

## GALLONS OR BUSHEL?

### *A Story*

BY JESSE STUART

WE'S all settin' around th' fire. Th' wind was blowin' hard. Th' snow was flyin'. Shelf was parchin' corn on a griddle over th' fire. Ma was darnin' th' heels o' Pa's socks. I's piecin' me a quilt. Pa was playin' th' fiddle and waitin' fer th' sweet-taters to roast on th' hearth. Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim were back at th' Moonshine Still.

Pa was fiddlin' *Sourwood Mountains*. Ma's pattin' her feet and smokin' and darnin' away. All at once somebody rapped our door. Pa stopped sawin' th' fiddle. Ma stopped pattin' her foot and darnin'.

"Who do you reckon it is?" says Pa. He looked surprised. Not many people come to our house. We live in a out-way place at th' head o' th' Hollow.

"I don't know," says Ma.

"Must I let 'em in?" says Brother Shelf as he took th' griddle from over th' fire.

"Don't be in sich a hurry Son,"

says Pa, "I'll attend to th' door. Don't know who it might be."

"Rap-rap-rap-rap."

"Jist in a minute," says Pa.

Pa gets up and goes to th' door. He lays his fiddle down on th' foot o' th' bed as he goes over to th' door. Pa lifts up th' latch and pulls th' door open.

"Howdy-do," says a well-dressed man at our door.

"Howdy-do, Stranger," says Pa. "Come in!"

We started cranin' our necks and lookin' at th' strange man that come in our house. Ma sorty made faces at us to act nice. He was a fine-lookin' young man. Had on a big gray overcoat with blue checked squares over it. Had on a gray felt hat and a brown shirt and a black necktie. His cheeks were red as red roses in bloom.

"Come around and get you a chear," says Pa, "I 'spect you're purty cold."

"It's an awful day out there," says th' strange man. He looked

around over our big front room. Two beds in th' back o' th' room. Th' dresser over against th' wall. Th' trunk back against th' wall between th' two beds and a standle-table by th' trunk.

"Let me have your hat and overcoat," I says.

"Thank you," says th' stranger and looked jist as straight at me. I never had any body to look at me so.

"What might your name be, Stranger," says Pa.

"My name is Bert Carpenter," says th' stranger and he reaches Pa his hand.

"Old Bill Duncan's my name," says Pa, takin' th' stranger by th' hand. "Over th' is my wife, Martha Duncan, this is my little boy, Shelf, and this is my oldest girl, Ida. This is little Bill here, that is Sam, that is Charlie, Moss, Grace, and over there on th' bed asleep is little Martha. We got two boys out sommers jist now. Got a right good houseful."

"What have you come here fur?" asks Shelf.

"Not so fast young man," says Pa, "I'll attend to that question myself."

"Ah, Sonnie," says th' stranger rubbin' Shelf's head, "I've come to find a place for airships to land." Then he laughs and Pa laughs.

We all laugh and Shelf turns around and looks plagued. He puts th' griddle o' corn back over th' blazin' sticks o' wood on th' fire-place. Pa jist turns and looks at th' stranger. Pa's eyes look straight at 'im. Then Pa says: "Why did you come to these parts, Bert Carpenter?"

"W'y, I'm lookin' over oil-lands," says th' stranger. "I'm checkin' over all these farms for a Firm. After I look 'em over I'll ask to take leases on them. I heard you had four-hundred acres o' hill land here. So I thought I'd come to you first."

Pa says: "Th' reason I ast you, there's been a lot o' frolickin' o' Government men through here lately. That's why I's a little sus-picy. I's goin' to tell you if you's a Revenuer to get out'n my house right now. Get out fast enough to not let your shirt-tail touch your behind. That's th' way I feel to-ward them birds!"

"Oh, no," says th' stranger, "I'm jist Bert Carpenter. I've come here for a purpose. I've been sent here to your place to look over your big farm back here among these hills."

"That's allright," says Pa. "I's jist goin' to tell you th' Revenuers ain't done much around here. If they didn't get out in a hurry w'y we jist

plant 'em where they'd never sprout!"

