

# LAST ACT OF THE MELODRAMA OF "MOONSHINER"

**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 still.

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 "revenue" 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 30 cents a gallon—a grade of whisky, by the way, that now costs from \$4 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. It must be where there is water in abundance, however, so he chooses a deep gully or ravine, or the banks of a creek running down a mountain-side—the more out of the way, the more inaccessible the better.

As a means of livelihood the "moonshine" whisky industry is fairly profitable. It requires little capital. 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 \$50 if the "moonshiner" takes sufficient pride in his business. The usual investment is, perhaps, \$200 or \$250.

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 at \$1.10 or \$1.20 a gallon.

That means an income of \$90 a week from materials costing about \$20.

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 demean himself by working when he had any money 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.

So 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



Caught in the Act by Revenue Officers

cannot get it too strong. A little perhaps he sends to the towns, and sells to the negro divekeeper—and that results in trouble and lawlessness on the part of the consumer.

As to the class of men who have been "moonshiners" these latter years, they have been mostly a worthless, thriftless lot, too lazy to raise cotton and seeing no fun in farming.

The "moonshiner" of today is not at all a romantic figure. He is very much like any other denizen of the outskirts of civilization. His clothing is poor and scanty. A more intimate acquaintance with soap and water would make another man of him, and a shave would probably make him a stranger to his own family.

He is a desperate man, ready to die in defense of what he claims as his God-given right to make whisky, but, on the whole, preferring not to. He takes no chances with life or liberty.

At the first hint of danger, it is flight or fight, according to circumstances. If it is flight, it is flight to a finish; and that, in times gone by, has not made for length of days for the revenue agent.

The "revenue" is a good deal more of a hero in his way than the "moonshiner." He rides into the wilderness, and sometimes he doesn't come back. His calling is as dangerous as that of the soldier, and he gets none of the soldier's glory.

If he is killed, his wife is not pensioned by a grateful country. On the contrary, if any provision is made for his widow and his fatherless children, it is in the form of a grudging allowance which must be authorized by special act of Congress.

He rides armed, of course, with the best and most modern weapons, but he rides continually in expectation of ambush, knowing that everywhere he is watched by hostile eyes, perhaps covered by hostile guns; that the moment the "moonshiner" thinks his still or his person is in danger he will shoot.

Until the "moonshiner" shoots the "revenue" may not. By that time it is sometimes too late. There is considerable advantage in the first shot, and that advantage the rules of the service deny the revenue agent.

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 is able.

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

## When Conscience Crapples 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."

SUCH instances of the workings of conscience are not rare. People who steal money, ride on cars without paying fare or defraud others in any way often feel a change of heart after many years, and go to the greatest trouble to right the wrongs they perpetrated.

Interesting and unique are the little stories revealed in railroad offices, banking institutions, post-offices and other places. The merest chances, the death of friends, conversion, often cause people to remember small and petty thefts. Their conscience burns, and then they make restitution.

One would hardly think that the memory of stealing a free ride on a trolley car would worry a person. The intentional sending of a letter with less than the required postage, overlooked by the postmaster, would hardly be regarded as a mortal sin. Yet people often remember these things years after the occurrence.

Often it takes the heart a long time to melt into penitence. But, as these little instances prove, hearts of the unjust often, instead of becoming calloused, become more sensitive with the passing of years.

Some time ago General Passenger Agent Danley, 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 be at peace.

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 confess to telling untruths about the ages and offer restitution."

"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 feeling."

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 contributed this amount to the college library. Inasmuch as the bank had lost through this man, 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 DISHONESTY

"If more men would follow this example," said Mr. Fetzer, "most 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 failure to pay taxes. It was bought by a lawyer and politician for \$500. 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 engagement 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 a wrong had been done Mrs. Ervin. What additional amount would satisfy her? Mrs. Ervin replied that \$200 would do. And so the clergyman's wife sent a check for that amount.

Sometimes conscience nags at the heart of the small boy who surreptitiously steals sticks of candy from stores. Children are by no means impervious. Some time ago the secretary of the Board of Education of New York city received 20 cents' worth of stamps from a lad, who signed himself "Reginald Smith."

back of him has not been able to do. 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

## PAID FOR MUTILATING DESK

He had been naughty one day, he said, and had whittled at his desk with a penknife. He was so sorry, he assured the secretary, and hoped the amount would pay for the damage he had done. As there was no address given, the secretary was unable to reply that it would.

Sometimes conscience will make men do strange things. It impels them not only to return money, but often, when this is impossible, to make confessions. When Governor Folk, of Missouri, got a letter from a former member of the St. Louis House of Delegates, confessing to have distributed \$250,000 of boodle money, he was rather amazed.

"I'll make a clean breast of it and feel cleared," wrote the man. And then he told of the various transactions of the "combine," or how the money was raised and distributed during a campaign.

There is a great fund of truth in the saw about conscience making cowards. While walking along a street in Atlantic City, John Bowls, of Washington, D. C., happened to look up and recognized the police headquarters. His heart ceased to beat for a moment, and then, in fright, he took to his heels.

A detective, standing on the steps, was attracted by his strange behavior, followed and caught him. When the detective questioned the man he broke down and confessed that he was wanted on a larceny charge in Washington. The crime had so weighed upon him since its commission that he had not slept a night. The mere sight of a police station filled him with terror.

