

LAST ACT OF THE MELODRAMATIC OF "MOONSHINE"

Picturesque Outlaw Forced out of
Business by Local Option and
Public Sentiment

WHO has not heard or read—even if he has never sampled it—of “moonshine” whisky, and of its picturesque, lawless maker, the “moonshiner”?

For years the “moonshiner” has been the hero of song and story, a roughly romantic figure, appealing strongly to the popular imagination. Thrilling melodramas have been built around him; dime novels have been filled with his adventures.

His readiness to die in defense of what he has regarded as his inalienable right to pursue happiness and the nimble dollar by the distillation of “mountain dew,” has won admiration for his wrong-headed heroism, even from those who had no sympathy with his illicit business.

But now, if the internal revenue men are not over sanguine, the “moonshiner” is near the end of his career. In a few years, it is asserted, he will be as extinct as the dodo.

With him will end as thrilling a serial story of romance and adventure as ever passed into history.

DAVID A. GATES, chief of the national government's internal revenue agents, believes that the next ten years will witness the final passing of the “moonshiner.”

This will not be, Mr. Gates admits, so much because of the activity and devotion of the revenue men, though these qualities are unquestioned, as because of the change in popular sentiment in the regions where the “moonshiner” is making his last stand.

Fact is, the “moonshiner,” who has always heretofore had the sympathy and tacit support of the communities in which he lived, is gradually being legislated out of existence by those very communities.

The states which have been his stronghold are, one after another, “going dry.” They are discovering that the liquor question, in the rural districts at least, is inextricably tangled up with the negro problem.

The country people are afraid of the drunken negro. Outrages, which have aroused the entire South and resulted in lynchings innumerable, have been traced, in many cases, to the mountain stills.

For it is there that the negro dives get their supplies, and it is “moonshine” that drives the vicious, loafing negro of the country districts mad. So the people have decided that the moonshiner must go; and, that being the case, there is very little doubt that he is going.

For more than fifty years—since Uncle Sam set himself seriously to the suppression of the mountain still—it has been war to the death between the “revenuer” and the “moonshiner,” and neither side was particular as to how many deaths resulted.

BACK TO WASHINGTON'S TIME

Probably the first moonshiners, though the name had not then been coined, were those who fomented the whisky rebellion in western Pennsylvania during the early years of Washington's administration, a revolt that was only broken up when federal troops took the field.

These were the only “moonshiners” for whose suppression an army has been called into service, but there has been for years a sort of guerilla warfare between the makers of illicit whisky and the armed revenue officers, which will only cease when the “moonshiner” is extinct.

He is in the class with the buffalo, in that he is “dying out,” but with this difference—that there is no effort being made to prevent it. Game preservation laws do not extend to him.

“Moonshining” is an ancient industry, and it is only comparatively recently that it has ceased to be an honorable one.

When our grandfathers were young men a great many of them owned and operated private distilleries. The promiscuous making and sale of whisky was as honorable and right in those days as the raising and selling of hogs.

Country gentlemen all had their stills. Each man made as much whisky each season as he had corn to spare for, saved what he wanted for family use and sold the rest at about 20 cents a gallon—a grade of whisky, by the way, that now costs from \$5 to \$6 a gallon.

When the government forbade this sort of “every-man-his-own-distiller” scheme, the better and law-abiding class submitted gracefully to the inevitable. But the forest free lances, knowing little and caring less for law, took up the industry, which meant big returns for little outlay of capital or labor, and began the manufacture by stealth, generally at night and at secret places. Hence the term “moonshiner.”

While there have been some illicit liquor manufacturers in the cities, the real stronghold of the industry has been in the mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas.

The “moonshiner” is essentially a product of the hills. His face is rarely seen in the market places. He is convinced that his business is not illegal. He believes thoroughly in his God-given right to make whisky, and he regards it as an infringement of his liberties as an American citizen to break his still or lay the heavy hand of taxation on the spirit which he manufactures. And in defense of that right he is ready to die.

BY MOUNTAIN STREAMS

At the same time he realizes that discretion is the better part of valor, and he builds his still with a view to concealment, just as we were in the woods in abundance; however, so he chooses a deep gully or ravine, or the banks of a creek running down a mountainside—the more out of the way, the more inaccessible the better.

As a means of livelihood the “moonshine” whisky industry is a fairly profitable business, but it cannot be compared with the big distilleries. The “moonshiner’s” plant is, as a rule, simplicity itself.

An illicit still can be made as cheap as \$10, with the furnace built in primeval fashion of rock and clay, and the “worm” adapted from a gun barrel. It may cost, on the other hand, as high as \$400 if the “moonshiner” takes pains to provide in his business. The usual investment is, perhaps, \$300 or \$350.