"Then you get rid o' 'em," says Mr. Carpenter, "kill 'em, do you?"

"Well, I ain't sayin'," says Pa, "fer you never know about th' Law. But what would you think? It jist ain't a healthy place here fer Revenuers. I'll tell you that right now!"

"I hate a Revenuer," says Mr. Carpenter lookin' over toward Pa and layin' it off with his hands. "W'y it's a sneakin' job, Mr. Duncan!"

"I forgot to ast you," says Pa, "but where might you be from?"

"Peoria, Illinois," says Mr. Carpenter.

"That's a fur piece away from here, ain't it?" says Pa.

"Yes, Mr. Duncan, it is."

"Lord my taters air burnin'," says Pa. "I got to talkin' about them dad-durned Revenuers and let my sweet-taters burn. Reach me th' poker, Ida."

I reach Pa th' poker. He takes th' long sweet-taters out'n th' ashes. They smell so sweet and good, roasted under th' ashes and th' wood coals.

"Have a tater and some parched corn," says Pa. "Parched corn and roasted sweet-taters air good together. Jist don't eat too much, fer supper'll be ready atter a while."

"Yes," says Ma, "I'll start gettin' it now. It's about time fer th' boys to be gettin' in. They'll be hungry and wantin' to stick their feet under th' table."

Ma puts her darnin' away and gets up from her chair and walks through th' front room door to th' dog-trot and then to th' kitchen.

"This potato is sure good," says Mr. Carpenter. "It's sweet as sugar. It's good with parched corn, too."

Mr. Carpenter would look at me. Then he'd eat his tater and take a mouthful o' parched corn and eat it jist like a pig eatin' corn. Shelf would pass th' griddle o' corn around to all o' us and we'd take parched corn and eat with our roasted taters.

"You're a pretty girl, Miss Ida," says th' stranger to me. Well, he warn't so much a stranger now as he was when he first come in th' house. He jist looked at me. I guess my cheeks got red. I says: "I thank you." Then he turned to Pa and says: "They tell me th' girls from these hills make good wives."

"I don't know," says Pa, "I guess they do. Martha stands by me. She's been a good spouse in th' times o' trouble and distress. I guess the gals air right purty to a man o' your age, but I don't notice 'em anymore. I ust to have a eye fer purty gals before I got hitched.

But that don't bother my mind none now. I 'spect you're a single man?"

"Yes," says Mr. Carpenter, "I'm a single man. I've never been married."

"I jist guessed that," says Pa, "by th' tone o' your talk! Young man you've got a lot to larn yet. Atter you get married you can't be a gay rooster with a lot o' purty feathers and spurs. Your spurs will get dull and your feathers will get ruffled."

Pa just laughed and laughed. Mr. Carpenter bent over and laughed. Then when he straightened up he looked at me.

"I allus told Martha," says Pa, "that th' rooster ought to rule th' roost. But I've larned th' hens jist about rule th' roost since I've been a married man. How do they do up in Peoria?"

"The hens rule the roost," says Mr. Carpenter, "just like they do all over America!" Then Pa and Mr. Carpenter bent over and laughed and laughed.

I says: "I'll go and help Ma get supper!"

"That's right where you ought-a be," says Pa, "What air you hangin' around in here fer nohow?"

"Did you ever hear th' song, Mr. Duncan, *Peoria in the Spring*?"

"Never did," says Pa.

"I heard you playin' th' fiddle,"

says Mr. Carpenter, "before I come in th' house. I jist wondered if you could play *Peoria in the Spring*."

"Can't play that," says Pa, "but I can play *Sourwood Mountains* fer you, or *Zeb Turner's Gal*!"

I run out'n th' front room, through th' dog-trot to th' kitchen. I started helpin' Mom get supper. I could hear Pa playin' th' fiddle fer Mr. Carpenter. Atter Pa'd play a piece I could hear 'em laugh. Jist seemed like they's gettin' along fine back in th' front room. I looked in th' oven to see if th' bread was done. I was so excited.

