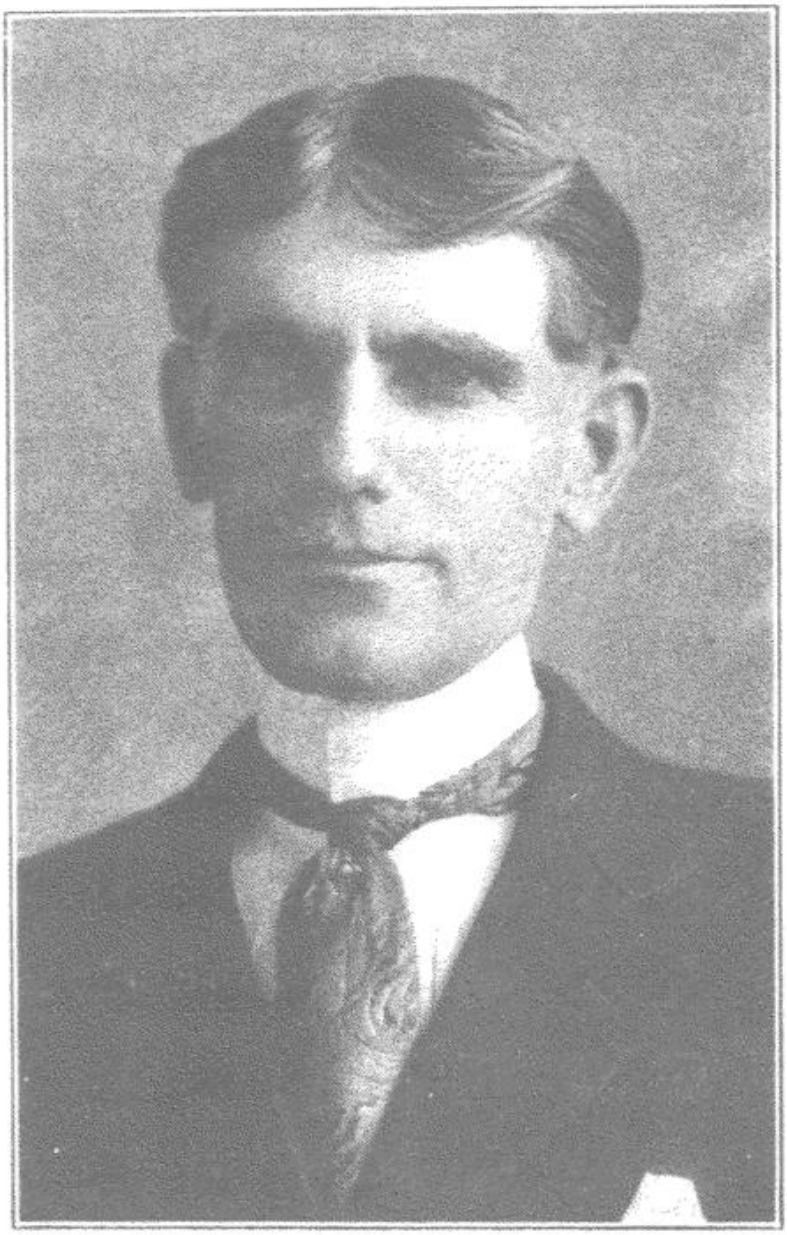
"MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME"

A Thrilling Story of Kentucky Mountain Life

By

C. Perry Gibbs

Log Cabin in Which the Author of This Story Was Born and Reared



COMMODORE PERRY GIBBS

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"A story and drama lecture of life and death, love and hate, rich in patriotism, philosophy and religion; tender and sweet with pathos; full of humor and tragedy; masterful in character-analysis; charming in description and thrilling in dramatic action."

EDWIN P. MORROW,
Ex-Governor of Kentucky.

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"MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME."

Once upon a time a young man was going to see his sweetheart. He stopped at the Florist's and purchased a beautiful bouquet of roses. When he arrived at the house of the beautiful girl who was waiting for him, he presented her the roses. She was so overcome with joy that for the moment she forgot her dignity and threw both arms about him and kissed him right on the lips. He tore away and started for the door. She ran after him, caught him by the arm, saying: "I did not mean to embarrass you." He said: "Embarrass nothing! I am going after more flowers." Now I am not writing this story for the flowers, or the other either. I am writing it that you may know something about "My Old Kentucky Home."

Since I am a minister and trained to sermonize, you will permit me to use a text. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (Psalm 137: 5, 6). The Bible is good enough as it is; but will you not allow me to put my bit of sentiment in the text by saying: "If I forget thee, O 'My Old Kentucky Home' let my right hand forget its cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not 'My Old Kentucky Home' above my chief joy.' "

A good many years ago there lived a young man in the New England States by the name of Foster. One day this young man had a peculiar sensation about his heart. He said: "I'll go courting." No, not courting but "sparking." Not many weeks hence he is in Blue Grass, Kentucky —which is the garden spot of the world. It was a beautiful day in June—"Knee Deep in June" as Riley says. The young gentleman was sitting in the shade of the old apple tree, in the front yard of an old Kentucky mansion. With him was a young Kentucky gentleman. On the front porch of the old mansion were two beautiful Kentucky girls. The sky was blue; the grass was blue; the sun was shining bright; the birds were singing; the flowers were blooming; the smell of the new mown hay came up from the meadow; the darkies were gay and all were merry, happy and bright. Again the New Englander felt that peculiar sensation and inspiration stirring his mind, heart and soul. He took from his pocket an old envelope and began to write:

"The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay;
The corn-top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day;
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,
All merry, all happy and bright;
By'n-by hard times comes a-knocking at the door,
Then, my old Kentucky home, good-night!

"Weep no more, my lady, O weep no more today!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

"They hunt no more for the possum and the coon,
On the meadow, the hill and the shore;
They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
On the bench by the old cabin door;
The day goes by like a shadow o'er the heart,
With sorrow where all was delight;
The time has come when the darkies have to part,
Then, my old Kentucky home, good-night!

