

INVENTORY SHOWS PLENTY LIQUOR HERE, AND OTHER SOUTHERN CITIES

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Three much discussed phases of law enforcement recently discussed here by officers and the public give rise to another question in a way which presents a rather peculiar paradox. One phase is the agitation for eliminating the drunken driver; another, the hackneyed defense in court, so often used, that the defendant was drunk at the time and he didn't know what he was doing; and the other is the commonplace statement that arrests on charges of drunkenness constitute only minor cares for the courts.

The paradox is found in the fact that these comments form a tacit admission that liquor is plentiful, generally obtainable, and just as effective as it ever was, regardless of the fact that liquor is not allowed to be made, transported, possessed or stored, for any purpose in Tennessee.

Then What?

The fact is, every man who is found drunk has broken at least two laws, and maybe three or four – but can it be proven?

Another fact is – and the most powerful fact of all – **that those who make, transport and sell liquor in these days are far more shrewd than the combined federal, state, county and city officers – and this is in no way a reflection on the officers.** Obviously, the makers and sellers of liquor give their first attention to officers, whom they have learned to avoid; and – they don't give a continental for the public at large, **for that same public at large don't give a continental** what goes on in the making and traffic of liquor. That don't mean everybody, of course, for there are many conscientious folk who would look with horror on two fingers of moonshine in a medicine glass; some of those conscientious folk are actually ignorant enough to believe that the liquor traffic is being controlled like the honest, popular, well-known matron who recently asked seriously if there were actually any young women in Johnson City who smoked cigarettes! But mighty few of the conscientious, honest, loud-preaching – or the indifferent or unscrupulous or anybody else, are willing to give any evidence to the officers or the courts, and then go into court and help prosecute anybody on a liquor charge. As far as the most rabid prohibitionist-citizen is usually willing to go is to give a far-fetched “tip” with the customary string tied to it, of “don't use my name.”

But this is not a prohibition article. Neither is it an article in favor of liquor. **It is just a report of a few facts along the line that there is always a lot of liquor in Johnson City – and it is just as difficult to get in Johnson City as anywhere else in this part of the south.**

Occasionally the officers capture a still; sometimes moonshiners are arrested, tried, sent to prison; men are arrested frequently with liquor in their possession, tried, convicted and punished; men are seen drunk or partly drunk, or with the odor and effect of liquor on them every day – and if disorderly, they are arrested and punished. All very proper. The officers and courts are to be commended; they are working at their jobs.

But the Facts

Heads of the government prohibition forces have recently stated that one of the biggest illicit distilling sections of the country is found in the Appalachian Mountain region. Officials down here comment with equal emphasis on the reports of the shipments coming by boatloads along the Atlantic coast; or the trainloads coming across the Canadian border, or the Mexican border; or along the Gulf, or from off the Pacific. Each section finds some other section interesting in its production of liquor.

But that's merely prefatory. The fact remains that liquor is abundant in this section – and plenty of it. Officers returning from a section of the mountains in Coker County, near the state line, report dynamiting about three dozen moonshine stills, while the moonshiners lined up along the road and greeted them quietly – and the officers report that they barely scratched the surface. But there are plenty of people in that county who do not make, store or drink any kind of liquor.

Officers recently destroyed a still on Buffalo Mountain, three miles from Johnson City; another on Cherokee Mountain, dozens in Carter and Johnson Counties; some in Unicoi County; other dozens in Sullivan County; some in the famed “Blair's Gap” section of Hawkins County, popularly known as the moonshiner's paradise; many big ones down on the Chucky River in Washington and Greene Counties – and plenty of others but these are the closest home.

Still closer home; a still was recently found in the basement of a home in the city; another in the kitchen of a home; another in a barn – and evidence where others had been in operation in the city limits. Lots of homes have no stills in them. *But keep in mind that liquor is as hard to get in Johnson City as any other city in this section.*

Two views may be taken of the situation – one, that all the manufacturing places had been destroyed; the other, that it must be underway on a wholesale scale. Frankly the latter is true, and anybody who knows what day of the week it is will admit it.

Both “wets” and “drys” keep harping on the drinking among young people of today. Maybe so. There may be some liquor consumed at parties, dances and shindigs in the higher social realm. Apparently nobody knows – that is, knows how much. *But it would be an interesting experiment to touch a lighted match to the breath of every man, woman, boy and girl attending them, after the ball is over.* It might be just as interesting to have some kind of liquor attracting magnet passed over the homes of bootleggers, deacons, laborers, Sunday School teachers, business men, professional men – *men and women* – on some dark and stormy night; and see what might happen. From lots of homes – nothing.

Then have the culprits (if any????) arrested by an officer who knows not the taste of intoxicating liquor; let an absolute teetotaling lawyer prosecute the case before a judge who never touched a drop and a jury that never smelled a cork in Johnson City, Bristol, Knoxville, Morristown, Greeneville, Kingsport, Erwin, Newport, Elizabethton, Rogersville, Asheville, Mountain City, Abingdon, Gate City, Bluefield, Pikeville, Jonesboro, Burnsville or Grassy Creek – and hang ‘em all to a sour apple tree.

But where does it come from? Haw Haw! Try and find out!

And the writer of this article votes with the vast, almost unanimous majority – just giving a tip, with the string tied to it – “Please don’t use my name!”