

HUNTING A STILL

By KATHLEEN I. M'CURDY

It was in the days of illicit distilling in Kentucky. A man riding along a road in the eastern part of that state, reaching a snug farmhouse, drew rein.

"I'm looking for a farm to buy," he said. "Do you happen to know of any good bit of land about here with some buildings on it?"

"No; I don't," said the woman, who was both young and comely.

"There ought to be good farming land here."

"Stranger," said the woman, "you hain't looking for farms. You're a revenue man after stills."

The man was astonished. He had supposed he was playing a very successful game.

"If you'd root out the stills the people about here would go to farming instead of making whisky."

"I can't root out the stills," replied the man, "unless you people help me."

"What kind o' help do you want?"

"Information."

"Well, come in and have a snack. Perhaps my husband'll be coming along soon, and he may do something for you."

The revenue man dismounted, led his horse to the stable in the rear and entered the house. He chatted with the woman freely about the illicit distilling, said that it helped the few and wronged the many. A district where it was notorious never prospered. It was under a ban; no credit; no production of crops; no comfort for any one. She appeared to agree with him and when he had finished said:

"Did you ever hear of Joe Comstock's still?"

"No, I'm a new man; just put on to this district."

"That's the only one we could get you on to here. If my husband don't come home purty soon I'll tell you all about it."

Her husband didn't come home. She said she supposed he had been delayed. So after supper she said she would tell him where the Comstock still was, and if he liked he could go and clean it out. It was the only one left in that immediate vicinity and most of the people thereabout would be glad to see it shut up. The woman after she had cleaned away the supper dishes sat down beside the stranger and on a piece of paper drew a diagram of the route to Comstock's. It was rather a zigzag course, extending over several miles. The stranger asked if there was no more direct route, and she told him that there was none that could be made plain to one who was not familiar with the country. When it was dark he got out his horse, mounted and, thanking the woman for her hospitality, was about to ride away when she asked:

"You going to take Joe Comstock alone?"

"That's just what I'm going to do."

"You're a plucky one."

The man rode away, following the route exactly as it had been laid down by the woman. He was most of the time climbing a mountain side, and though the distance was but a few miles, he was two hours getting to a point just beyond which he had been told he would find the Comstock still. He was to recognize it by the crossing of two mountain roads, a peculiarly shaped oak tree on the point of one of the angles. From the crossroads he was to pass through an opening between the trees, go over a stone wall, follow a tunnel a short distance down the mountain and he would come upon the still. Leaving the crossroads, he moved on as directed.

He was moving very quietly down the stream when he dislodged a stone that betrayed his approach. He paused, but, hearing nothing, moved forward again. Suddenly he heard the words come out of the darkness, "Hands up!"

He knew that he was on an elevation that showed the sky line beyond him and that doubtless his enemy could see him, while he could not see his enemy. He held his revolver in his hand cocked and, hoping to at least disconcert his opponent, fired into the darkness. The only response was a bitter laugh. It sounded like that of a woman crazed. Then came a voice which sounded distinctly feminine:

"Drop your weapon. I can kill you if I like!"

The revenue man hesitated a moment, then thought it best to do as he had been bidden. Suddenly a bullseye lantern was flashed in his face.

"You're not the coward the other one was to come here and surround the place and kill my Joe. You're a brave one if you are a revenue. I'm Miss Joe Comstock, the woman who sent you here. I knew you were a revenue right off, and since I've been wishing for a chance to get even with you government men I gave you a roundabout way, coming myself straight up the mountains. I intended to kill you, but I couldn't. You're too plucky."

"Well, then, since there is to be no killing, suppose we shake hands and say no more about it."

"You go your way and I go mine. Good night."

The next afternoon the stranger again rode up to the Widow Comstock's house and after a long interview persuaded her to give up a still that she had been running ever since her husband had been killed. There was something persuasive in his makeup, something that took hold of the widow's better side, and instead of hunting stills he hunted for her heart. He captured it in time, and they are now well to do farmers.

SMALLEST BEAST OF PREY.

It is a True Weasel, but is Only About Six Inches Long.

The smallest carnivorous animal in the world is an American weasel which is numerous in northwest Canada and Alaska and is occasionally seen about the great lakes. It is a true weasel, but only six inches long, with a tail only one inch in length. All its upper surface is in summer pure amber brown, but the throat, abdomen and inside of the legs are pure white, and, unlike any other weasel, it has no black at the end of the tail; hence, although the animal turns white in the north in winter, it does not show the black tipped tail which characterizes an ermine pelt, and so it is not sought by trappers and fur traders.

This fact, with its small size and secretive life, has made its habits very little known, but they seem to be much like those of other weasels. It feeds on insects, which it finds alive in summer and in winter digs out of rotten logs; upon small birds, etc., but lives mainly on mice. These it can follow into their narrowest holes and runways, for it is scarcely larger than a field mouse itself, or, striking the trail of one, it will trace all its wanderings and as soon as it catches sight of its prey will spring after it with amazing and fatal rapidity.