"The head must bow and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the darkey may go;
A few more days, and the trouble all will end,
In the field where the sugar-canes grow;
A few more days for to tote the weary load,—
No matter, 'twill never be light;
A few more days till we totter on the road,
Then, my old Kentucky home, good-night!"

The two beautiful girls on the porch joined the two young men; a bee buzzed above them; a yellow butterfly zigzagged by; blackbirds chattered in the firs. The quartette put their heads together and began singing "My Old Kentucky Home." The birds that had been singing so gaily in the tops of the trees came down on the lower limbs and turned their heads side-wise to listen to the sweet-

est music they had ever heard. The darkies down in the cornfield who had been singing:

"Trouble, O Lawd!
Nothin' but trouble in lan' of Canaan,"

forgot their trouble and came up near the old apple tree to listen to the music that warmed their hearts. At once "My Old Kentucky Home" won its way into the hearts of the American people. Wherever you go in this fair land of ours you will hear "My Old Kentucky Home" ringing from every cabin and mansion. Yonder on Flander's Field, the night cold and dark and long, a zeppelin droning overhead, the whiz-z-z of a cannon-ball across the trench—you could hear a doughboy's voice ringing out over the field on the midnight air:

"Weep no more, my lady, O weep no more today!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away."

Now, *my* old Kentucky home that I want to tell you about is just as great a contrast as you can image. That you may see *my* old Kentucky home and know it, I will take you to the very heart of the mountains of eastern Kentucky. Do not be afraid of being lost for you cannot lose a Kentucky mountaineer; he always goes back the way he came. So we will journey to *my* old Kentucky home the way I came. We are now in Indianapolis, Indiana; at the Union Depot we will purchase a ticket over the Big Four Railroad to

Cincinnati; here we will take the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. We cross the Ohio River to the Kentucky side,—we go up the Ohio—on and on we go. At times we think the train will plunge into the River; on and on we go for over two hundred miles. We arrive at Ashland, and five miles beyond Ashland we come to Catlettsburg at the mouth of Big Sandy River. At the mouth of Big Sandy the States of Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky meet. Big Sandy River rises in Old Virginia, flowing directly northward through the mountains, forming the boundary line between West Virginia and Kentucky and emptying into the Ohio River at Catlettsburg between Ashland, Kentucky and Huntington, West Virginia. Twenty years ago there was no railroad up Big Sandy River. *My* old Kentucky home was over one hundred miles from any railroad. Now the Big Sandy Division of the C. & O. goes up the river through the mountains, joining the Sea Board and Air Line to the coast.

Now, we are on our way up Big Sandy River. It is an April day; a day of mist and rain. Sometimes, for hours, there is a miracle of blue sky, white cloud and yellow light, but always between dark and dark the rain is falling and the mist is creeping up the mountains and rises from the tops, only to roll together from either range, drip back into the narrow valleys and lift, straightway, as mist, rain or fog. You can reach out of the car window and touch the great stone walls

where they were blasted away for a road bed The few valleys or bottoms are very narrow. In most places the ridges come down to the very water's edge. The railroad winds about as it follows the river. In many places you may look on before and see the engine crawling around the mountain side. At a few places you will think the engine is coming back to meet you. In some places in the mountains you must look straight up to see the sky at all. Great white tumbling clouds are piled high above the mountains. Squirrels chatter among the trees; the forest which covers the mountain sides, is full of singing birds; the crows are cawing in the woods across the river; little streams run down from the mountain side with banks that are green to the very water's edge. A worn rail-fence encloses small fields. Nestled among the rocks and trees on the side of the mountain may be seen the corner of a log cabin. The mountain sides are showered with pink and white laurel; we mountaineers call it "ivy." The train creeps by another log cabin set in the hillside, and then past another and another; and always several children are standing in the door and the mother peering over their heads. Each little railroad station on the mountain side is crowded with mountaineers. At one of these little stations the train stops; we step off; the train goes on and leaves us. We look around for some way to go over to *my* old Kentucky home. Well, there is no flying machine, no carriage, no

taxi. There are three ways we may go. We may go on an ox-cart, on horseback or take your foot in hand and go dusty road fashion. Just take your choice. We will go down the river about one mile, then we will go up Muddy Branch, over little Whipperwill Hill, over Big Whipperwill Hill, on to Road Branch, down Road Branch to Tom's Creek. The maze of the mountains deepens. Now and then we ride up branches, with cliffs a hundred feet high on either side, and small streams trickling down the mountain side. We come to a deep, narrow valley, through which flows a creek, emptying about ten miles farther on into Big Sandy River. The creek can be followed thirty or forty miles back into the mountains, and, and for the full distance, it is beautified with trees and bushes. Here at the mouth of a mountain ravine on Road Branch of old Tom's Creek, is the dearest spot on earth to me. You could not find a more favorable spot for *my* old Kentucky home. Just at the mouth of the ravine is a gigantic yellow willow, four or five feet in diameter and near two hundred feet high. In the ravine on the west side of the cabin stands a great weeping willow. It's long robe-like branches hang down and reach to the ground. On the east side of the cabin stands a wonderful old walnut. To the north a great cove, reaching to the mountain top. Geese and ducks are hunting crawfish in the little creek that runs in front of the log cabin, half hidden by willows at the edge of the forest. *My* old Ken-

tucky home is a large log cabin, with a lean-to in the rear. The space between the logs is chinked up with mud and chips. It is provided with a puncheon floor, a stone fireplace and a stick and mud chimney. There is one window with a swinging board shutter, and the roof is covered with boards of our own splitting. It is comfortable, rain-tight, wind-tight, snow-tight and cold-tight. Here I was born; here I grew to manhood.

For the time being let us forget our beautiful city with all its wealth, culture, education, religion and comfortable homes—and live in the very heart of the mountains of Kentucky that we may see, know and understand the Kentucky mountaineer. My people have lived in the mountains of Kentucky for five generations. I am the first of the family to leave the mountains.