Ma says to me: "What is th' matter with you, Ida? You're beside yourself!"

I says: "I don't know, Ma. Jist something!"

That's all I could say.

## II

We put the two big pitchers o' milk on th' table. One pitcher o' sweet milk and a pitcher o' butter milk. We set th' big dish o' yaller butter on th' table. Ma cut th' big pone o' hot corn-bread up in square pieces in th' bread-pan. She lifted out a plate o' th' squares and th' sweet-smellin' steam come off'n th' bread. She took th' soup-beans from th' pot on th' stove and set a couple o' pumpkin pies on th'

table. Then she opened a can o' blackberries, a can o' peaches, and a can o' strawberry preserves. She took th' fried Irish-taters from th' skillet—good and brown—and th' baked sweet-taters from th' oven. I took th' biled short-ribs and sausages from th' stove and put 'em on th' table.

"Th' little bite's ready," says Ma. "Go and tell your Pa."

I run back across th' dog-trot and told Pa and Mr. Carpenter. I heard Pa say: "Come on children: supper is ready!"

"I guess we're jist in time fer supper," says Brother Tobbie to Brother Jim. They's comin' down th' bank by th' dog-trot. Th' dog-trot is a entry that runs between our big log front room and our big log kitchen.

"Come right in, Mr. Carpenter," says Pa, "and get your feet under th' table. I know you must be hungry!"

"I'm feelin' like my beans," says Mr. Carpenter.

We all got in th' kitchen at th' same time. Brother Jim and Tobbie got in jist as Pa and Mr. Carpenter did.

"My boy, Jim, Mr. Carpenter, and my boy, Tobbie," says Pa.

"Glad to know you boys," says Mr. Carpenter, "jist don't Mister me. Call me Bert."

Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim looked at one another. Then they'd look at Pa. I knowed they felt suspicy with a stranger in th' house. But they didn't know Mr. Carpenter. He warn't a Revenuer. That's what they thought he was.

I says: "Brother Jim, Mr. Carpenter has come to look over th' land fer oil. We'll all be rich one o' these days if we find oil on th' place." I jist laughed as big as anything when I said this. I didn't care what he'd come fer. I could tell I's goin' to like Mr. Carpenter.

"So he did?" says Jim. "You ain't shore Mr. Carpenter ain't a wolf in sheep's clothin', air you?"

"Hold your tater now, Jim," says Pa. "Mr. Carpenter ain't no Revenuer. He's allright. You know when your old Pappie tells you about a man it's jist that way. Do you think a man decent as Mr. Carpenter could be a Revenuer?"

"Well if you air Bert Carpenter," says Brother Tobbie from th' fur side o' th' table, "I'll tell you right now so you won't haf to sneak around about it. We've made a run to-day. Right up in th' head o' th' Hollow. Now report it if you want to! But if you do, warn th' fellars you send in to get us. And if you come, your hide won't hold shucks by th' time we get through feedin'

you th' powder and lead! That's th' medicine we give them birds! Th' betrayer will get th' most o' th' hot lead, too!"

"Boys," says Mr. Carpenter, "I've come to look over th' lay o' this land. I've been sent here by my Firm. It's a big Firm that I work for. I'm only an agent for the Firm. I've got to do my duty. Do you believe I'm a Revenue Man?"

"I don't know," says Brother Jim, "you can't tell about th' wolves now-a-days that come to these hills in sheep's clothin'. I ain't sayin' you air or you ain't! I'm jist a-sayin' you'd better not be!"

Pa says: "Now reach and help yourself, Bert, if you can find enough to eat. It is before you. You are welcome as th' flowers in May. Make yourself at home. Th' boys air jist a little skurred o' Revenuers. I believe Martha is too. Martha, why don't you pour me and th' boys our little toddies!"

I knowed why Ma didn't do it. She might a-thought Mr. Carpenter warnt ust to it. Pa and Jim and Tobbie allus took a glass o' whiskey at night instead o' milk or coffee. Ma went over and got th' jug from th' bottom shelf in th' safe and poured Pa's toddie and one fer Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie.

