THE SMUGGLERS

From a drawing by Lord Teignmouth.

AN ATTEMPTED LANDING: BLOCKADE SENTINEL FIRING HIS BLUE LIGHT FOR ASSISTANCE

THE SMUGGLERS

Picturesque Chapters in the History of Contraband

BY
LORD TEIGNMOUTH, COMMANDER R.N.
AND
CHARLES G. HARPER

"*SMUGGLER.—A wretch who, in defiance of the laws, imports or exports goods without payment of the customs.*"—DR. JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL HARDY, BY THE AUTHORS, AND FROM OLD PRINTS AND PICTURES

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THE SMUGGLERS

CHAPTER I

THE STIRRING EARLY DAYS OF THE COASTGUARD

THE coastguardsmen having taken up their stations, an order was immediately issued for officers and men to be sworn as constables by the nearest magistrate, " to enable them to act with more perfect security to themselves." At the same time, the riding-officers attached to the several districts were ordered to instruct the " mounted guard " in their duties, making them thoroughly acquainted with the by-roads, as well as with the names and haunts of the chief smugglers. It may be remarked that the riding-officers, being a very old-established force, were on this account very useful for putting the newly established mounted guard " up to the ropes."

On April 22nd an " extraman " (a name given to men temporarily engaged during illness or absence of men on the establishment) in the Hastings district was dismissed " for allowing a boat to run its cargo on his guard, and for not following up the company of smugglers, which he saw, or firing his pistol from time to time to direct the crew in their pursuit "—a clear case of bribery or cowardice.

A warning was issued to the men in the Brighton district that " the smugglers are in the habit of watching the Coastguardsmen return to their

residences after daylight and then taking the opportunity to run or sink their goods off the coast." Early next month (May) the campaign opened in earnest : a run being successfully effected at No. 58 Tower, in the Hastings district, under circumstances —to quote the Inspecting Commander—" highly discreditable to some of the boatmen who did not support the men on whose guard the boat landed, or use their arms in a steady manner and with effect after violence had been shown by the batmen. Such conduct," observed the I.C., " reflects disgrace on the district. I therefore again impress on the minds of the boatmen that the smugglers on this coast are not to be trifled with, and unless more praiseworthy conduct takes place in future they will continue their illegal practices."

The fact is the men were new to their work, new to their stations, strangers to each other and therefore lacking mutual confidence and esprit-de-corps. Many of them, moreover, had come from stations to the westward, where the smugglers were not wont to carry arms.

Some of the orders issued for the guidance of coastguardsmen when attacked by smugglers are worth quoting by way of commentary on the times. Thus, the I.C. of the Brighton district points out, " the great importance, in order to avoid the sudden modes of attack hitherto practised by the smugglers, and which in many instances have been successful, that, in no instance where it can be avoided, are the men to patrol singly. They are to be sent out together, with directions to keep such a distance apart as to be able to hear each other speak in case of any sudden attack, or that one may give the alarm and then proceed to the assistance of the other." And

he directs that, " when any landing of contraband goods is attempted, none of the coastguardsmen who are stationed either to the left or to the right of the place where such an attempt is made are to fire their pistols until they come up to that place, or fall in with the smugglers, as it is obvious if there is firing at more places than one the mounted guard stationed in the rear, as well as the cruiser's boats along the coast, may be led into error and prevented from rendering assistance by going to a place wide of the intended landing."

It was the duty of the mounted guard to patrol the coast at some distance inland, with a view to cutting off the retreating smugglers with their goods. The revenue cruisers, in the same way, endeavoured to intercept the smuggling boats as they escaped seawards.

In the Hastings district we also find the I.C. warning the men that, " as some degree of confusion generally arises when the alarm is fired, by the patrols on each side repeating it along the line, which deceives the mounted guard inland as well as the patrols on the beach, the crews are warned that only the next patrol on each side repeat the alarm. The person on the spot is, if possible, to burn his port-fire or blue-light, should more assistance be required."

There is frequent allusion at this time (May 1831) to the four-oared smuggling galleys from Dover, whose crews were excessively active.