First let us consider the geography of the mountains. So the class in geography may stand; but we must learn a part of our geography all over. Out of the mountains the schools teach that there are four directions—east, west, north and south. In the mountains of Kentucky we have only three directions, namely: up the creek, down the creek and over the hill. If a mountaineer by chance crosses the ridge over to another creek or river and meets another mountaineer, something like this conversation will take place: "Whar you from, stranger, an' what's yo' business over hyeh, an' whar you goin' and what moight yo' name be?" "From yon side o' the mountain, an' I'm a

huntin', an' I'm a goin' up the creek an' then over the hill."

The hills and mountains in eastern Kentucky are very steep. A few years ago I came to Indiana and stood by the side of a beautiful, auburn-haired, blue-eyed Hoosier school teacher. She held my hand and I held hers, and the minister said the words that made us one. I asked my bride, "Where will we spend our honey-moon?" She said, "I want to go to the mountains of Kentucky." We made the trip and spent two months in the very heart of the Kentucky mountains. When we returned to Indiana we visited with my wife's father, a practical Hoosier farmer. He looked at me; I was tall, slim and just from the hills. He could not trust me for the whole truth in the matter, so he turned to his daughter and said: "Are those mountains steep?" Here is what his daughter said: "The mountaineers plant their corn on the mountain side. The soil is very fertile and will grow anything. The mountain farmer does not plow his ground; the horse would fall off the hill and break its neck. He puts his seed corn in his pocket, takes a hoe in hand and goes up on the mountain side. The first thing he does is to dig a hole for a toe-hold; then he digs another small hole and drops in three or four grains of corn, digs a little soil over it, then another and another until the row is completed around the mountain side. Then another row is dug in and another until the mountain side is all planted. In

a few weeks the corn is up. Then the mountaineer cuts the weeds and digs dirt up around the corn and the corn stalks grows straight up by the mountain side. When the stalk is full grown there will be a big ear of corn and sometimes two ears on each stalk. The stalk grows up by the side of the mountain, the wind blows and the stalk begins to weave to and fro and the rubbing against the mountain side wears the ear of corn off the stalk. Yes, the hills *are* steep! They are so steep that you must hold to a bush to pull yourself up or to let yourself down the mountain side. One day a sheep was grazing on the mountain side and stumbled and fell and rolled down the mountain side and into an old mud chimney and down into the cabin!"

My people are farmers; they were farmers two hundred years ago. My father owned one hundred and sixty acres of mountain land, and there was only one-half an acre of level ground. All the farming was done on the mountain side. No farm is complete without a meadow. There is no word in our language that is so full of music, poetry and life as the word "meadow." Don't call your meadow a grass field or hay field. If you are growing old, if you are worried and nervous and tired, go out into the meadow where the sky is blue, the grass is blue, the flowers blooming, the sunshine bright, the water flowing; spend two months out in this meadow and your hair will cease to turn gray and all the wrinkles will

leave your face. We had our meadow on the old mountain farm. Just in front of the log cabin there is a small brook or branch. Just across the stream is the mountain rising almost straight up toward the sky. On this mountain side was our meadow. The wild grass, blue grass, orchard grass, red top, timothy and clover grow up fine and high. When it was ready to mow or cut down we did not use a modern machine; we went out to the old shed and took down from the wall an old scythe blade, the kind that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob used; then we went out to the mountain side to cut down or mow the grass. The mountain stands right up in front of us, and the blade of the sickle sticks into the mountain side. What can be done? Well, we put our sickle under our arm or on our shoulder and go up to the top of the mountain. Then we cut a swath down the mountain to the branch, then climb back and cut down again and again until all is cut down. When the grass is well cured, we go up to the top of the mountain and gather the hay into a rick or cylinder around the mountain side, then we begin to roll it down the mountain. It will of its own weight gather the hay as it rolls, growing larger and larger until at last it reaches the bottom—a big cylinder of hay, and all we have to do then is to open the barn doors and roll the hay into the barn. So much for the geography of the mountains of Kentucky; I shall pass on to the people

of the mountains and give something of their history.

Blue Grass is the garden of the world. The land is a great series of wooded parks such as one might have found in "Merrie England," except that stone walls take the place of hedge along the highways and pikes. It is a land of peace and plenty that is close to luxury for all. And, broadcast, through the people, is the upright sturdiness of the Scotch-Irishman, without his narrowness and bigotry; the grace and chivalry of the Cavalier. Here we find the highest type of education, refinement and culture. Old Transylvania University at Lexington was the first seat of learning planted beyond the Alleghenies. Boone loved the land from the moment his eagle eye swept its shaking wilderness from a mountain top, and every man who followed him loved the land no less. Once a Kentuckian—always a Kentuckian!

The Kentucky mountaineer is entirely different from a Blue Grass Kentuckian. I am a real one hundred per cent Kentucky mountaineer. My people came over mountains, the Alleghenies, at the close of the Revolutionary War and settled in the very heart of the Kentucky mountains and have lived there ever since. Kentucky Mountains! No humor in that phrase to the Kentucky mountaineer. There never was—there is none now. To him those rugged hills are the pet shrine of the Great Mother of freedom and liberty. The Great Mother of Nature fashioned those mountains with

loving hands. She shut the land in with a mighty barrier of mountains to keep the mob out. She spread broad, level prairies beyond, that the mob might glide by or be tempted to the other side, where the earth was level and there was no need to climb. She filled those Kentucky mountains with flowers, grass, trees, fish, birds and wild beasts, just as she made Eden for Adam and Eve. It is a Promised Land! And when the chosen came, they found the earth ready to receive them —lifted above the baneful breath of river-bottom and marshland, drained by rivers and creeks full of fish, filled with woods full of game. For those chosen people—such, too, seemed God's purpose. God meant to the race upon whom He had smiled a benediction for a thousand years. The race that obstacles but strengthen, that thrives best under an alien effort to kill, that has ever conquered its conquerors, and that seems bent on the task of carrying the best ideals any age has ever known back to the Old World from which it sprang. God only knows! He knows that His must suffer if they stray too far from His great life-giving heart. And how He has followed close when this Saxon race seemed likely to stray too far. Here in the very heart of the mountains of Kentucky are gathered a goodly family of the sons and daughters of the Saxon race, in the arms of nature in virgin lands that they might suckle again and keep the old blood fresh and strong. Here the Kentucky mountaineer has lived for a

century and a half, shut in with gray mountain and shining river. The Kentucky mountaineer was shut off from Blue Grass and the nation and left to fight with savage nature, savage beast and savage man. Thus the mountaineers have strength of heart and body and brain. They have learned to stand together and mind their own business; and meddle not at all; to think their own thoughts and die for them if need be. And nature holds the Kentucky mountaineer close today. Woodrow Wilson said, "They are a part of the original stuff out of which America was made."

