WHISKEY IN STATE PRISON.

JOHN SHORT TELLS HOW HE RAN A DISTILLERY IN SING SING.

Supplying the Convicts with Liquor for Five Years with but One Detection—Guards who were Bought and Wardens who were Fooled—Retiring on a Competency.

One of the passengers on a Staten Island ferry boat recently, coming cityward, was a man who looked more like a rural clergyman than anything else. Critical examination might have shaken the clerical theory in favor of a sporting man who had money enough to back events, and who studied by plainness of dress to distinguish himself from the rabble of sports; but, take him altogether, he was more like a preacher. His face was shaven closely, and had that smoothness and freedom from pimple or blemish that are seen in men who have for years led temperate, secluded lives. He wore a high silk hat, and when he raised it there was shown that upward march of smooth forehead into the regions of hair that is presumed to indicate fertility of the sub-soil of brain. His hair was black, and shiny with oil. He wore a sober gray spring overcoat, nicely polished boots, and dark brown kid gloves. Such a collar as old-fashioned lawyers and ministers wear was turned down over a stiff, black cravat, and no jewelry was visible. This man was John Short, famous as the convict who came out of Sing Sing prison several weeks ago with a fortune, gained by distilling whiskey and selling it to his fellow prisoners. Through collusion with some of the keepers, he managed to carry on his business with but one detection during the most of five years. His profits have been from four to eight thousand dollars, but he denies that he has retained more than a portion of them. Upon being asked yesterday to tell about his prison experience as a distiller, he laughed and said he supposed there was no use in keeping it secret any longer.

STARTING IN BUSINESS.

"I'll tell you the whole of it, sir," he said, as his gray eyes twinkled, "for it it make good lively reading for the folks up at Sing Sing. In the first place, understand that all the stories about my distillery being made of odds and ends is love and affection. The prison is not precise. I drawd the plans for it—being a practical distiller I knowed just what I wanted. The things was all made outside the prison, from my plans, and fetched in for me. Of course, sir, I kept going to give away the men as made 'em, but I got 'em fixed. I tell you I did get 'em all right. It was a good deal of bother, though, for the worm was made wrong first, and it had to be sent back. This was in 1869, and I'd been there about a year on an eight-year sentence. Warden Nelson was boss then, and I was a good deal scared of him. The boss all said he was mighty severe, and I knowed if he got hold of me I'd suffer for it. I was what they call captain of the hall—had charge of giving out the blankets, run errands, and so on. That gave me a kind of liberty, sir, and I wasn't watched so close as the other convicts. I had a cell next to me that was used for storing things, and was pretty full of rubbish. I had charge of it, and nobody else had a key except me and the warden. It was the place for my still, and I got it fixed up without anybody knowing it as hadn't sought to. The still was a little thing, but it would turn out from eight to ten quarts a day if it stayed there long enough. I tell you it was my ambition to do my duty, I could look after it without being caught. I used to run it nights too, sometimes, in my own cell. You see, sir, the guards thought if there wasn't a light in the cell they couldn't see what a man was at, and I used to keep everything shady. I worked nights hard, and didn't sleep more'n three or four hours a night sometimes for a week. Pretty soon I got so pale and were out that they was going to send me to the hospital. So I had to let up on it a little."

PROSPERITY.

"Could I make good whiskey? Well, sir, I wish I had some of it here for you to try. The talk about my using pot-to peelings, stale bread, and such stuff is lies. Every drop of whiskey I made was out of good barley that I got—I know it was, because I saw the receipts. The results was prime, and they was as good judges as you could come across anywhere. They didn't know where my still was, mind ye! I'm not they bought the whisky, and paid cash for it. Oh, I tell you, sir, the best thing in life is the world to run an illicit distillery. No collectors prying round, and no competition. I bottled it, and got generally a dollar a bottle—about a pint. When I was running the still night and day, the profit was about $18 or $20 every twenty-four hours. I'd sell on the book for fourteen months, and then Warden Nelson got a kind of suspicion that something was going on. Some of the convicts got drunk on my whiskey, and the Warden knowed they was being supplied with it, for I had a regular trade in it. He was being made right slap inside of the prison. He nosed round to catch some of the keepers fetching it in. Them as knowed of my distillery scared me by saying Nelson was mighty severe when he got his dander up. I didn't care, but I had too go of a thing not to get it again. When Nelson had got hunting for somebody that was fetching whiskey in, and of course didn't find 'em, he all flowed over. The storage cell wasn't searched at all, and after snivering a whole week I fixed up the still again. You see, sir, the demand was big—more'n I could supply, but I couldn't enlarge, because the cell was as large as could be run without being liable to certain of being found out. Somebody tried to tell on me, but I found out who and fixed his flint to get out of the way of the other. He knew I knew, but he never let on. I had no ill will towards him, but he never let on. I was then reduced to the ranks for three months. I didn't go to the warden's office again. Along there sometimes Warden Hubbell came in, and with Nelson out I thought I was come to be at it. Nelson was six weeks, and, sir, Mr. Hubbell was a good deal of a man. Along there the boys used to tell me I'd have a big respect for him, and I was kind. He gives the best grub, and allows men to have really a good, square good time. I believe a pound of boiled beef is better than a pound of fried onions, sir. But I digressed. Hubbell and Nelson run my distillery right up to two days before I left."

SUCCESS.

"Yes, sir, I was in for eight years, but the good behavior was about a year and a half. I got my ticket out on the 24th of May, sir, so I was to be long a man. I started another still under the shade of the chapel. My work was so much used to look-out for me, and I fixed up my distillery in the back of the tailoring trade. It ran all the September, I guess! It was Hubbell found out whiskey was to be had in the boys. About that time the warden got an amount of my making whiskey with a government. That was all this way. A convict named O'Donovan was in charge of the tailoring trade with skill. Hubbell had been down on him a little, and asked me if I knew anything against him. I said I knew he was a good man, and I knew he was not. Hubbell said he was a good man, and I knew he was not. Hubbell said he was a good man, and I knew he was not. Hubbell said