humphrey, then Sheriff, and Craig Tolliver, before him and forced them to agree to leave the State. They promised and did, but were back in a few days. The murders continued until Boone Logan entered the field.

"Boone Logan's affiliations had joined him to the Tolliver faction, but when in one of the ramifications of the quarrel his two cousins were killed by Tolliver adherents he went to Frankfort and obtained authority to put down the feud. Men were tired of a state of anarchy. The feud was no longer merely a 'gentlemen's disagreement' but a public nuisance. The mountain counties suddenly developed a horror of promiscuous killing and a posse of two hundred and fifty joined Boone Logan. But, after all, they were mountaineers and they smiled grimly at Logan's orders to take the Tolliver leaders 'dead or alive.'

"Before attacking Morehead on June 22, 1887, they stationed men with red flags on the railroad in both directions to keep trains out of the way of flying bullets. Then they surrounded the town and drew in. There was fierce fighting near the railroad station and the Tolliver men were driven back, firing as they ran. They made a stand in a little building the site of which is now occupied by the parsonage. Craig, Bud and Jay Tolliver and Hiram Cooper were killed and the back of the feud was broken.

"These are the American highlanders. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with them; they have the stuff of solid citizens. For the sake of their fathers, who were ours; for the sake of their record, which is noble; for the sake of humanity we owe them a debt—the debt of education. They are eager to know. They learn quickly. A little attention, a little training, a little opening of the door of opportunity and they shall have outgrown their vices and taken their stand by the side of other Americans, no longer an anachronism. Their salvation, which will give us three million believers in democracy, supporters of the Republic, intelligent defenders of liberty, lies in the school."