The Kentucky mountaineer believes in God. No people or nation need expect to rise to a high order of civilization and prosperity, and abide, without a firm belief in God. If history proves any one thing it is this fact. Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and the old Roman Empire died and passed away because the people composing these great nations did not believe in God. Well, the Kentucky mountaineer believes in God! These mountaineers must be brothers because of their isolation and peril; to be brothers means to love one another; to love one another is to love God. The Kentucky mountaineer may not know how to read or write but he has inherited a faith in God that cannot be shaken. Every mountain cabin has its Bible; they call it "God's Book," "The Holy Bible," "The Word of God" and "Mother's Book." There may not be one in the family who is able to read the Bible, but that makes no difference,

they love the old Book and keep it with tender affection.

The history of the people of the mountains of Kentucky has a very important place in our national life. A young man with coon-skin cap and an old flint-lock rifle living in North Carolina, heard of a wonderful country beyond the Allegheny Mountains called the "Dark and Bloody Ground." Daniel Boone with a few companions, blazed his way through the forest and over mountains into the strange territory. He spent a few months exploring the streams and valleys, and then returned home. He told his neighbors and friends what a goodly land it was, full of wild animals and game of all kinds. One day twenty-five or thirty families of men, women, boys and girls, with horses and mules, cattle and sheep, pigs and goats, geese and ducks, chickens and turkeys and with large covered wagons gathered together and started through the wilderness on their way to Kentucky or the "Dark and Bloody Ground." If you will travel the "Old Wilderness Trail," the way our fathers came, you will find lonely graves all along the way, mute witnesses of the sacrifices of life that this great central west might become the very heart of our nation. Many parties and companies of pioneers were completely destroyed by the Indians. It is safe to say that one-half of the people now living in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois are the children of those brave men and women who traveled the

"Old Wilderness Trail" over the mountains into Blue Grass about one hundred and fifty years ago. Among these early pioneers were the Clays, Clarks, Brockenridges, Taylors, Harrisons, Lincolns, Marshalls, Rileys and the Cartwrights.

George Washington had a body-guard of one hundred picked men. Caleb Gibbs was the captain of this company. When the Revolutionary War closed these brave men made their way through the mountains and settled in Kentucky. Three brothers—Caleb, James and John Gibbs, were on their way through these mountains. Caleb was a college graduate. They had married beautiful girls in Old Virginia. This party found the mountains full of wild animals, deer, bear, wild hogs, etc. Caleb loved hunting and fishing. He built a small log cabin for himself and his wife. John and James went on to Blue Grass to find a good settlement. Caleb and his young wife fell in love with the mountains; the spell of the mountains came over them and they stayed and became mountaineers. The day came when these settlers ceased to come across the mountains and the "Old Wilderness Trail" was closed. The only connecting link between the Mountains and Blue Grass was broken, and for nearly one hundred and fifty years the mountaineers have been shut up in the mountains, isolated from the outside world.

Caleb Gibbs taught his children to read, write and spell. He lived to be an old man and then

died, and his children buried him on the mountain side. Three was no one left to teach his grandchildren; education just died out, and for years our people were without schools. We mountain people have multiplied until every river, creek and mountain side is dotted with log cabins, filled to overflowing with bright eyed boys and girls.

We mountaineers have flowing through our veins the purest Anglo-Saxon blood in the world. The settlers were mostly English, Scotch and Irish, with a sprinkling of Germans. These people have not changed; they still use the spoken word of Shakespear. Will blood tell? Lincoln, Jackson and Clay are the answer. These people today are the original stuff out of which America was made. The story of George Washington praying all alone in the forest at Valley Forge is told again and again in every mountain cabin until it has found a lodging place in the heart of every mountain child. We may be very ignorant about theology and even not able to read the Bible, but nevertheless our chief characteristic is a mighty faith in God.

Not many years ago I was with a surveying party in the very heart of the mountains. A gaunt mountaineer died and he must be buried; there was no minister so there was no service sung or spoken over the dead. There was no undertaker, so the neighbors cut down a big hollow poplar tree, sawed off a log and scooped it out for a casket. They dug the grave and carried the

dead man up on the mountain side and buried him. There were three other graves there—the mother, a daughter and a son. The only member left of this family was a blue-eyed, white-haired Scotch-Irish boy about nine years old. After the dirt was filled in and the grave made and the neighbors were going away, following the many mountain paths, the little mountain lad stood by the new-made grave weeping. His little dog had trudged up to the point of the mountain and was standing by his little master, and it seemed to me that the little dog was the only bit of life on earth that had any sympathy for the boy. Doubling his fists into his eyes and stumbling away from the grave a few feet, his little body dropped to the earth and quivered like an autumn leaf. This little mountain boy with pure Scotch-Irish blood in his heart had never been to school; he had never heard of a Sunday school. In a moment he lifted his head and said, "O God, help me; I am all alone." He arose and disappeared down the mountain side. This boy was the kind of stuff out of which George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were made.