The following order refers to a well-known method of smuggling :—" I have information of the most unquestionable nature," writes the I.C. of the Hastings district, " that the smugglers are contemplating a scheme of secreting and conveying

dry and contraband goods from the ports of France in old ballast-bags; and that it is their intention, in order to prevent suspicion, to beach their boats during the day, and throw the ballast-bags carelessly on the shore. There are two galleys now at Calais, taking in goods for this purpose."

A somewhat similar device, invented by a Jew nicknamed "Buffy," was in vogue a few years earlier, in the form of tubs of spirits whose shape and colour were disguised by a coating of plaster of Paris, studded with gravel and shells, and partially hidden with seaweed, so as to resemble, as nearly as possible, the blocks of chalk found under the cliffs along the Kentish shore. These would be dropped from boats at night on the beach, above low-water line, so as to be dry when the tide receded. Next day, a smuggler, attired in a countryman's gaberdine, would drive a cart on to the sands, and load it with what appeared to be lumps of chalk for lime-burning. The scheme was so well thought out, and proved so successful, that it might have gone on indefinitely had not the secret been entrusted to a woman. One of the Dover smugglers, we learn from the officer of the district, in the exultation of success, confided the stratagem to his sweetheart, and the damsel in turn betrayed it to a more favoured lover, who happened to be an officer in the Coast Blockade Service. This, of course, led to the discovery and seizure of the next cargo, and a couple of the disguised tubs were sent along the stations to put the officers and men on the *qui vive.*

Ever since the establishment of a preventive force bribery and corruption had been in favour with the smugglers as a means of gaining their ends. Wherefore there is nothing surprising in the following

official warning : " There being reason to fear that an attempt will be made to corrupt our men through the medium of females," wrote the I.C. of the Brighton district, " it is my direction that patrols hold no communication with any person, male or female." And he warns the crews of stations and mounted guards to keep at as great a distance as possible from the inhabitants near the stations. This was hard on the gossips.

It was the invariable custom for the blockade sentinels to be posted on the brink of the tide : a custom which had its drawbacks, the men's positions being thus proclaimed to the smugglers. When the coastguard took over charge, however, the patrols were encouraged to keep out of sight as much as was consistent with a good look-out. And we find the I.C. of the Hastings district issuing a further caution apropos of " the custom which prevails of the patrols hailing every boat that approaches the beach at night ; " adding : " Such conduct is not consistent with the duty they have to perform, and I request that the officers will forbid their men doing so in future." It was certainly a foolish practice to " warn off " the smuggling boats, and thus lose the chance of a valuable prize.

Whether the customs authorities had paid agents in the continental ports to report the movements of smuggling vessels, or whether they depended on the consuls for information, cannot be positively affirmed. This much is certain, however, that valuable " tips " were constantly being received at headquarters, and duly transmitted to the commanders of revenue cruisers afloat and coastguard stations on shore. Thus, under date May 29th, 1831, the following bit of news came along : " A correspondent writes from

Caen : About a week since I saw a man in the street whose appearance and dress immediately told me he was a smuggler, and on inquiry I found he had been one. A cutter is ready and will probably take lace or blonde, which, owing to the distress, is now extremely cheap."

Symptoms of impending activity amongst the smugglers in the early days of June prompted the I.C. of the Deal district to issue the following warning : " I perceive by the movements of the smugglers that it is their intention to try their illicit trade on all parts of the coast a short time before the setting of the night watch, and as soon after its relief in the morning as possible." And as forced runs might be attempted, it was further ordered that, " at evening muster each man is to have at least ten rounds of pistol ammunition, and the extreme men are to carry muskets in addition and ten rounds of musket cartridge. The swords are to be kept sharp and with a good point."

The men throughout all districts were further cautioned against being led astray by " smugglers' decoys " in the shape of fires, and reports of disturbances, spread about for the purpose of drawing men away from the spot where a run was to be attempted.

In the Deal district it was found expedient, in addition to the land patrolling, to row guard along the coast by night ; and ingenious officers were wont to devise means of making the boats' crews as little conspicuous as possible. For example, the following order was issued (July 17th, 1831) to the men of the Deal district : " That every man may be ready at a moment's notice to go afloat at night, it is my direction that they immediately furnish themselves with white frocks and hat-covers, or canvas sou'-westers,

painted white. Officers should also be similarly provided, or the object of their going afloat is at once defeated."