"You want one, too?" says Ma to Mr. Carpenter.

"Yes," says Mr. Carpenter, "I'll take a glass, too. Thank you!"

Pa jist smiled and took a sup from th' glass. Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie jist gulped theirs right down and ast fer th' second glass. 'Peared like they didn't like Mr. Carpenter.

It was a sight th' way Mr. Carpenter et our grub. 'Peared like he was happy. But he was shy as a ring-necked pheasant o' Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie.

"I suppose, Bert," says Pa, "that you can stand our company here while you're lookin' fer oil. I hope you can stand our grub. I hope you'll like your stay here."

"I could stay here fer ever," says Mr. Carpenter, "but I don't think your boys like me none too well."

Brother Jim looked at Brother Tobbie. Brother Jim says: "Bert Carpenter, how do you like our three-ply moonshine?"

"Fine," says Mr. Carpenter. "I've seen things I'd love more. One since I've been here."

"W'y," says Pa, "it was my music. You liked *Zeb Turner's Gal*. You're too bashful to say so. It's got it all over your *Peoria in th' Spring*. Jist somehow that song can't rile me and make me pat my feet like *Zeb Turner's Gal*."

Pa laughed and laughed. Mr. Carpenter acted kindly plagued.

Then Brother Tobbie says: "Well, we get sixty gallon o' three-ply moonshine to th' acre here on these old hills. We get three dollars a gallon fer th' whiskey and forty cents a bushel fer th' corn. Which would you rather have, Bert Carpenter, gallons or bushels?"

"W'y gallons of course," says Mr. Carpenter. But he didn't act like he meant it.

My heart jist jumped up and down in my bosom. I thought: "Maybe it is me he wants. What will Jerry say? Jerry'll be jealous o' me then! He'll be jealous o' me and wished he'd ast me to marry 'im before now. But I love Mr. Carpenter. I know I do. Love is a ticklin' o' th' backbone and you jist can't turn around and scratch it! That's it. I'm in love too. I know I am. He loves me. I can tell he does. I don't care if he's a Rev- enuer. I can't help what he is! I jist hope he ain't! If he is, Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim will kill 'im. Pa'll kill 'im. If he's a Rev- enuer and asts me, I'll go to Peoria with 'im. That's what I'll do if he asts me! I'll leave these hills!"

### III

"Well," says Pa, "if you all air through your suppers jist break your plates and knock out your

teeth and let's get in th' front room and have a little music and a little dancin'. I'm rarin' to saw on a good break-down. I'll give you th' *Turkey Scratch*. Can you dance, Bert?"

"Jist a little," says Mr. Carpenter.

"Can you do th' Turkey Scratch?" says Brother Tobbie.

"I don't know," says Mr. Carpenter. "Can you?"

"Oh, a little," says Brother Tobbie, kindly bashful like. He wouldn't tell Mr. Carpenter that he winned th' dancin' prize at th' County Fair.

"Yes," says Pa, "he can piantly do 'er!"

We went in th' front room. Pa took th' jug with 'im. Pa says: "Now boys jist a little more o' th' sperets from th' corn and a little resin on my bow. We'll let Tobbie do th' Turkey Scratch. Atter Bert sees 'im maybe Bert can do it!"

Pa got th' fiddle. Brother Tobbie stepped out in th' floor. We clapped our hands and patted our feet. Brother Tobbie kicked higher than th' ceilin', it looked like. He danced then almost a-settin' on th' floor, kickin' his feet out. He danced all around th' room between th' two beds and th' fireplace. Then Pa let th' bow kindly quiver and die. Brother Tobbie slowed down to a stop and said "Whew".

He slung th' sweat from his forehead with his finger and jist drapped down in a chair, give out.

Mr. Carpenter got up and took his coat off. He says: "Bear down on 'er, Old Bill Duncan! I'm a rearin' to go! I'll show you how we *Scratch th' Turkey* in Peoria! It won't be *Peoria in the Spring*, neither!"