We mountaineers are patriots; we know but one flag—the Red, White and Blue. We have been with Old Glory ever since Betsy Ross stitched the stars and stripes together. We mountaineers were with Old Glory at Concord and Lexington. We were with Old Glory and old Hickory Jackson at New Orleans. We were with Old Glory at Gettys-

burg. We were with old Glory at San Juan Hill with Teddy. We were with Old Glory at Chateau Thierry. Thirty thousand young men from the mountains and hills of Kentucky rushed to Camp Taylor at Louisville when the World War brought Old Glory into the fight. These mountain boys were awkward and green. They had stood on the mountain side so long that one leg was shorter than the other so they could hardly keep from falling over on one side on level ground. They were herded around by the officers like a flock of sheep. One day on the practice field each boy was given a trusty old rifle; every boy smiled—had they not shot the squirrel through the head in the highest trees in the mountains? The old army officer with all his military dignity cried, "Ready, aim, fire!" Every time those boys touched the trigger it was a bull's eye. The old army officer forgot his military dignity and reached up and took off his cap, and crushing it in his strong hand he cried, "Look out, Kaiser, we are coming!" When the war was over and General Pershing pointed out the hero of the World War, it was Sergeant York of the mountains of Eastern Tennessee, a lad just like these in the mountains of Kentucky.

When the Civil War began the Kentucky mountaineers, almost to a man, rallied to Lincoln. My father, then a lad of only sixteen years, slipped away from the mountain cabin and walked forty miles to General Garfield's Camp where he

was arrested by the guard and taken before the General. Father told Garfield that he had walked forty miles to join the Union Army and Garfield wrote his name down and ordered a uniform brought. The sleeves of the blouse and the legs of the trousers had to be cut off a bit as my father was so small. It was not long until father was ordered to the army of the Potomac; he had a part in many battles. At the close he was with Sherman on the famous "March to the Sea." He was ordered back to Grant's army. When Lee came to Grant to surrender and Grant said, "Lee, keep your sword," father was standing within forty feet of the great General.

When father was discharged from the army he returned to the mountains of Kentucky. He met a blue-eyed, black-headed, Scotch girl by the name of Matilda Jane Daniels. He looked at her and she looked at him; he loved her and she loved him. One day he held her hand and she held his and somebody said the words and they became one. On Whipperwill Creek, a small stream emptying into Tom's Creek, they built a log cabin, set deep into a shaggy flank of the mountain. I will not attempt to describe this cabin. I will only say that the creek was their wash basin, and everything about the cabin was in harmony with the wash basin.

One day the stork brought the first baby to the cabin, and finding it a good place to leave babies, he brought one the next year. Mother had no

little bed or cradle for the babies and she needed one so badly. Necessity is the mother of invention, so that Scotch heart throbbing with love for those babies began to look about for something to take the place of a little bed or cradle. She had father to take the lid off an old trunk some one had brought with them across the mountains from Virginia. She turned the lid upside down on the floor and spread an old skin or blanket in it and placed the baby in the lid and rocked it to sleep. Then along came another baby and pushed this one out; and then another and another until I was the seventh baby in the old trunk lid. Then along came another one and pushed me out. They continued to come until eleven babies had been rocked in that old trunk lid. Now, I love the walnut, mahogany and quartered oak furniture of our homes, but the dearest piece of furniture on earth to me is that old trunk lid that rocked eleven babies to manhood and womanhood.

In the meantime mother had to work in the corn-field on the mountain side. The children were all small and there was no one to help father raise enough corn to feed a pig or two that we might have corn-pone and pork to live on through the year. If you make a trip up into the mountains of Kentucky in May, June and July you will see beautiful girls up on the mountain side with old dresses and split bonnets on, bare footed, with old hoes in their hands, hoeing corn. These girls have the beautiful southern hair and dreamy

eyes, teeth like a flock of sheep, and roses on their cheeks that no artist could paint. By the time these girls are thirty years old their teeth are gone, the luster is gone from their hair, their wonderful dreamy eyes have faded and sunk deep and the roses are gone from their cheeks. Why? Because the drudgery, slavery and exposure and hard work with no medical care has broken their health, and they die when they should be in the prime of womanhood. When we see so much luxury and waste in our fair land and remember that the blood of the men who gave us freedom and independence, flows through the veins of these neglected mountain boys and girls, we wonder if a just God won't demand some of the beauty, power and wealth of our nation for our neglect to the children of our fathers?

When I was pushed out of the old trunk lid I was in the way just as I am now at times. Again mother solved the problem as to what to do with the baby. I was only a few months old and we had no maid to care for me. Mother took me with her to the corn-field and dug a deep hole on the mountain side in the shade of a big poplar tree. An old blanket or skin was thrown in the hole and then I was put down in the hole. I could scream to the top of my voice but it did me no harm, it only developed my lung power and voice which I need so much in my work today. You have heard of people being in the hole—well, I have been in the hole! It is no disgrace to be in

the hole but it is a disgrace to *stay* in the hole. One day I got a toe-hold and I climbed out of the hole and I have been out ever since. I have studied the philosophy of life under some great teachers but the best bit of philosophy is the experience of the hole in the corn-field.

When I was old enough to go to school the family had grown to eleven children. To feed, clothe and shelter this family was a great task, especially on a mountain farm one hundred miles from any railroad or market. Education was side-tracked for the more important things, as we thought. Our schools were only for three months in old log school houses with teachers that could scarcely read, write or spell. My father attended school only three months. When he was nine years old he was given a little tin bucket containing some corn-bread, sauerkraut, pickled beans and a bottle of milk and sent away over the mountain about seven miles to school. One day the boys were up on the mountain side playing, and rolled a log down the mountain side which struck the school house, knocking it down. The children were all out playing and no one was hurt. The parents came and placed the logs back in order and school continued for almost three months. One evening the little lad did not come home. Grandfather shouldered his old flint-lock rifle, whistled to his dogs and started out up the mountain side to find the lost boy. Op top of the mountain the boy was found up in a big tree, and about

the tree was gathered a gang of wild hogs, making an effort to reach him. The hogs were chased away, and the boy graduated that evening; it was his last day in school!

When I climbed out of the hole I just grew up in the forest and mountains. When I was about ten years of age I possessed a dog and a gun. I roamed over mountain and through forest day after day. I knew all the animals and birds. I knew their habits and calls. I did not know there was any such a thing as botany, but I knew all the flowers and they all knew me. I talked to them and they talked with me. After trudging all day I would reach the mountain peak far away from home. Soon the darkness fell, and, on the very top of the mountain I would build a fire with flint and steel, broil my squirrel on the coals, warm a piece of corn-pone, eat them, sharing with my dog; then covering myself in the dry leaves, I would sleep soundly. Early in the morning when the first golden sunbeams would come streaming over the big rocks on top of the mountain, shining down the mountain side, causing the dew-drops to sparkle like a million diamonds, I arose, brushed the dew from my eyes and wended my way homeward. When it was evening and the sun had dropped low on the blue mountains rolling westward, and at the next gap, a broader path ran through it and down the mountain to *my* old Kentucky home.