Whether owing to the short nights, or the summer crowds at the seaside, June and July passed off without any serious attempts to force the chain of patrols. Early in September, however, two runs were effected in the Deal district; concerning which the I.C. remarks that the first, which came off at "the Accommodation ladder" at Pegwell, was on the guard of J. Clark, Chief Boatman, "the said guard being only 142 yards;" while the other, at Sandown, "was, no doubt, a bribery case."

The crews of stations are cautioned at this time that "smuggling in open boats from Boulogne and other ports opposite Kent and Sussex is carried on as actively as ever by some secret method which they are to use their utmost efforts to discover."

All the coastguard stations were in the charge of Lieutenants R.N., many of whom, being past their prime and weary of life, found the duties somewhat irksome. It was in allusion to one such officer that the following order came from the I.C. of the Deal district (October 9th, 1831): "Having on a recent night visit observed an officer under my command riding a donkey on the beach to visit his guards, instead of using every precaution to keep his situation as much as possible from the smugglers, as well as from his crew, I desire that this practice be discontinued, assuring the officer alluded to that I shall not keep such idleness a secret from the Comptroller General."

On the approach of winter, with the long nights so favourable to smuggling operations, the crews were enjoined to exercise the utmost vigilance, with a

view both to repelling attacks and frustrating the attempts of the smugglers to run their goods. While, by way of obviating the confusion wont to arise from the indiscriminate use of blue-lights as alarm signals, the following order was issued : " One light—signal for assistance, or company seen ; two lights—return to your guards ; three lights—assistance of whole station required, smugglers in the act of running by force."

On the 6th October the campaign fairly opened, and the first of a series of fights with the Sussex smugglers took place near the Priory, Hastings, when two boatmen were badly beaten, and the smugglers succeeded in running all their goods. No prisoners were taken, nor was any clue obtained concerning the parties engaged. That the affair was regarded seriously by the authorities is shown by the following Proclamation, issued two days later :

Custom House, London, Oct. 8, 1831.

" Whereas it has been represented to the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs that on the night of the 6th Oct. William Gruer and Francis Duff, Boatmen in the service of the Coastguard, were severely beaten and wounded by a large party of smugglers unknown, whilst in the execution of their duty at Hastings, in the county of Sussex, in endeavouring to seize a cargo of contraband spirits, and which party succeeded in rescuing some of the smugglers who had been detained by the said officers ; the said Commissioners in order to bring to justice the said offenders are hereby pleased to offer a Reward of

£500

to any person who shall discover or cause to be discovered," etc., etc.

With a view to enabling the men more effectually to resist attacks of this nature, the I.C. of the Folkestone district ordered the muskets to be loaded with slugs prepared from the balls of condemned cartridges : the men were further directed to " provide themselves with stout hats of sufficient substance to protect the head from a common bat " (blow). They were also enjoined to keep their cutlasses sharp, and to fit them with beckets for attaching to the wrist, to prevent them being knocked out of their hands.

On November 26th, the I.C. of the Deal district warned the crews as follows :

" I have good reason to believe that some desperate attempts will be made by the smugglers at different points in this district to effect landings by force, particularly between the North Shore and Reculvers. The officers are always to be accompanied by a man on night duty who is to carry a musket and bayonet, pistol and sword. The men are to be cautioned before going on duty against surprise, by not allowing anyone to approach their guard till satisfied it is their officer, as I am persuaded the smugglers will attempt to seize them on their posts by assuming a false character. The chief officers are also to be properly armed and on their guard when passing through plantations, turning corners or near cliff edges, as I am informed on the very best authority that each company of smugglers will be accompanied by a number of batmen whose first and grand object will be to secure the officer."

During December the smugglers were busy all along the coast. A run came off at Sizewell, as well as an affray at Cuckmere in which fire-arms were freely used by the smugglers; and concerning which

it was stated in General Orders that "the patrols at Hope Gap behaved with great firmness and gallantry." There was also an affair on the Lancing station which led to the promotion of a boatman—"for meritorious conduct when attacked by smugglers and batmen on the night of the 4th of December and severely beaten."