It is frequently caught by naturalists in their mouse traps. An old Indian told W. H. Osgood of the biological survey, who thus captured one in southern Alaska, that it was a promise of rare good fortune. His brother, he related, had taken one when a boy and had in consequence become a big chief. A good name for this least of the carnivores would be "mouse hunter." It is known to science as *Putorius rixosus*.—Harper's.

SCIENTIFIC PUZZLES.

Some Queer Things One Learns In the Study of Chemistry.

Every one knows that the diamond is only charcoal crystallized, but there are a great many other things in nature that, though possessing widely different properties, are composed of exactly equal quantities of the same elements.

The white of an egg and rattlesnake poison are formed of identically the same amounts of the same elements.

The oil of roses and common coal gas are each formed alike, both being composed of four atoms of hydrogen and four atoms of carbon.

Sugar and gum arabic are likewise brothers of the same weight and texture.

All the hydrocarbons, known to science as a combination of sixteen atoms of hydrogen and ten atoms of carbon, are alike in their composition. To enumerate some—oil of orange, lemon, cloves, ginger and black pepper.

The suggested explanation of these peculiarities is that the atoms are placed differently toward one another in the molecules of the different substances.

Other things just as peculiar are evident when certain substances are united chemically. Thus hydrogen gas, which is odorless, and nitrogen gas, which is also odorless, when united go to make ammonia, which has a very strong odor. Copper, which has no odor, and zinc, which also has none, when melted and mixed to give us brass, produce a substance with a very characteristic one.—Chicago Record-Herald.

An Easy Tongue For Poesy.

Burns, of course, is untranslatable, for when he attempted common English he was commonplace. But he took his opportunity with the Scotch poets who have the delightful language that has no consonants. You can rime anything with anything. Scotch is the easiest language for rime. Among the most beautiful of Burns' poems is "Mary Morrison," with—

Yestreen when to the trembling string
The dance went through the lighted ha'
To thee my fancy took its wing;
I sat, but neither heard nor saw.

But saw doesn't rime with hall unless you speak Scotch and omit the consonants. You will perceive that a Scotchman cannot help writing poetry when he can make anything rime with anything.—London Chronicle.

Queered Himself.

The detective had just congratulated the housewife for bringing about the arrest of a noted sneak thief. "Oh, I knew he was a crook the minute he opened his mouth," she replied smilingly.

"How did you spot him so quickly?"

"Why, he told me the gas company had sent him to examine our meter and see if we were not entitled to a rebate."—Argonaut.

The "Inthemis."

"Well, James Henry William, did you enjoy yourself at the seaside?"

"Yes, teacher, very much. I liked the sea, but I couldn't find the inthemis."

"The what, James Henry William?"

"The inthemis, teacher; where it says in the Bible, 'The sea and all that in them is.'"—London Chronicle.

Unfair Comparison.

"Pa, when is a man well to do?"

"When he can afford to spend as much in a year for his clothes as his wife does in a month for hers."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Luckily It Is No Worse.

If half the exceptionally smart babies were to develop into smart men and women there would be sharper competition in every walk of life.—Judge.

It is far better to grow noble than to be born noble.

IMPROVE SYSTEMS OF MARKETING FARM CROPS

Uncle Sam Proposes to Assist in Solving Problems Confronting Both the Producer and Consumer.

Systems of marketing farm products and the demand for them at trade centers are the subjects of a special report to congress by the secretary of agriculture, recently published. The report was made by special direction of congress in order that information might be at hand concerning the establishment of a division of markets in the Department of Agriculture. The secretary specifies various items of service that could be performed by such an office, with recommendations that they be adopted, if it is created. The report covers 391 pages and is crowded with information with regard to the subjects treated.

By Producers to Consumers.

The report treats of the movement of farm products from the farm to consumer through a great variety of channels. The simplest distribution is the direct one of delivery by farmer to consumer, and next after this is the delivery by individual farmers or associations of farmers to individual consumers or associations of consumers. In these direct form of distribution the middleman is eliminated, although of course intermediate services are performed either by producers or by consumers or by both parties.

Intervention of Middlemen.

Among the varieties of middlemen concerned in the marketing of farm products are the traveling hucksters who go from farm to farm gathering eggs, butter, poultry, calves, and other commodities, which they sell to shippers, jobbers or retail dealers. The country merchant is often the first receiver of such products as eggs, farm-made butter, poultry, wool, hides, cotton, and sometimes grain and hay. In regions where grain is the staple product the tendency has been to displace the country merchant by the grain buyer and the local elevator man.

Farmers commonly sell through commission merchants and to some extent directly to wholesale dealers and also to retail dealers. The farmer who employs a trustworthy commission merchant who will handle his products honestly and honorably will get the current prices for them within the range of the commission merchant's business, but the farmer often finds himself in the hands of a commission merchant who falsely reports that the products were received in damaged condition or that they were of a grade lower than they were in fact, or he reports receiving prices lower than those actually received by him for the products. Worse than this, it is by no means rare that the commission merchant has sold the products and failed to return the net proceeds.

Samples of transactions in which only one middleman intervenes between producer and consumer include the commission man at a large market who receives consignments of live stock from farmers and sells to packers; the factor to whom the planter consigns his rice or cotton and from whom purchases are made by millers; the warehousemen who manage the sale of a Virginia planter's tobacco.