At the age of fourteen I had never been to

school. One day mother told me to go up on the mountain and drive the two old cows home. On the last spur I came upon the cows browsing on sassafras bushes right in the path. They started down the old path on a run—no, cows do not run they pace. I ran after the cows and I must have touched a stone and caused it to start rolling, at first very slowly, then faster and faster until it struck me on the ankle, breaking and crushing it. I fell over on the mountain and screamed, while the folks ran up and carried me down to the cabin. It was the month of July and very hot. They saddled the one old plug horse and started after the doctor twenty-four miles away. When they arrived at the county seat they discovered that the doctor was twenty miles on the other side of the mountain to see a patient. It was five days before the doctor arrived. By this time my ankle was swollen as big as four ankles; they thought I would die. I suffered untold misery. Fourteen pieces of bones worked their own way out of my ankle. For four months I was not turned over, then I walked on crutches for three years.

In June of the following year I was still suffering and could not put my foot to the ground. I hobbbled about on two crutches; I was weak, ignorant and discouraged. One day out on the mountain side as I meditated, I pictured myself hobbling through life as a poor, ignorant cripple. The whole world was full of gloom and disappointment. A lump came up in my throat that

hurt; I buried my head in the mountain grass and cried; then I prayed, "O God, if this is all there is in life for me I want to die; help me or let me die." Within two weeks I was in school. It happened this way: One Monday morning I was sitting in the door of the old log cabin. A man was coming down the mountain path—he was the school teacher. The school house had been moved over on our creek only two miles from our cabin. When he was near our house he called to me and said, "Come on and go to school." I said, "Why should I go to school? I don't know anything and I have no books." He replied, "You can't work and you might just as well go to school." The teacher was right—I was not producing one thing. I was a dead expense. After thinking it over for a few moments, I hobbled down to the old log school house with the teacher. In the mountains our schools begin in July. The creeks are dry in summer and we use the creek-beds for roads. In the winter the creeks are full of water and ice and we have no bridges, making it impossible to go to school. Most of the children are bare-foot anyway. Though I had never been to school, I knew a few of the letters; I had learned them from the newspapers with which mother had papered the cabin. Father got the papers at the post-office at the county seat, the only post-office in the county. Some of this paper was a catalog of our big mail order houses. I would study the pictures and wonder how the different articles were made.

Well, I learned all my letters the first day at school. I learned to count to one hundred, and the last thing I did that evening before I climbed to my bed in the loft was—not to say my prayers—but to count one hundred.

The school term was increased to five months. I never missed a recitation and all my heart, mind and soul was concentrated on my lessons. When the five months term had closed, I had worked every problem in Ray's Third Part Arithmetic. I learned the world was round and that it turned around every twenty-four hours. In fact, I was in wonderland, and every lesson brought a surprise and a thrill. That winter a lady came out from the county seat and taught a subscription school for two months. The next year I attended five months, making twelve months I had been in school. My great ambition at this time was to be a school teacher. Up the river about twenty miles was a small town called East Point, where a small county Normal school had been organized. I told my father that I wanted to go to this school to prepare for teaching. I told him it would cost me thirty-five dollars for five months. Board and room would cost me one and a half dollar per week, making a total of thirty dollars for twenty weeks. The tuition for the five months was five dollars, making the total expense for five months schooling only thirty-five dollars. My father looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "Son, you can't go; I do not have the thirty-five dollars

and I can't get it." We had no money; we lived one hundred miles from the railroad or any market. We raised everything we ate and wore. From wool, cotton and hemp we made our clothing. Mother carded the wool, spun the yarn and wove the cloth for our clothing. The old Civil War soldiers were getting no pension at this time. Our small country schools were taught by foreigners —people from down in the state. We lived without money. For ten months there would not be a penny in our home. The day I was twenty-one years old I wanted to mail a letter; I did not have two cents with which to buy a stamp. I asked my mother for the price of a stamp. She said there were only two pennies in all the family and that I might have the sum if I would hoe the twelve rows of onions on the mountain side. This I did but it took me all day for the rows were long, weedy and cloddy. I received the two cents and mailed the letter, but our family bank was broke.

If you remember I had been in the hole once before, and so I began to figure how to get out of this financial hole. Down the river from our home lived a very wealthy man, for he had a wagon and two horses. He hired men to work for him at twenty-five cents per day. I went down to see this wealthy man and he said he would give me twenty-five cents per day for all days it did not rain; so I contracted with him. At the close of the year I counted my money and I

had just even thirty-five dollars, and was ready to go to East Point and enter the little County Normal.

Boys and girls have an outfit when they go away to College. I too had an outfit—one old home-made suit of clothes that mother made the year before; this suit had been patched and mended; one pair of stogy shoes with brass on the toes and ground-hog shoe strings; two pairs of yarn socks and two old cotton shirts; one old cap and a pair of mittens mother had knit for me—this was my wardrobe! The old plug horse was saddled and I rode three miles while father walked, then I would walk while father rode. We passed through the county seat and called at the post-office; the post-master knew me and gave me two silver dollars. This was the only money given me for my education by anybody, including my father and my own people. The two dollars with my thirty-five made a total of thirty-seven dollars. When we arrived at the little town, I found a place to room and board at one dollar and a half per week. I paid in advance for the entire twenty weeks. I paid the five dollars for tuition and had two dollars of the thirty-seven dollars left. I went out to the slate-rock cliff and whittled out my slate pencils. I worked all my problems on the slate to save expense. I went over to the old store and bought wrapping paper to write my essays and compositions on, to keep down expenses. Steadily I worked and the schoolmaster helped me un-

wearingly, and it was a great help socially, mentally and spiritually.