Pa says: "Martha fetch me th' jug."

Ma reached Pa th' jug. He took a big dram. Then he give th' bow a long rake across th' strings. "All-right," says Pa, "let's go, Bert!"

Of all th' fiddlin' you ever heard, Pa put it up. He tried 'imself in company. We started patten' and Bert started dancin'. It beat any dancin' we'd ever seen in Kentucky. I'll tell you th' dust come from th' floor and from th' ceilin'. Bert went around faster than Brother Tobbie on th' floor. It made your head swim to watch 'im! And we all started to holler-in'. W'y Pa let out a big "whoopée!" and he'd pat his feet and might nigh bend down to th' fiddle! Bert put in all kind o' extra steps and whirls! We could feel th' wind from Bert. Jist like a February wind wheezin' through th' oaks.

"He's a dancer from away back yander," says Pa. "He's got Kentucky blood in 'im from summers.

He's got mountain blood in 'im!"

Pa jist about broke his arm playin' fer Bert. He didn't get tired. Pa jist slowed down to a stop. Pa says: "Son, you ain't no Revenuer, air you? You're jist like one o' my boys to me already. I'll make th' County Fair Champean out'n you. You're a winner fer this Spring, shore as God made th' hills! Jist how long do you aim to stay with us?"

"Forever, maybe," says Bert. "I'd love to stay forever!"

Brother Tobbie looked at Brother Jim. Pa looked at Bert. Then Brother Tobbie looked at Bert and Brother Jim looked at Pa. I looked at Bert and Ma looked over at Pa. My heart jist fluttered like a leaf in th' wind. I knowed somethin' was goin' to happen. It would happen soon, too.

"Give Bert th' little back-room upstairs," says Pa. "Jist let 'im have that bed by 'imself. Jist take your suitcase up there, Bert, and hang your coat on a nail to stay awhile."

Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim went upstairs with Bert. Brother Tobbie carried his suitcase fer 'im I jist thought: "I'm glad my brothers like Bert better."

Th' next day Bert put on his overcoat atter breakfast and



trapped off to th' hills. He was gone all day. He come in fer supper and we danced again. Pa sawed th' fiddle and th' boys danced. 'Peared like Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie liked Bert better. We all liked Bert. I loved Bert. I waited fer 'im to ast me to go out with 'im and look over oil land. He'd come in with a map he'd drawed on a piece of paper o' the hills and houses. Then he'd say: "I think here's th' place we might drill for oil. Here's th' place th' well ought to be."

One day Bert went with Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim to th' still up in th' Sulphur Spring Holler in th' coal mine. When he come back to th' house that night he says to Pa: "You've got a good place for a still. No Revenue man will ever find it unless he betrays you."

"Yep," says Pa, "it's a right purty place back there. No one goes that fur back among these dark woods but our neighbors. Th' Pratts live back from th' Sulphur Spring Holler."

"Th' Pratts, did you say?" says Bert. "That name 'Pratt' seems like I've heard before."

"Yes," says Pa, "Ida over there could tell you about th' Pratts. Jim Pratt's boy Jerry 's been tryin' to marry my Ida. But I think they's th' very sneekin' foxes that turned us up to th' Government. Worked

around and had it done because we make th' best whiskey in these hills. Old Jim Pratt can't come anyways nigh old Bill when it comes to runnin' th' fragrant water from th' corn."

"That's why he turned you up was it?" says Bert. "Is that th' reason?"

Bert looked down at the floor. He didn't say anything. His face got red. Then he looked up at me. I looked at 'im.

Th' next day Bert says: "Ida, do you want to scout over th' hills with me and look for oil prospects?"

I says: "I've got to ast Pa first. He may not want me out runnin' over th' hills with a strange man!"

"I'm a strange man?" says Bert and he looked at th' ground and kicked th' dirt with his toe. "I'm nothin'! I'm a fool. I'm in love."

