

Country Where the Moonshiner is King



GOVERNMENT DETECTIVES DESTROYING MASH CAPTURED IN RAID ON MOONSHINERS.



WELL CONCEALED ENTRANCE TO STILL SHOWN JUST TO RIGHT OF ROCK.



OLD MILL USED BY MOONSHINERS TO GRIND CORN FOR MAKING MASH.

(Copyright, 1902, by Clifford Smythe.) THE man who pitches his cabin in some mountain wild, collects a band of followers and makes his living by methods that fall under the curse of government and society, is in all reality a more picturesque character than the Rob Roy and the Deane of popular fiction. He is regarded with superstitious terror by his neighbors. His daring exploits become the theme of wondering gossip, while his success in eluding government wins him the homage due to a hero.

While such conditions and the outlaws that make them are rapidly disappearing from the United States, there are a few sections of the country where they still exist, wild regions that are the bane of the United States marshal, and where the moonshiner is king.

Into one of the most notorious of these districts, thirty miles from the town of Hinton, in the counties of Mercer and Raleigh, West Virginia, Dan Cunningham, prince of government detectives, invited the writer to accompany him on a three days' raid. For some time past the outlaws in this far-off region, known as the Flat Top country, had escaped the active attention of the marshal's office at Charleston. As a consequence the manufacture of illicit or "moonshine" whisky among them had reached serious proportions and a raid by the best officer in the service became inevitable.

Method of Moonshining.

Moonshining is an art that glories in a nomenclature and a process of its own, but briefly, it is the illicit method by which corn or rye is turned into whisky. The moonshiner selects as the scene of his labors some spot conveniently near a running stream and secure from outside intrusion. Such a spot is usually found at the bottom of a steep ravine hidden by a thick growth of laurel bushes, although sometimes a cave in a hillside is selected if the approach is sufficiently precipitous to insure against unforeseen invasion by the ever-dreaded government officer. A stone furnace, a copper still, a copper or tin "worm," the "mash" tubs and the barrel or hogshead to receive the whisky constitute the moonshiner's plant or distillery.

When everything is in readiness the corn or the rye is put into the mash tubs and cooked by scalding water being poured over it. After it is thoroughly cooked it is given another immersion and allowed to stand for a period of from three to four days, during which it passes through the process of fermentation. The result is a light sort of beer, or sour mash. This is then poured into the copper still and boiled. This still is a closed vessel with an average capacity of from 100 to 200 gallons. Its manufacture is prohibited by law. Into the top of the still is inserted the worm, a hollow tube with a series of convolutions and open at both ends. As the mash boils in the still it turns to vapor which finds its way into the worm. The latter is either submerged in cold water, or else water from the adjoining stream is poured over it. This contact with the cold coagulates the vapor inside and it runs out in liquid form into the receiving hogshead. The first run from the still is called "singlings" and produces a low wine. This low wine is bodied again in the still, passing through the worm into the hogshead as before. This second run is called "doubling" and the product is the high wine or whisky. At the time when the three raiders heard of

the still near Flat Top, the moonshiners were said to be ready to make their first run—that is, turn the beer into singlings or low wine.

Ride Has Its Dangers.

It was necessary for us to pass through nearly thirty miles of moonshiner territory, and in a country, where travelers of any kind being scarce, every stranger receives a degree of scrutiny that is difficult to avoid. Carrying rifles, also, after the hunting season is over is a hard matter to explain to the inquisitive. Dan, the deputy marshal, tucked his, therefore, under his coat and volunteered the information to the few people who were met on the road that the writer, who exhibited an ungainly camera box on his back, was the surveyor of a new railroad line and was taking pictures for his company. This apparently allayed suspicion and the raiders seemed to have a fair chance to walk quietly in on the moonshiners at their work and capture the entire party.