The school closed in May and I called on the County Superintendent of schools on my way home and told him that I wanted to teach school. He said it was necessary for me to take an examination and that it would cost me one dollar. I had one of the two silver dollars left and gave it to the Superintendent and began to write. I had to pass on eleven subjects and it took me all day. The Superintendent graded my papers and before I left his office he announced that I had made license for two years.

That year I taught my home school and drew one hundred and thirty-five dollars for the five months' work. I was the wealthiest man in all the county for I had saved nearly all the money. I gave some to my father. Why not? Those soldier shoulders had begun to stoop and his hands were rough and calloused from hard work, prompted by a deep love for us children. I gave some to my dear mother and sisters, but I had saved most of it.

During the autumn the dean of Berea College with his wife and a few college boys in a big covered wagon, came up through the mountains. When night would overtake them they would pitch their tents by the roadside and camp. We mountaineers would gather in large crowds to see and hear these strange people. Dr. Dinsmore would preach a sermon, Mrs. Dinsmore would tell a

story and the boys would pull off a few stunts. I went to one of these gatherings and was standing near Dr. Dinsmore when he closed his speech. He placed his hand on my shoulder and asked me what I wanted to do most. I told him I wanted to go to Berea College when my school closed. He encouraged me and expressed the desire to see me at Berea the first of January. On New Year's Day I was on my way to College. We lived seventy-five miles from the railroad. I had often wondered about the railroad, trains and stations. After three days of walking and riding horse-back, I reached the small station at Peach Orchard on the Big Sandy division of the Chesapeake & Ohio.

I had bought me a real store suit of clothes—all wool—at a cost of seven and a half dollars. I had bought me an old-fashioned overcoat with a cape for three dollars. I purchased my ticket and asked the ticket agent where I might see the railroad; he rubbed his head and looked at me for a time and said, "Are you from the mountains?" I assured him I was and he smiled and pointed to the railroad. There it was! Logs side by side and two big pieces of iron nailed to these logs. I stepped upon it and looked down the track; those two pieces of iron came together away down the track and I said, "Just as I expected, it will never get me there." About this time something screamed away down the track and I was very much frightened. Up the track came some great monster belching fire and smoke. I ran over to

the station and stood trembling as the train drew up. A big man with a big blue coat with gold buttons came off the train. In a few moments he cried, "All aboard." I looked around for a board but could not see any so I went on the train anyway. They knew I was coming and that I had a new overcoat; they had stretched clothes lines from one end of the car to the other so I could hang my overcoat up; but when I hung it on the clothes line the people all smiled and winked. I said, "My, everybody is happy here." The big man with the blue coat and gold buttons came in and smiled. He felt of my coat and said, "That is a good coat." I said, "You bet, it cost three dollars." He asked me if I would care if he placed my coat down on my seat. I told him it would be all right. He very carefully placed the coat down by my side and reached up and gave the clothes line three yanks. Something screamed and I was scared, then I felt elevated and said, "Let her go," and I have been going ever since!

When the train arrived at Berea, I stepped out on the platform. There stood Dr. Dinsmore to meet me and greet me and bid me welcome. He put his arm about me and said, "I am mighty glad you are here." He took my suitcase and carried it, holding to my arm with one hand as he led me up through the campus. There were two thousand five hundred boys and girls in Berea College. It was a strange sight to see these students and to hear them sing and yell. Dr. Dinsmore pointed

to a large building, four or five stories high and said, "You will live there." I thought I sure would have plenty of room for the buildings I had known had only one room.

We arrived and entered the building. We were in a large reception room and on one side there was a big iron cage. We walked over to the cage, touched a button and another cage dropped down; a door opened and we entered the cage. The door closed and we started on our way to heaven. Suddenly the cage stopped, the door came open and we stepped out into a hallway. Dr. Dinsmore led me to a door and said, "Here is your room." I entered the room and the good Doctor smiled, closed the door and was gone. It was very still and very lonely in the room. I was lonelier than I had ever been in my life. My good friends had anticipated this loneliness. On a table was a beautiful bouquet of flowers and some of them were mountain flowers. They talked to me and I talked to them. I tried to lift myself up in the air for I was standing on the first rug I had ever seen. There were great big red roses in the rug and I thought it was a shame to stand on them with my old muddy shoes. On one side of the room was a large book-case full of books. I never knew there were so many books in the world. On another side of the room was a big white bowl, about half of it in the wall. My curiosity was aroused and I wondered what it had to do with my happiness. I noticed a brass button or knob

on each side. I ventured over to it, touched one of the buttons and out came clear, cold water. I touched the other one and out came warm water. I said to myeslf, "My, there ought to be one for milk."

I completed the Normal course in Berea College and returned home where I taught school for five years. I surveyed for the Northern Coal and Coke Company for one year; then was in the Internal Revenue Service for one year.

At the age of twenty-seven I came to Indiana and at twelve o'clock on the thirtieth day of June I stood by the side of a blue-eyed, auburn-haired Hoosier school teacher and she held my hand and I held hers and the minister said the words that made us one. This beautiful school teacher is now the mother of a wonderful daughter and two splendid boys.

When I was just a small boy I wanted to preach. Yes, I did preach to the trees and stumps. Occasionally I preach to stumps now. Four great events of my life happened at almost the same time—anyway in the same year—I came to Indiana; I married; I entered Moores Hill College; and I united with the Methodist Episcopal Church. I preached three years and then we sold all our furniture and went to Chicago, where I entered the Theological Department of Northwestern University (Garrett Biblical Institute). I cleaned houses, washed windows, beat rugs, fired furnaces, preached and did about everything you

can imagine to work my way through school. I graduated in 1914 and returned to Indiana as pastor of one of our churches. During the great World War I was sent to Europe. I was in many of our camps and preached and lectured to over one million of our soldier boys. I was within four miles of the front trench when the war closed. I returned to Indiana and was appointed pastor of our church at North Vernon where I remained for five years; I was then appointed pastor of Grace Church at Franklin, Indiana, where I served for three years. I am now the pastor of the North Church of Indianapolis, Meridian at 38th Street, where we are building a new million dollar church.