Pa says: "You can go anyplace with Bert. I trust that boy. He's allright. I love 'im like he's one o' my boys. Jist took up here like a stray dog. He acted like a dog that's been away from home a long time and jist got back. W'y he's even hepped 'em fer one day at th' still. Jist watched 'em make th' best whiskey that ever come out'n these hills."

I put on my coat. I went down th' road with Bert. We'd jist got to th' pine woods by th' old Darby House. We stopped under th' big white oak where Ma ust to milk th' cows. Bert says: "Ida, I've got a lot to tell you. I have to tell you. I've got to get it off my chest. I'm not what you think I am."

I says: "I know, Honey, what you're goin' to tell me. You don't haf to tell me unless you want to. But you are a Revenuer, ain't you?"

"Yes," says Bert, "I am. I have betrayed all of you. I come to arrest your father. He's the biggest moonshiner in these hills. No one has been able to get the goods on 'im. I've been sent here because on the Federal Force I'm the one selected for this job. I know the Kentucky hill people pretty well. My grandfather came from Kentucky. He was a fiddler. My father was a fiddler. I learned to Scratch th' Turkey when he used to play it for me. He taught me to dance it."

I says: "Pa says you had Kentucky blood in you. Pa said some of your people had come from th' hills. Pa was right. But Pa don't believe you're a Revenuer."

"That's what hurts me," says Bert. "I love you. I'm going to ask you to marry a Revenuer. Will you do it?"

"It's against our religion, Bert,"

I says, "but, Honey, I'll do it!"

I put my arms around his neck. The wind whined through the oak limbs above us. I put my lips to Bert's lips. I loved him. I would marry him. I couldn't help what he'd done. I'd ruther he'd killed a man though, as to be a Revenuer. I didn't tell 'im. But it run through my mind. "What would Ma think? What would Pa think?" I didn't care what they thought. I was marryin' Bert and not them.

Bert says: "And just to think, Ida, it was Jim Pratt that turned your father Bill Duncan up for making moonshine. He got twenty-five dollars for doing it. He's the second-biggest moonshiner I've found in all this part of the state. Just one job I want to do before I turn my badge in. I want to arrest Jim Pratt. I want to get that sweet little Jerry who thinks he loves you. You don't mind do you?"

"Not one bit," I says, "and I think Pa and Ma and my brothers will be mighty glad."

"Did he ever ask you to marry him?" says Bert to me looking me in the eyes. Before I had time to answer him he says: "Honey, you got the bluest eyes I ever saw. Just like a Kentucky sky in April."

"Yes," I says, "Jerry ast me to marry him more than one time. But Pa and old Jim Pratt was at

the outs. So we thought we'd better wait until the families got things patched up a little. His boys out gunnin' fer my brothers. Brother Tobbie and Brother Jim packin' guns fer Jerry, Amos, and Candy Pratt. W'y I couldn't a brought Jerry home. My brothers would a killed 'im."

"Just like they'll do me," says Bert.

"Maybe not," I says. "But it may not be very healthy fer a while. Jist you watch your step."

"I'm goin' back and tell the whole thing," says Bert. "I'm going to come clean."

#### IV

We walked back around the way we'd come. Th' sun had gone down. Th' winter trees were bare. The wind moaned through their leafless limbs. Bert had his left arm around me, and I had my right arm around him. He helt my left hand with his right hand. Th' path was a nar path but we's walkin' close together and made it allright. Bert walked ahead o' me and parted th' briars. Now we walked back side by side facin' th' briars together.

I says: "It'll be a lot o' fun goin' through life like this together — side by side."

"Yes," says Bert.

I says: "Why are you so silent, Honey? Why don't you talk?"

Bert says: "I dread telling your Pa and your brothers."

I says: "Don't worry. We'll make it somehow. If we don't I'll run off and go to Peoria with you."

"If you do," says Bert, "you'll have your Pa and your brothers right after you with a lot o' guns. We'll have to stay right here and face the music. I'm just afraid it won't be th' *Turkey Scratch* either. I'd like th' hills better than Peoria. I'm at home here. Life comes back. I could live here forever."