The stills are crude affairs, of course, as compared with the elaborate machinery of the big distilleries. But an average sized still can be made to produce eighty gallons of marketable whisky a week, which sells readily for \$10 or \$12 a gallon.

That means an income of \$80 a week from materials costing about \$30.

Seventy dollars a week would mean a princely income for those parts if the men worked steadily, but they don't. No “moonshiner” worthy of the name would work himself to death by working without a hand and a gun in his clothes. Moreover, there are times when they can't

work for lack of water, and times when they don't work for fear of the “revenuers.”

“Moonshine” whisky is, as all whisky is when it comes from the still, colorless. It is moreover, raw and strong. The “moonshiner” has no time to age, color or blend his product. He must dispose of it at once.

He sells it to his neighbors—to the poor white, whose throat has been made callous to the burning fluid by long familiarity, or to the negro loafer who



Home of the Moonshiner.



Caught in the Act by Revenue Officers



A Typical Moonshiner

ist, she continued his illicit business. Frequently she stood guard with a Winchester rifle while the man she employed worked at the still in a deep ravine. She is non-committal as to whether she ever shot a “revenuer,” but says that the idea of letting human blood was always repugnant to her.

But from present indications it will soon be a case of Othello's occupation gone. The state Legislatures, with the people back of them, are doing what the revenue officer with the whole federal government



Fights with “moonshiners,” many of them never seeing the man who fired the shot. This does not include marshals and deputies marshals who were killed in making arrests.

John Carver, a posse man, killed in a raid in the Smoky mountain district, along the border line between North Carolina and Tennessee, in 1904, was the last of the government officers to lose his life in such a fight.

Back to her home in Jackson county, Kentucky, recently went Mrs. Adeline Rose, having been released from jail through the clemency of President Roosevelt. Her sentence of six months, coupled with a fine of \$100, did not convince her that “moonshining” was wrong. She announced her intention of abandoning the pursuit, however, because she had become convinced that she could no longer evade the “revenuers.”

He must wait for the other fellow to fire first (as a rule, he does not have to wait long), but once fired on, he can fire as often as he likes and as accurately as he able.

Since 1874 fifty-four of the government's revenue agents have been killed and ninety-four wounded in

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“The moonshine” belt lies south of the Ohio river, and includes parts of Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, North and South Carolina and Virginia, Mississippi, Missouri, West Virginia and Florida also have illicit stills, but the traffic there has never amounted to much.

Georgia and Arkansas have had, perhaps, the greatest number of stills, and have produced more than half the illicit whisky made in the country. The Georgia “moonshiner,” however, is a poor creature; his stills are small, he sells mostly to his neighbors, and is not particularly prosperous.

But one by one these states in the former “moonshine” belt are going “dry.” Recently Georgia declared for prohibition after January 1 next. County after county in Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi

have voted out liquor, and they have been mostly the counties that have been the particular strongholds of the “moonshiners.” More than half of Texas is “dry,” though to be sure “moonshining” has never been much of an industry in Texas. In Alabama is it unlawful to sell liquor after 9 o'clock in the cities, or after 8 o'clock in the country districts. North Carolina's next Legislature will consider prohibition law. The southwestern part of Virginia, the wildest part of the state, the only part where the “moonshiner” has flourished, has taken advantage of local option to go dry.

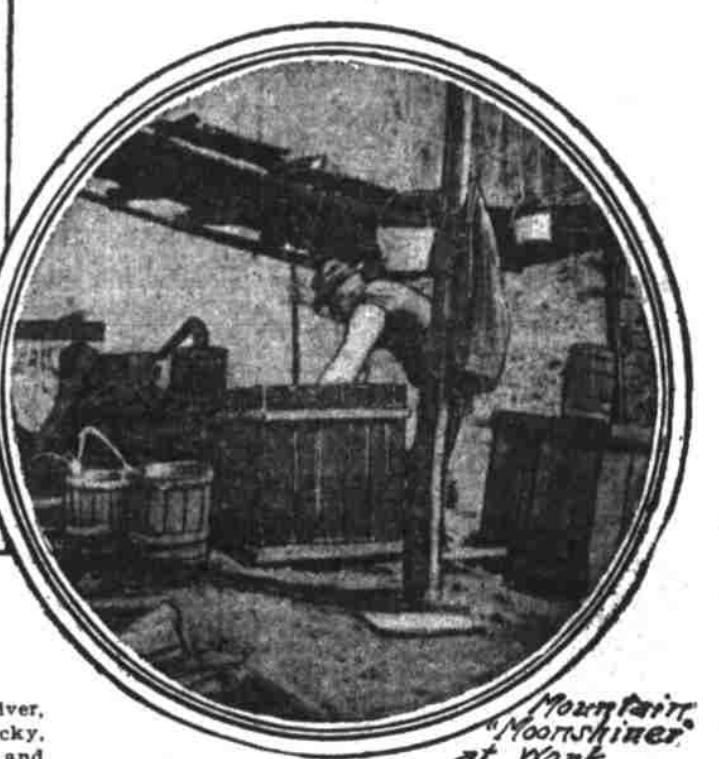
It is admitted by southern people that the negro question is at the bottom of the prohibition question, for the criminal class among the negro race is a practically uncontrollable element where whisky is permitted.