Well do I remember when I was a lad of fourteen years, sick, with a crutch under each arm, poor, ignorant, superstitious and in rags. The clouds were hanging low, shutting out all sunshine. My world was a world of suffering and shadows; about all hope was crushed from my heart. One day I hobbled over on the mountain side where the sun was warm and buried my face in the tall grass and sobbed, "O God, I am poor, sick, heart-broken and disappointed, help me or let me die." And I was sick, helpless and dying. I did not know about the parable of the Good Shepherd, but He found me and brought me into His fold. Within three weeks I was in school. It has been a wonderful climb over rough places and obstacles, but I have had His love leading me and

his voice calling me to a higher and fuller life each day. All I am, all I have and all I expect to be I owe to my Shepherd whose name is Jesus.

Just a closing word to young people who may read this, and I am through. By study and experience I have learned that three things are absolutely necessary for success in anything we may attempt.

First—to be successful we must have a mark. Abraham Lincoln was in his law office when a school teacher came in and said, "Mr. Lincoln, do you know that to be able to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that a thing is right or wrong, you must know a little geometry and logic." Lincoln said, "Well, if it is necessary for me to know geometry and logic to prove and demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt, I will know them." His big, bony hand reached up and pulled down the sign over the door that said, "A. Lincoln, Lawyer," and he closed the door and went home. For several months he was seen constantly with a book in his hands.

He was not a college man but he mastered these great subjects of thought and reason, and the day came when Uncle Sam wanted a man to prove and demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that a thing was right or wrong, and Lincoln was the man that did it, and thus became the white plumed hero of American manhood.

In the second place—to succeed at whatever we may attempt we must have a motive. There

must be something within us that will carry us over all hard places and obstacles. David Livingston, when a young man, heard the call of the great dark continent for help. He felt a tug at his heart. One day he said good-bye to his father and mother and to all that was near and dear to him. He disappeared into the jungles of Africa. For twenty long years he toiled to heal the great sore of the world and lift the natives of the great unknown continent up into the light of God. He had suffered untold misery and privations. He was sick, lonesome and homesick, but his great love for humanity carried him on deeper and deeper into the heart of Africa. He was lost to the world and the world mourned him as dead. It was noonday; he had just finished his lunch in the shade of a big tree; he was thinking of home and loved ones; it was his birthday. He says to himself, "It is a long time since I was home. It has been so long since I heard my native tongue." Then he dropped his face into his hands and his great soul sobbed, "O, I am so homesick!" Just then the scream of a native was heard and in a few moments Mr. Stanley with his party came into camp. He took Livingston by the hand and said, "Livingston, the world mourns you as dead; come home with me and you shall be crowned the hero of the world." Great joy filled his heart and he said, "O home! It will be wonderful to go home." Then he noticed that the natives he had led from darkness to light were standing about

him, while great hot tears streamed down their faces. Livingston turned and said, "No, Mr. Stanley, I must be about my Father's business." He staggered away to his work. No white man ever saw Livingston again. He died on his knees praying for Africa. The natives removed his great heart and buried it in the center of the dark continent, and they carried his body on their shoulders over nine hundred miles so it could be sent back to his home. A motive like Livingston had can do anything on earth that is right and proper.

The third and last thing that is necessary for success in life is a method. During the Spanish American War our battleships arrived at Manilla Bay to destroy the Spanish fleet. Our old Admiral gave the command that all chairs, swings and furniture on the decks should be thrown overboard. The ax and saw were brought out and all wood railings and banisters were sawed and cut away and thrown overboard. At last those battleships, stripped of all wood, stood there like great mountains of iron and steel. Why? That there might not be anything to catch on fire when the shot and shell came with destroying power. The result was a great victory without the loss of one life. So young people, to succeed in life the method is to eliminate all cheap and frivolous things from our lives and stand out four-square for the high and mighty things of God.

Then, in a closing word I will say, like the old

Admiral who started out to discover a new world —"Sail on!" After they had been out at sea for a few days, the discouraged sailors went to the old Admiral and said, "We are in great danger and there is no new world; let us go back home and be failures." The eyes of the old Admiral flashed as he straightened up and cried, "Sail on!" In a few days the sailors came back and for the second time pleaded for the old Admiral to go back home. The second time the eyes of the old Admiral flashed as he cried, "Sail on!" Again the third time the sailors came to the old Admiral saying, "The very heavens have changed; great monsters will arise and destroy us; we are at the edge of the world; let us go back home and be a failure. There is no new world." The third time the old Admiral's eyes flashed as he cried, "Sail on!" In a few moments, in the far distance there was the gleam of a light and then the glad cry went up from all, "Land, land, land!" A new world had been discovered!

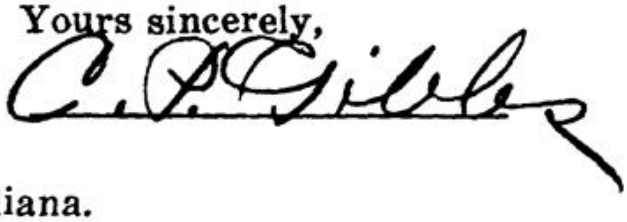
So, young people I say with a mark, a motive and a method, "Sail on!" and some day the light will flash on the mountain top and you shall hear a voice speaking to your soul saying, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

My dear Friend:

I want to thank you for reading this story of Kentucky mountain life. No doubt while reading the story your heart was moved with compassion and you said to yourself, "Poor lad, if I had only met you when you were struggling and working so hard for an education I surely would have given you a boost." I thank you for your spirit of sympathy and your good motive. It is not too late for you to help me do this very kind of work. I know thousands of Kentucky mountain boys and girls who are having it just as hard as I did. A few of them will fight their way out, but most of them will remain in ignorance and poverty unless they have a bit of help from someone. Many of these mountain boys and girls are of my own family. Every dollar I can possibly spare I send to these boys and girls. Do you want to help me? If you do, send me any amount you may desire and every dollar will go to some worthy mountain boy or girl.

Thanking you for any kindness, I am,

Yours sincerely,



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