When we got to th' house Pa was out in th' yard. Pa was actin' pleased. I thought it was because I'd been out with Bert. Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie had come back from th' still. I run up and I says: "Pa I got something I want to tell you!"

"Allright, Ida," says Pa, "let's have it. Right out with it."

I says: "I'm goin' to get married."

"To that Jerry Pratt?" says Pa.

"No," says Brother Jim, "she ain't goin' to marry a Pratt. We got something to say about that, ain't we, Brother Tobbie?"

"We shore have," says Brother Tobbie. "We know they ain't no Pratt comin' in th' Duncan house. Ain't never been one and ain't goin' to be one!"

"Wait a minute," I says, "jist hold your hot taters a minute and shuffle 'em in your hands to keep 'em cool!"

Ma come runnin' out'n th' kitchen. She heard all o' us into it. She says: "What's th' matter with 'em, Bill?"

Pa says: "No matter a-tall, Martha. Come out'n see fer yourself."

"Nothin', Ma," I says, "only I'm goin' to get married. Pa and Brother Jim and Tobbie thinks it's Jerry Pratt. But it ain't. It's Bert."

"Yes," says Bert, "it's me. I ain't nothing. I must confess. I—"

Bert stopped. Jim looked at Brother Tobbie. Pa looked at Brother Jim and Brother Tobbie. Ma looked at Pa. She's just waitin' to see what they'd do. Jist seemed like they all knowed what's wrong.

"Jist as I told you, Pa," says Brother Tobbie, "about takin' strangers in th' house. He's a Revener. That's what he is!"

Brother Tobbie pulled a long blue gun. Pa jerked his gun from his hip.

I run over and got in front o' Bert. I screamed: "Don't shoot!" But when I looked around I saw Pa had Brother Tobbie covered with his gun. Pa says: "Son, you drap that gun. Let me hear what Bert's got to say fer hisself. I'll be

th' Law at this house yet for a while. Not one o' you young sprouts!"

Brother Tobbie let his gun fall. Ma picked it up and held it. Pa turned around and says: "Now, Bert, speak fer yourself."

"Well," says Bert, "I come here to get you. I come here to arrest you. You're th' man they're after. You're th' biggest moonshiner loose among the hills. I was sent here because I know you people better than most of th' other boys on the Firm. I didn't come for oil. I come to locate moonshiners and especially to get you." Bert looked at th' ground. He kicked th' dirt with th' toe o' his shoe.

"Go on with your story," says Pa. "I want to hear th' rest o' it"

"When I first saw Ida I loved her."

"Go on," says Pa.

"Jim Pratt turned you up and got twenty-five dollars for it."

"Th' man I thought," says Pa.

"Th' dirty low-down skunk," says Brother Tobbie. "Jist haf to waste a shell on th' polecat."

"Quiet," says Pa. "Bert's talkin' now."

"I heard you say he's a moonshiner too. I didn't know it. Then I heard you say Jerry was interested in Ida. I was, too. I didn't like it. He was betrayin' you. I was be-

trayin' you, too. I couldn't say anything just then."

"Go on," says Pa, his hand on his gun. His eyes twinklin'. Ma standin' there shakin'. Brother Jim lookin' mean out'n his eyes. Jist waitin', it looked like to me, to run in and grab Bert. Maybe stick 'im with a knife.

"I'm not betraying you," says Bert. "I'm not turning you in. I'm throwing my badge away. My Grandpa was from Kentucky. I love the hills. I'm stayin' here. I've come back home. Just one job I want to do before I turn my badge in. I'm going to get Jim Pratt."

"Bert," says Pa, "you ain't tellin' me nothin'. I knowed all th' time you's a Revenuer. I knowed all th' time Ida'd marry Jerry Pratt if she didn't get you. I knowed you's a Revenuer th' first time I laid eyes on you. You can't fool me. I can look at a Revenuer and know 'im. I can almost taste one. I can feel one. I can smell one. I knowed you warn't gettin' away with no reports on us. I felt like you'd come clean. I told th' folks here in th' house you larned th' Turkey Scratch from Kentucky. I knowed, my boy, these old hills would get in your blood in th' end."