On January 6th, 1832, the revenue cruiser *Ranger*, having made a seizure of a boat containing 205 tubs of spirits, landed them at Hastings. The sight of this valuable cargo *en route* to the custom-house in carts so incensed some of the inhabitants that they assaulted the officer who was in charge, with stones, "which to his credit," wrote an eye-witness, "he bore with patience and forbearance, although his arm was considerably injured." Five smugglers who had been taken along with the goods, and placed for better security in a tower at Bo Peep station, effected their escape during the night, and were not seen again.

On the night of Sunday, the 9th of January, a serious affray took place at the Warehouse Gate, near the new town of St. Leonards, with a large party of smugglers, in course of which several were wounded on both sides, and a great quantity of goods was run. It was reported that three of the smugglers died afterwards, and that one man had his hand amputated.

The crews of the Hastings district were warned that the cutter *Hope* of Middelburg was about to attempt a landing on the 26th inst, and that the "Spotsman" was a man named Nash. The officers of stations were further enjoined to be on their guard against being deceived by "feints." "Should a run of goods take place on any station or a seizure

be made," ran the order, " the officers are particularly requested not to allow the other parts of their stations to remain unguarded, as it is very probable that a small cargo may be landed in order to draw attention to that, while a larger one is run elsewhere."

On February 6th, in an encounter with a large party of armed smugglers near Cambury Lane, Guilford, near Rye, several were wounded on both sides, and one smuggler was shot dead, who was afterwards buried at Hastings.

The frequency of these conflicts and the defiant attitude of the smugglers account for the following grimly suggestive order by the I.C. of the Deal district :

" Having received positive information that during the present darks the smugglers will make some desperate attempts with armed parties to run goods, and in order that the crews may be prepared to give these ruffians a proper reception, it is my direction that every other man is armed with a musket and bayonet in addition to his pistol : the musket to be loaded with ball cartridges, and a second ball cut into *four*, with orders not to use this valuable weapon for an alarm, but to keep it in reserve for the security of their own persons and to severely punish those who may have the temerity to attack them."

The insecurity of many custom-houses being notorious—a circumstance well known to the smugglers—as proved by frequent attempts to rescue seized goods, an order was issued to the coastguard " not to deposit large seizures in custom-houses liable to sudden attack from smugglers."

During January the stations of the Brighton district were thus warned : " It is reported that a

party of batmen have left Hastings for the purpose of covering a run at either Kingston, Worthing or Lancing." Particulars of the resulting affray are lacking, but it is on record that W. King, Chief Boatman, and John Richardson, boatman, received injuries in conflict with a large party of batmen on the night of February 2nd, at Littlehampton (Kingston station), and that a reward of £300 was offered for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the offenders.

The frequency of these attacks, and the impunity with which the smugglers conducted their operations owing to the use of fire-arms, led to the issue of the following order from Headquarters, with a view to making the fire of the coastguard more effective when attacked: "The chief officers are, with the least possible delay, to furnish themselves with an ample supply of swan-shot which is immediately to be made up into cartridges to be used by the patrols in the event of being attacked by smugglers."

On the morning of the 21st another very serious affray with a large party of armed smugglers took place at Tower 40, opposite the "long-rails," about three miles west of Hastings, with fatal results: one coastguardsman being shot dead on the spot, another received a gunshot wound in the abdomen and died soon after, and a third was dangerously wounded in the arm. None of the smuggling party were captured, though the boat, containing 153 tubs, was taken.

In the old burial-ground at Bexhill the writers discovered a melancholy reminder of this affair, in the shape of two headstones, bearing the following inscriptions:

" In memory of David Watts of the Coastguard Station No. XLII Tower. He was shot and almost instantly expired on the 21st Feb., 1832, aged 45 years.

> Short was the warning, quick the summons flew,
> Ere scarce his weeping friends could bid adieu."

" In memory of William Meekes, Chief Boatman of Coastguard Station No. XLII Tower. He was mortally wounded on the night of 21st and died on the 23rd of Feb. 1832, aged 35 years."

(The lines which followed were illegible.)