A unique story of change of heart was revealed in a petition presented to the License Court of Philadelphia for the revocation of a liquor license. Declaring that he was opposed to impure liquors which were manufactured, and that he realized the evils of the liquor business, Matthew M. Farrell asked that his license to sell liquors in West Philadelphia be revoked. As a result of his action, Farrell received letters from all parts of the country praising him.



Home of "Moonshiner."

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 it is unlawful to sell liquor after 9 o'clock in the cities, or after 3 o'clock in the country districts. North Carolina's next Legislature will consider a 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.

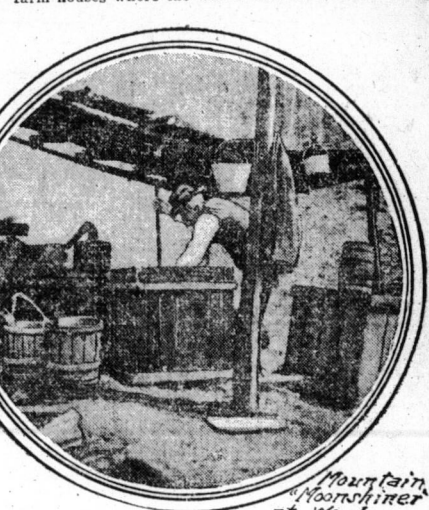
It is admitted by southern people that the negro question is at the bottom of the prohibition question, for the criminal class among the negro race is a practically uncontrollable element where whisky is permitted.

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 there 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.; Asheville, N. C., do not contain more than ten legalized saloons. Everywhere the liquor laws are being framed for the protection of the isolated districts, the lonely farm houses where the women and children are being



Mountain Moonshiner at Work.

left alone, at the mercy of the drunken negro, maddened by "moonshine" whisky.

And the people in these outlying counties, who have always been ready to protect and conceal the "moonshiner," to warn him of danger, and sometimes even to help him in his resistance to the "revenue," are now the first ones to give the agent every possible assistance.

It is that fact that is sounding the knell of the "moonshiner," and that will in time make the revenue agent's job something of a sinecure in the very regions where formerly it was most strenuous.

Another factor in the enforcement of the law against illicit distilling in the South is the fact that there is now a federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Ga. The "moonshiner" who was willing to risk his life rather than be sent to prison, and exchange for the free air of the mountains, the sweet freshness of the hills and forests, the close air of confinement in a northern prison, had the judge's sympathy.

Close confinement for a man of his class in a locality to which he was not accustomed often meant death within a short time. But now that the Atlanta penitentiary is complete, judges do not hesitate to impose a prison sentence on the "moonshiner."

It is taken for granted that as soon as his prison term expires, the "moonshiner" will take up his old pursuits. It is simply as if he had been away on a visit. He holds it no shame to have served a term in prison for "moonshining." His friends congratulate him on his return, and he prepares to resume business at the old stand as soon as he can get a new still.

Of late years, however, the revenue men have been more than ready to anticipate the entire extinction of the illicit whisky industry in the immediate future. There has always been, and there always will be, more or less of it in the big cities.

New York does the biggest business of the sort; but Chicago and Philadelphia have always their secret stills in operation. In January, 1899, one of the most elaborate stills found in the experience of the revenue office was raided in Germantown, Philadelphia. It occupied a second-story front room, and fourteen barrels of "mash" were found there fermenting.

However, this sort of illicit distilling, as it is carried on in cellars and attics of the city, is a very different affair from "moonshining." It is as prosaic as soap boiling and little or no danger attends the raids. But the "moonshiner," the rugged, picturesque hero of the crazy mountain side, with his primitive still hidden in the underbrush, first cousin to the cowboy, in the estimation of the small boy, and next of kin to the feudsmen—who, by the way, his primitive still both among the "moonshiners" and under the banners of the "revenue" for the sole purpose of lawfully slaying his enemy—is doomed.

His day is past, because the people to whose tolerance he owed his existence have ceased to tolerate him. They no longer regard him as merely a technical lawbreaker, a rather-to-be-admired rebel against an unjust law, but as a serious menace to the entire community in that it is from him directly or indirectly that the negro element gets most of its liquor, under the influence of which it becomes a hideous danger to the entire community.

"Moonshining" is being uprooted in its own stronghold, and by the work of its own people.

## Deserts Palace for Hut

TWO nature and win his wife back to health, G. Kennedy Tod, a banker and civic reformer, has lived outdoors this last summer at his country estate at Sound Beach, on Long Island.

His splendid home, Iona Arden, is one of the show places of that section of the country. But he deserted it entirely for two small huts, only a little over six feet from floor to roof, in the "hemp" timberland. The other lived his wife with a trained nurse. A cot and a few pictures were the only furniture.

In addition, a small tent served as a dining room and another as a kitchen.

More than a year ago Mrs. Tod, who was Mrs. Howard Potter, a niece of Bishop Potter, was forced to undergo a surgical operation. Her recovery was slow.

Last autumn Mr. Tod spent six weeks in the Canadian wilds.

How much good the trip would have done his wife, had she been strong enough to take it, he thought. So, as the next best thing, the plan of living in the open at home occurred to him. It was thoroughly congenial to both of them, and they enjoyed their huts more than they did their palace.