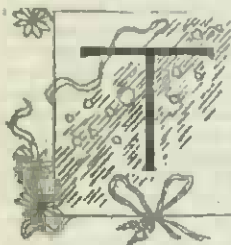


MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

TALES OF GOVERNMENT CRIME.

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THIS IS THE first of a series of letters which I propose to write showing some of the curious ways in which Uncle Sam is robbed.

He does one of the biggest businesses in the world. His ordinary expenditures have for years been between three and four hundred million dollars annually. He has on hand here today in Washington, in the shape of bonds, bank notes and bullion, more than \$800,000,000, and the gold and silver coin stacked up in the treasury cellars weighs 5,000 tons. The sums in which he deals are big enough to tempt the wildest dreams of criminal avarice, and thousands of men are plotting how they can in some way break in and carry away a part of the pile. This money is surrounded, however, both by day and by night by trusty watchmen, whose revolvers are always ready. The strongest of wrought iron and of welded steel inclose his bags of gold and silver, and the heavy doors which form the entrances to his vaults have time locks which defy the most expert of burglars. The ordinary thief has little chance here. The checks on the treasury are legion, and the chief money stolen from the government is slipped out in other ways. And yet there is no doubt but that vast sums are stolen. Uncle Sam's receipts amount to almost a million dollars a day, and he undoubtedly loses millions of dollars in one way or another every year.

Take the matter of the whisky tax. Since its increase to \$1.10 a gallon moonshine stills have been springing up like weeds in all parts of the country. They have flourished for years in the mountains of the south, but they are now beginning to sprout up in the big cities of the north. Within the past few weeks a number of illicit stills have been discovered in New York and Philadelphia. The business is being carried on by Polish Jews in attics and cellars. They are making whisky from black strap molasses, for which they pay in bulk about four cents per gallon. It probably costs them less than twenty-five cents to make a gallon of whisky, and their profits are from 400 to 500 per cent.

This business is entirely different from that of the moonshiners. Col. W. W. Colquitt, the chief of the special agents of the Treasury Department, has given me the details, and I have before me the drawing of one of these northern whisky stills, which has just been received by the Treasury Department. The still was captured only a few days ago in one of the big cities of the east. It is of the sort used in Russia, and it consists of two galvanized iron boxes or barrels with fire boxes beneath them. The molasses is mixed with water and is fermented into a kind of sugar beer. It is then put into these boilers and

cooked into a vapor. This is conducted through pipes into a second still and cold water from the city water works acts as the condenser. The sugar beer after two distillations comes out in the shape of whisky, and as such it is ready for the market. Such a still costs but a few dollars. It makes practically no smell, and it can be put up in any room where there are water-works. The only ways that the treasury detectives can know of its existence are through the selling of the whisky and the purchasing of the molasses and yeast. A large amount of yeast has to be used to ferment the beer, and the yeast factories of all the big eastern cities are now being watched by treasury detectives. Every one who buys much yeast has to give an account of himself, and all suspicious purchasers are carefully shadowed.

The whisky robbers use all kinds of means to escape the detectives. A week or so ago one of the treasury agents saw a Jew buy a large bundle of yeast. He took it from the factory and walked off with it under his arm. The detective followed. He saw the yeast given to another man, who carried it through several alleys, and gave it to a third man, who took it into a cellar. About fifteen minutes later this man came out with what seemed to be four base ball clubs wrapped in brown paper in his arms. This was the yeast, which he had molded up in this way to avoid suspicion. As he walked off the detective followed him, and he finally traced him to an attic where some Polish Jews had a distillery, which was making many gallons of whisky a day.

Another of the stills was discovered only a few weeks ago, which was being operated under the disguise of a dairy. This was located just outside of Brooklyn. The whisky robber had bought the dairy. He had on hand about 100 cows, and he had his regular milk route, which was mostly confined to the saloons of Brooklyn and New York. The revenue spies knew that there was a large amount of illicit whisky on the market. They could not trace it until they noted that some of the saloons seemed to be getting large quantities of milk. One day they followed the milkman and they found the still. At least half of his cans had been filled with whisky, which was delivered to the saloons, while the milk went to his ordinary customers. In capturing the still the revenue agents took charge of the dairy and they confiscated the cows on the part of Uncle Sam.

The increase of illicit distilling in the southern mountains during the past year is enormous. The stills are scattered through the mountain districts of every southern state, and the revenue department has never had its hands so full as now. The commissioner of internal revenue tells me that the agents have never been so well organized, and they have never done so good work as they are now doing. Col. Colquitt, the chief of this branch, was for years in the field as a special agent. He has the moonshine districts mapped out, and there is a black list at the Treasury Department containing the names of the suspected characters. Congress has set aside \$50,000 a year for the pay of spies and hired informers, and Uncle Sam is

now spending, all told, about \$500,000 annually to put down the business. Still there are more stills now than ever before. One thousand were destroyed last year. The outlook is that there will be nearly 2,000 wiped out during the coming year and the number destroyed last month was 164. It is hard to estimate the loss which Uncle Sam sustains from these moonshine stills. A few days ago a wagon load of whisky, containing 100 gallons of liquor, was captured near Greenville, S. C. The tax on this alone would have been \$110. Suppose the 2,000 stills which will be captured this year to continue in operation. It is a small still which will not produce five gallons of whisky daily. These 2,000 stills would produce 10,000 gallons a day, on which the tax would be \$11,000. Eleven thousand dollars a day is more than \$4,000,000 per year. This will be the saving in revenue by the breaking up of these stills. There are, however, in all probability, hundreds which are never discovered, and the loss is incalculable.

I asked Col. Colquitt to give me some idea of the moonshine stills of the south. He replied: "They are rude affairs, and the average still does not cost more than \$50. It usually consists of two barrels, one of which contains a coil of copper pipe connected with a boiler on the top of an oven, like a bake oven, near by. In the other barrel the mash is kept. This mash is made of cornmeal. It is fermented into a kind of a beer. This beer is put into the boiler, and as it gets warm it rises in vapor into the pipe and flows off into the coil. Cold water from a mountain stream is kept running through the barrel over the coil, and as it falls upon it it condenses the vapor into liquor. The whisky has to be distilled twice before it is ready for use. It costs only a few cents a gallon, and it requires no capital to speak of to make it. The mountaineers bring their corn to the still and trade it for whisky. They receive a gallon of whisky for a bushel of corn. The moonshiner can make three gallons out of every bushel, and he has two gallons of clear profit. This he sells to his fellow mountaineers at \$1 per gallon. So, you see, the profits are large. When we discover a still we chop it in pieces. If we find a wagon load of whisky we break the barrels and let the liquor run out upon the ground. We locate the still by means of spies, and the revenue agents have a standard price of \$10 for each still that is pointed out to them. Ten dollars is a great deal of money in the southern mountains, and sooner or later the moonshiner is bound to have some one inform upon him. The business is very dangerous, however. Now and then the moonshiners fight the revenue officers, and the man who follows them takes his life in his hands. I have been shot at a number of times, but so far have escaped being hit.

"The moonshiners hate the spies worse than they do us. They will kill them if they can discover them. Still, some of our informers continue their work for years, and they are not discovered. Some follow the business because they wish to wipe it out, rather than for the money. One of the most remarkable informers I ever knew was a guide named Roper. The moonshiners suspected him. They caught him, carried him to a well and threw him in. This well was fifty-five feet deep and