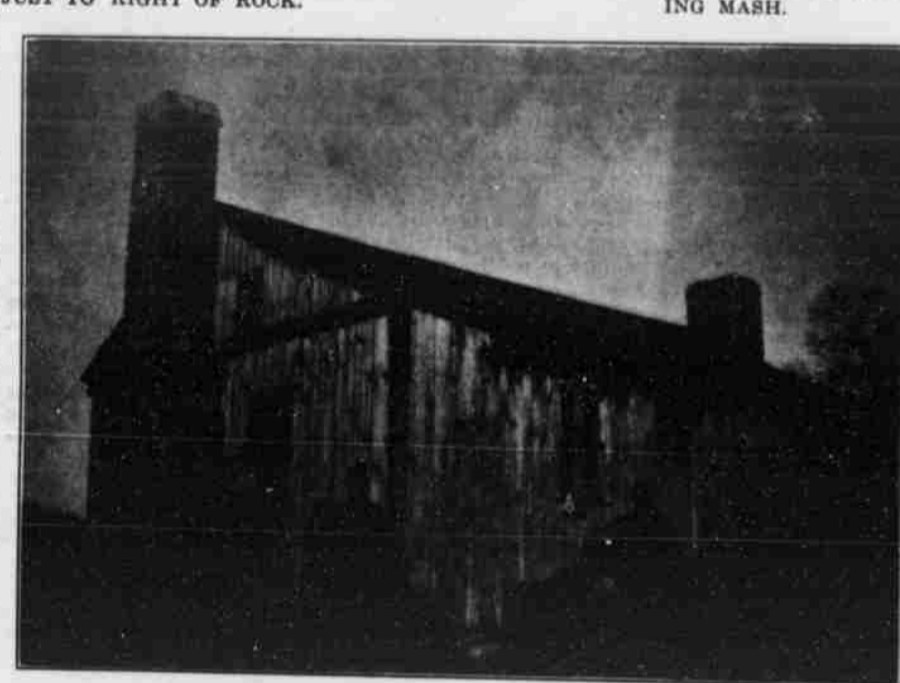
By evening, however, this hope was dispelled. We had scarcely reached Flat Top when from the surrounding mountains signal guns were fired and beacons lit. Not a soul was seen and these evidences of an aroused community were anything but reassuring. Until midnight we spurred our horses over a road that eluded us more than once in the intense darkness. Nothing could be more weirdly impressive than this stealthy approach in the black silence of the night, through a hostile country hampered by all the obstacles that the roughest section of the Alleghenies could present. No houses were passed until within a mile of the place where the moonshiners were at work. Here a strange spectacle came into view that caused each of us an involuntary shudder. The house of one of the moonshiners was burning. Not a soul was visible; not a sound could be heard, except the roar of the flames and the occasional plunge of a hissing log to the wreck-strewn ground beneath. What tragedy was marked by this conflagration; what midnight orgy or deadly mountain feud, none of the raiders hurrying by with blanched faces loomed through the circle of fire could fathom. It was a mountain home gone and possibly an entire family of these strange people slumbered beneath the ashes. The mystery of it, undoubtedly connected in some way with the raid, will probably never be solved. More than one tragedy occurs in those wild mountains and never a whisper of it reaches the world outside.

Dan Smelled the Still.

By what instinct Dan could tell the proximity of the moonshiners' plant in that dark wilderness it would be hard even for him to explain. Every now and then he would get on his knees and examine the snow and frozen twigs for signs. Finally, after one of these inspections, he called us together and announced that we were within gunshot of the place, pointing at the same time down a dark precipice, at the bottom of which could be heard the far-away murmur of a mountain stream.

"Have your guns ready, boys. Get the drop on the first man you see. If you need to, fire on him."

That precipice seemed interminable. Instead of a short declivity it was afterward found to be about 800 feet in height, a glare of ice and a tangle of laurel thickets. As the bottom was reached, the snow-covered banks of the stream could be faintly distinguished in the starlight, and then a mass of dark objects from which a thin column



TYPICAL MOONSHINER'S CABIN.

of smoke appeared to be rising. We closed in on the dark mass before us. There was row on row of huge mash tubs filled to overflowing with "beer." There was a wide stone furnace in which were a few glowing embers. But the copper still and worm were gone, and not a moonshiner was in sight.

The possibility yet remained that one or more of the gang might be lurking in the brush nearby. With whispered instructions, therefore, to hold up the first man encountered, the raiders separated as the morning began to dawn, taking different directions in their search up and down the ravine.

For a long time nothing came of this effort. But as I neared the rendezvous at the still I heard a rustle, a stealthy tread in the laurel thicker ahead of me. The desperado was coming directly toward me. I got my gun ready and then hesitated, as I remembered that I had not been told the correct form of address to use on such occasions. "Stand, in the king's name!" sounded well. "Under which king, Bezonian, speak or die?" had also done good service in Pistol's day. But though excellent in themselves, neither of these exclamations appeared particularly appropriate to moonshiners in West Virginia. Fearful, therefore, of displaying ignorance of moonshine etiquette, I determined to say nothing. I would simply get the drop on the moonshiner. With my gun all ready I calmly waited. The laurels swayed, then parted—and the burly form of Dan, the detective, stood before me.