More Than Two Intermediaries.

A series of three middlemen may include first the local buyer of the shipper; second, the commission dealer or the wholesale merchant; and third, the retail merchant. In the sale of fruit by auction, which is common in large cities east of the Mississippi river, the auctioneer is an additional middleman. He may sell for a commission dealer, to whom the consignment may have been made by a country buyer; and the purchaser at such an auction may be a jobber, who in turn sells to a retail merchant. Five middlemen are thus concerned in such a transaction.

Onions raised in Kentucky are sometimes bought by a local merchant and shipped to Louisville; here they may be put into sacks and consigned to a New York wholesaler or a commission man who in turn sells to a New York retailer. Eggs and poultry frequently pass through the hands of at least four middlemen.

The marketing of clover seed is an example of a transfer from one farmer to another through a number of middlemen. The first middleman may be an Indiana jobber, who consigns to a commission dealer in Toledo, Ohio; here the seed may be purchased by a merchant and shipped to a wholesale dealer in a distant city. The last middleman in this course of distribution is a coun-

try storekeeper or a city dealer in agricultural supplies.

Market Places and Warehouses.

Public market places are established in a number of cities and towns, and in these places consumers may buy such articles as fruit, vegetables, dairy products, poultry and eggs direct from farmers as well as from dealers.

Another institution which aids the producer to dispose of his crop is the public warehouse. Illustrations of this are afforded in the marketing of tobacco in Virginia and North Carolina, wool from the northern Rocky mountain states, and to some extent rice in Louisiana and Texas. The growers or their representatives, with their produce, meet the buyers at these warehouses.

Diversion in Transit.

While farm products are in transit by rail, there are certain points at which the consignor may designate a final destination. The purpose of this practice is to enable the consignor to find the best market for his goods. This is the plan followed in shipping fruits and vegetables by rail from California to the east and from southern states to the north.

Associative Marketing.

The secretary of agriculture has much to say concerning associative marketing by farmers, and the economic advantages are stated in detail. "A survey of the systems of marketing farm products clearly discloses what the farmers can best do to their advantage. They must associate themselves together for the purpose of assembling their individual contributions of products, of shipping in carload lots, of obtaining market news at places to which it is practical to send their products, to sell in a considerable number of markets, if not in many markets, and to

secure the various other economic gains of associative selling."

To carry out this suggestion, it is recommended that if congress establishes a division of markets, a corps of traveling field agents be maintained to assist farmers to form associations for marketing their products.

Estimates of Fruit and Vegetable Supply.

It is also recommended that estimates of the prospective supply of fruits and vegetables, and perhaps other products not now represented in the quantitative estimates of the department's crop-reporting service, be made a short time before harvest, so that the farmer may "have in mind a fairly definite idea of the volume of the crop throughout the country in order that he may occupy a place in the market that is fair to himself or, as the case may be, a place in the market that is fair to the consumer."

General market news service is not recommended. If such service were derived from telegraphic reports, the expense would be enormous. One farmers' marketing association spends \$25,000 a year in telegraphing alone and a fruitgrowers' organization spends \$75,000 for this service.

Field Agents and Correspondents.

It is proposed that a corps of traveling field agents and a large corps of local agents and correspondents be established for the following items of service: To help producers organize for associative marketing; to examine and remove local difficulties in the way of such marketing; to help producers to find markets; to report the current descriptive condition of crops, in addition to the work already done by the department's crop-reporting service; to estimate the probable production of crops a short time before harvest; to report the beginning and ending of the shipping season; to report the crop movement from producing points through "gateways" to principal markets.

Subjects for Investigation.

Among the subjects whose investigation is suggested are the storage of farm products either on the farm or elsewhere pending their sale; the business of commission dealers; the various costs of marketing properly itemized, and compared with prices of products at the farm and with consumers' prices; a description of principal markets and of chief producing regions; and some problems of transportation.

Some information with regard to foreign markets, it is advised, might be made useful to producers. It is proposed also to keep an elaborate record of prices of farm products in which prices at the farm shall be paralleled by wholesale and retail prices. Among the other recommendations are the maintenance of a list of marketing associations and the collection of statistics concerning the business done by them; the investigation of systems of marketing farm products in other countries, with special attention to those features which it may be assumed might be adopted beneficially in this country.

Proposal to Aid Consumers.

The secretary of agriculture closes his recommendations by making one concerning the participation of consumers in the solution of marketing problems. "A cheapening of farmers' costs of marketing will naturally result in gain to the producer rather than to the consumer. If the consumer is to gain by changes in the costs of distribution, it seems probable that he must do so through cheapening or eliminating costs at his end of the chain of distribution. The consumers can cheapen the costs of farm products by co-operative buying and by reducing the expenses of retail and other local distribution. The consumer's aspect of the problems of the distribution of farm products is a conspicuous one at the present time, and problems in distribution that are concerning the consumer rather than the producer may well be included within the service of a division of markets."

Mr. Merchant

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Ashland Tidings