The remarkable feature of all this anti-liquor legislation is that it is not for the protection of the cities so much as in the interest of the rural districts. Where the law does not attempt absolute prohibition, the regulations as to the sale of liquor are much more stringent in the country than in the towns. Where local option exists, it is not the towns that go “dry”; it is the country.

In Kentucky, for instance, where the law gives every local community the right to pass upon the liquor question, county after county is falling into line. In Missouri here are only seven counties in which liquor can be bought; in Tennessee there are only three. In the latter state it is significant that Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga, the three largest cities, are the only points which still have saloons.

PROTECTING THE HOMES

The most notorious “moonshining” districts in the south, which are known to be in the neighborhood of Middleboro, Ky.; Bristol, Tenn.; Gadsden, Ala., and Asheville, N. C., do not contain more than ten legalized saloons. Everywhere the liquor laws are being rigidly enforced for the protection of the isolated districts, the lonely farm houses where the women and children are being



Mountain Moonshiner at Work.

When Conscience Grapples the Guilty Mind...

HOW do you do, Mr. Brockett, do you know me?”

John Brockett, a farmer living near Derby, Conn., looked up from his dinner table one day and saw a well-dressed man whose face seemed familiar.

Yet he shook his head vaguely.

“I'm So and So,” replied the man; “you remember I worked for you eighteen years ago.”

“Yes, and stole \$200,” said Brockett. “The police gave up looking for you years ago. You have nerve to come back.”

“Well, I've come to pay you the money,” said the man. He drew out a purse and placed bills amounting to \$200 on the table. Then the former hired man explained that a number of years ago he had been converted in Chicago, and had got a position in a dry goods store, of which he was now manager.

“I made up my mind to pay you, and saved my money. So here you are.”

of the Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, received a money order for \$4,50.

“This is for the conscience fund,” wrote the sender. “Twenty years ago I stole a ride between Chattanooga and Nashville, and the memory of this has often worried me. At nights I think of this act of dishonesty, and hope this will wipe out the debt.”

Mr. Danley purchased a ticket between the two points and had it canceled. Then he wrote the man, telling him to go ahead.

Railroads often receive money orders of just this kind from persons who have stolen rides on trains.

“Sometimes these letters surprise us,” said a railroad official. “The amounts in most cases are insignificant. Sometimes people send in money for the fares of children whom they had taken at half rates. They confide in telling untruths about the ages and other conditions.”

“Undoubtedly the conscience fund is a tribute to the honesty of mankind. It is a pity purloiners of larger sums of money in banks and financial institutions are so rarely affected by the same change of heart.”

John C. Fetzer, receiver of the Milwaukee Avenue State Bank of Chicago, which failed through the manipulations of Paul O. Stensland, received a check from an institution for \$25.

The check came from the president of a college in Illinois, who said that about a year before Stensland had been the victim of a swindle in the college library.

“Inasmuch as the bank had lost through the swindle, the president declared that he felt he would be doing a wrong if he did not return the money. He said he felt that it belonged to the creditors.”

CHARITY SCREENS DISHONEST Y

“If more men would follow this example,” said Mr. Fetzer, “many of the creditors of wrecked institutions would benefit. It is a fact that men engaged in dishonest dealings contribute largely to charitable institutions, for it does them good. It directs suspicion from them and gives the reputation of being religious and honest.”

More than fifteen years ago Mrs. Martin J. Ervin of Kingwood, W. Va., lost her property for failing to pay taxes and was overseen by a lawyer and politician for \$300. The man deeded the house to a young woman, to whom he was engaged to be married. A disagreement arose between the couple and the engineer, and the house was broken. The lawyer went to the Klondike where he made a fortune, and the young woman married a clergyman.

Nearly a year ago Mrs. Ervin received a letter from this young woman. She stated that the house

was still in her possession, but she could not regard the property as her own. It had been bought at too low a figure, she said, and she felt it was wrong had been done.

Mrs. Ervin. What additional amount would satisfy her? Mrs. Ervin asked that \$300 would do. And so the clergyman's wife sent a check for that amount.

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