Pa looked at brothers Tobbie and Jim. He looked at Ma. I jist wondered what they'd say about

me marryin' Bert. I didn't care. I'd marry 'im if I had to run off to Peoria and do it.

"You can have 'er Bert," says Pa.

"No," says Brother Tobbie, "she can't marry a Revenuer. That's a disgrace. It's against th' honor o' this family."

"Whose wearin' th' pants at this house?" says Pa. "Who rules this roost yet? Me, or you, my son!"

"Let me hold my badge until I make th' arrest," says Bert.

"Shore," says Pa, "and I'll send two dad-durned good deputies with you. I'll send Tobbie and Jim. You can bring home th' bacon. Then atter that we'll have one o' th' dad-durndest weddin's that ever took place among th' hills. We'll dance all night. I'll do the fiddlin'. I jist want th' folks around here to see a real dancer no-how. Th' next County Champean! We'll have two county Champeans in this one family! We'll get rid o' old Jim Pratt too. Then we'll have everything our way! We can sell th' gallons then!"

"I don't like it," says Brother Tobbie, "that Ida o' all th' men would marry a man with th' Mark o' th' Beast on his hands!"

"Better that," says Brother Jim to Brother Tobbie, "than a Pratt. Better to marry a son o' Satan than a Pratt."

"He's been converted," says Pa. "Jist don't ever tell anybody he's ever been in th' business. Jist don't let it be known. That's fer this family to keep. I know Bert's heart is right. I've jist got some questions to ast him."

Pa turned to Bert and says: "Young man, you ain't goin' to take Ida to Peoria air you?"

"No," says Bert.

"Can you plow?" says Pa.

"Yes," says Bert.

"Which do you favor," says Pa, "bushels or gallons?"

"Gallons," says Bert.

I was so happy. I jist didn't know how I felt. I grabbed Pa. I put my arms around his neck. It was th' first time I ever hugged and kissed Pa.

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He jerked my arms away and says: "What's th' matter with you, Ida? Air you goin' crazy? Kissin' your old Pa's mustache! A purty thing like you kissin' your old Pa!"

Then Pa jist bent over and laughed and laughed. Ma says: "Don't you act like a little child, Bill!"

Then Pa says: "You can't fool Old Bill. I knowed it all th' time. I jist waited fer everything to work out. I'm th' King o' this Hollow with th' dad-durndest best dancer in my family. I'm th' dad-durndest best fiddler that ever resined his bow. I'm th' dad-durndest best moonshiner in these hills. I'll have th' dad-durndest best son-in-law in all these hills. Th' boy has jist come home."



# THE OTHER SIDE

*For the edification of its readers, THE MERCURY will present in this department from time to time the views of some of those who most sharply disagree with its editorial policy.*

## AMERICA'S FALSE DEMOCRACY

BY UPTON SINCLAIR

KING LOUIS of France said: "I am the State". That was the system known as Autocracy. The French people overthrew it, and set up a new system, in which they were the State. Instead of being subjects, they became free and equal sharers in sovereignty, collective masters of their own lives and fortunes.

King George of England claimed the right to tax his subjects in America without allowing them representation. The colonists overthrew him, and set up a Republic, in which all were citizens, and in which the governing officials were chosen by free and equal suffrage.

Government by popular consent implies the right and the duty of all citizens to discuss their own affairs, and to organize for the purpose of carrying out their collective will. Consequently, Democracy means

freedom of speech, press, and assemblage.

Because these rights are new in the world, and have been won only by sacrifice and suffering, Democracy means a crusading spirit; it means active sympathy with all other peoples struggling for freedom. When it ceases to mean that, the spirit of Democracy is already dying.

Many enemies threaten the system of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Autocrats and dictators see in it a threat to their principles, an insult to their majesty. They see a chance to feed their own vanity, and to divert the minds of their subjects at home, by seizing the lands of other peoples. Because dictators can strike quickly, whereas self-governing processes are necessarily slower, friends of Democracy have to