A VISIT WITH Sergeant YORK

The hero of the Argonne, now the chairman of his county draft board in the hills of Tennessee, does not conscientiously object to killing the enemy this time. "You can't trust 'em," he warns.



As he is today.



In World War I.

BY A YANK STAFF CORRESPONDENT

PALL MALL, TENN.—His name is York—Alvin C. York. He resembles that straight-backed sergeant with the fierce mustache who came back from France a hero.

He still has the mustache, but it's mellowed now by flecks of gray.

"I'll tell yuh somethin', son. . . ." He was talking of the war and the glint in his blue eyes was no longer kindly.

"I'll tell it to yuh like I tell it to every soldier in camps I go to. . . .

"This country's always been fair and square—fought its wars accordin' to the rules, but these here people we're a-fightin' now just don't have no honor. They're mean and they're dirty. And I'm a-tellin' our boys we've got to be just as mean an' just as dirty as they are."

He was a conscientious objector in '17, until his captain convinced him that fighting to protect his country was a necessary evil. But he'd be mighty slow about taking prisoners now. "You can't trust 'em nowadays. Just as likely as not shoot yuh in th' back. When I'm a-talking to th' boys now, I tell em just this. . . ."

War Changes His Life

This war's made a lot of changes in the life of Sergeant York. For twenty years after his return from Europe, he lived quietly on the farm in his Upper Cumberland Mountains that the State of Tennessee gave him—in the home his friends built for him.

The ribbons he won for killing 20 Germans and capturing 132 in the Argonne were put away, and only an occasional visitor journeyed over the mountain from "Jimtown" to see "the greatest private soldier of all the armies of Europe."

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This new war put an end to that.

The red-headed mountain hero was remembered when thousands of other Americans began to move from farms and homes and factories to tents and barracks and troop ships.

He's on the go all of the time, now, speaking all over the country—to soldiers in camp, to War Bond rallies, to any crowd where patriotism is the theme.

Plenty of Ideas About War

He's a well-to-do mountain farmer, and he's chairman of the draft board and a member of the Tennessee State Defense Council. But he aims to hang on to that title of "Sergeant York." He was so proud of that "Sergeant" that he turned down the gold leaves of a major to keep it.

But he has plenty of ideas on how we ought to fight the war.

"For one thing," he said, hitching up his khaki pants and then shoving a forefinger under his collar to loosen it, "you oughta be mighty proud to get as much trainin' as yuh do nowadays. To tell yuh th' truth, we did more marchin' and maneuverin' after the Armistice than we did before we went into the trenches.

"An another thing—a man's got to be in good shape. Why, I spent 26 days in the trenches under fire without gettin' relieved, an' I tell you a man's got to be in good shape to do that."

(Good mountain eating and plenty of it have added an inch to the Sergeant's waist-line, but he'll admit that he's still a "pretty fair shot." And when MacArthur's men were holding Bataan, he said he'd be "mighty proud to take a bunch of mountain sharp-shooters over there and clean them Japs out.")

"'Course it goes without sayin' that a man's gotta learn to do what he's told," the Sergeant added, shoving his broad-brimmed black hat back. "We was in the Argonne once (that was the time he brought a few German soldiers back) an' I had this feller in my squad. He was hard-headed, an' he wouldn't listen to nuthin'. Dumbest man I ever did see. Well, sir, he wouldn't keep his head down and I kept tellin' him ifen he didn't he'd get it blown right off, but they's some people yuh can't tell nuthin', you know. Well, sir, he got his head blown off, just like I told him."

Up here in the Valley of the Three Forks, people have a habit of taking Sergeant York's advice. As head of the Fentress County draft board, he's been sending their boys off to war, and the people, the boys, and Sergeant York are all proud of the top-notch record their county has made in voluntary enlistments in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Volunteers filled Fentress County quotas the first months of the draft.

Sergeant York and his exploits are all very real to Fentress County. The Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute and the Alvin C. York Bible School were of his creation, designed by him to give mountain boys and girls "the kind of practical education they'll need."

"Remember, Pinto beans is scarce"

He may be the sage of Fentress County to his neighbors, and an almost legendary figure of history to millions of Americans who saw the motion picture about his life, but he's still very much alive—and he'd like to be where the shooting's going on.

"I'm ready any time they want me. If they'd let me, I'd take a bunch uv men across that Channel. It'd be mighty tough, but we can shore do 'er—I know we can!"

Back behind his red barn a sileage cutter howled again and one of Sergeant York's sturdy boys pitched it beans from a wagon. Sergeant York listened for a moment to the mechanical clatter, stuck out a big, tanned hand.

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hero of the Argonne

From the war his conversation turned again to his farm. As he gave a firm hand-shake he said, "Remember, son, what I told yuh—'Pinto beans is scarce."

He started back to the silo. A few paces away he half-turned, and with a wave of his arm looked back and grinned:

"Meet me on the Eye-talian Booley-vard in Paris."

When you're on your way through Paris, soldier, keep an eye out as you go down *Boulevard des Italiens* for a big fellow with a thick red mustache and an extra chin. Sergeant York is liable to keep that date.

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By the men . . for the men in the service

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