Destruction of the Mash.

As the sun swept down the surrounding hills Cunningham destroyed the plant that the moonshiners had been forced to leave behind them. About a thousand gallons of beer or "mash" were thus poured into the brook. This represented a net value of at least \$500. Then we followed a path that led us straight to a house that we knew to be the headquarters of this particular gang of moonshiners. It was the home of Lens Lilly. They are all Lillys in this wild community. Lilly seems to be a tribal name among them, due, probably, to the fact that a century or more ago a family of Lilly settled here and in time spread

over the country. The history of creation is frequently re-enacted on a small scale in these remote corners of West Virginia.

Lens, of course, was not at home when the raiders entered his cabin. His wife, a wild-eyed woman dividing her attention between a spinning wheel and a child who was dying of whooping cough, persistently denied any knowledge of her husband's whereabouts. Probably the primitive cabin had never held so many strangers before, and its mistress with her half-starved children clinging about her, regarded the unwelcome intruders with the gaze of some female wolf at bay, until the detective asked some questions about her dying child and tried to soothe its cough. This show of interest had a humanizing effect on the woman, although it failed to elicit any information regarding the absent husband. As we left the house the woman crept out after us and commenced calling the cows, a favorite signal among these people to moonshiners lurking in the brush that they are in danger.

Twenty-Five Years of War.

For the next two days and nights we scoured the adjacent country and succeeded in capturing three of the gang. More than once in the chase we were at the mercy of ambushed moonshiners, and the aim of these outlaws is unerring. We spent three days vainly trying to capture the leader. For the last thirty years he has had a master hand in most of the moonshining in the neighborhood and his arrest would go a long way toward breaking up the open outlawry that flourishes in this part of the country. More than one deputy marshal and revenue officer has lost his life tracking him to his lair, and Lilly has confidently announced he will never be taken alive.

For the last twenty-five years the government through its marshals and revenue officers has been waging war on moonshining, and undoubtedly the latter is less prevalent than at the time when the first serious effort to abolish it was made. Ex-Governor Atkinson of West Virginia, who was the first to make effectual headway against this class of outlaws, the first marshal to enforce the present revenue policy

of the government, declares that during four years of warfare between moonshiner and official in the southern states nearly 5,000 stills were seized and 8,000 moonshiners captured. This was accomplished at a sacrifice of twenty-nine government officers murdered and sixty-three seriously wounded. The saving in revenues to the government by the capture of these distilleries Governor Atkinson places at \$7,042,500 annually. From these figures the extent and seriousness of moonshining can be estimated, although today, judging by Governor Atkinson's thrilling reminiscences, the moonshiner is not so formidable as he used to be. Indeed, with the continuance of the present official activity, by another generation the moonshiner with all his strange social environment may become as much a matter of fiction as the Highlander of Scotland or the outlaws of Robin Hood's England. Meantime many a brave deputy marshal may bite the dust amid the solitudes of these southern hills, many a daring outlaw spread the terror and fame of his deeds over a country that he dominates with the authority of a chieftain of old.

CLIFFORD SMYTHE.

Pointed Paragraphs

Chicago News: Short friends often make long accounts.

Man's loose actions often get him in a tight place.

Consistency is often but another name for contrariety.

When a man is spooling for a fight he is naturally too fresh.

Selfishness is the result of a misdirected search for happiness.

A practical man is one who carries out the plans of a theorist.

Fireproof buildings are provided with fire escapes just the same.

Possibilities of genius are few when compared with impossibilities.

A heated argument is one of the things the wise man quickly drops.

Only a fool man believes that a woman believes everything he tells her.

A small boy with an armful of snowballs can make a strong man tremble.

The gas bill may be a light affliction, but getting it receipted is a heavy one.

Women defend the wearing of corsets on economic grounds; there is less waist.

He who steals a woman's purse gets away with a lot of samples and other trash.

Contentment should be measured by the number of things you are willing to do without.

Toadstools are often mistaken for mushrooms and gall is sometimes mistaken for genius.

Lo and the White Man

Washington Star: "Is your hair cut?" "It is," answered the Indian.

"Have you washed all the paint off your face and instead anointed yourself with bay rum?"

"I have."

"Have you cultivated habits of thrift and saved up some money?"

"I have."

"Sure you've saved up money?"

"Yes."

"Well, come on. You are ready for the next step in civilization. I will now teach you how to play poker."