The affray thus briefly alluded to was followed, the morning after, by a still more daring outrage, at Worthing, of so extraordinary a nature that we shall quote the account that appeared in the *Sussex Advertiser* (February 27th, 1832) :

" A smuggling transaction remarkable for the bloodthirsty daring with which it was perpetrated, as well as for the fatal event in which it terminated, took place in this town, on Wednesday last, 22nd inst., which created considerable alarm amongst the inhabitants and has formed the topic of conversation ever since. At 3 a.m., in broad moonlight, a boat containing about 300 tubs of spirits was beached opposite to Stafford's library, and a party of 200 men succeeded in clearing nearly all the tubs, with which they proceeded along the Steyne and up the High Street, guarded in the rear by a company of Bexhill batmen, with a few fire-arms, and closely followed by a small party of Preventive-men who kept firing at intervals along the street to bring their party together. At the top of High Street Lieutenant Henderson and four of his men met and

immediately pressed upon the smugglers, who made their way over into the Brooks; here the parties had a skirmish: one of the preventive-men was knocked down, and another had his breastbone broken by a stone. The smugglers, with a man of the name Cowardson as their leader, formed a line and came with many oaths upon Lieutenant Henderson, who, maintaining the greatest coolness, warned them not to come near him and threatened to shoot the first man that advanced; but they still closed on him, when Cowardson, with his bat raised, being in the act of striking, Lieutenant Henderson shot him dead on the spot, and with his second pistol wounded another man in the thigh. The lieutenant immediately after had his left arm broken by a bludgeon, when, after striking another with his cutlass in the neck, he was overpowered, struck down and trampled upon by the smugglers. At this time there were also three of his men on the ground, one of whom now lies in a dangerous state."

Several of the smuggling party were reported to have been wounded, but, as was usual on such occasions they were carried away by their companions to prevent discovery. The tub-boat with 44 tubs was secured; and the cutter which towed it across—the *Mary* of Rye—was captured the evening before by the revenue cutter *Hawke*.

Were the above facts not well authenticated the reader might doubt the possibility of such an affair taking place at a popular sea-side resort, in the nineteenth century. But the writers have themselves interviewed an old smuggler who took part in the affray.

This affair was viewed so seriously by the authorities, that it was determined to call in the aid of the

military. It was unreasonable to expect the isolated crews of coastguard stations to face the large bodies of armed smugglers that were now in the habit of forcing the runs. While the disastrous results of recent encounters had terrorised the men. On March 12th it was reported from Hastings, that " part of a troop of Dragoons, 36 in number, had arrived there to assist the coastguard, and proceeded afterwards to Brighton, being succeeded by about 40 of the Rifle Brigade." Other movements of troops were reported from the westward, " to assist in suppressing the daring attempts which are being made to introduce contraband articles on the coast of Sussex."

That these measures had the desired effect, for a time, is evident from the following warning issued two months later : " The smugglers being greatly disconcerted along the coasts of Kent and Sussex, in the more open mode of smuggling, intend trying largely to import goods in partly laden colliers."

A further caution from the I.C. of the Deal district throws an interesting light on the stratagems that were sometimes resorted to in order to throw the smugglers off their guard : " Having noticed the day look-out men at some of the stations parading their posts in uniform . . . the first object is to have the day sentinel dressed as much as possible like the inhabitants, instead of placing them as beacons to warn the illicit traders, whom it is our duty to detect by disguise and every other means that can devise itself."

From Gravelines came news under date July 16th, that " two waggons had arrived with 100 bags of tea, and a number of packages about 16 inches square, secured with red tape and sealed, supposed to

contain gauze ribbon, which will be shipped in four English boats now in the harbour, for the Newhaven district."

During August great activity was displayed by the Deal smugglers. On the 16th the coastguard were warned that "the long smuggling galley *Bee* left Deal on the morning of the 14th, with 6 men, and returned this morning, having been seen coming round the North Foreland." And on the 25th, "the open lugger *Pursuit* left Deal at 12.30 a.m. with 8 noted smugglers, taking a long black galley with them. Also the *Fame*, open lugger, left with 10 noted characters at 1 a.m., taking with them a long varnished galley." And again, in September, "The *Victory*, smuggling lugger which generally works with the *Bee* galley, left Broadstairs."

The following order by the I.C. of the Deal district is interesting in view of the changes which time and the builder have wrought thereabouts: "His Grace the Duke of Wellington having expressed a wish to preserve game on the left side of the road from Deal to Dover castle, as being within the limits of the Warden of the Cinque Ports, the chief officers will govern themselves accordingly and will not sport thereon."

Armed parties of smugglers having been observed for several nights on the look-out near Beachy Head and Seaford, the I.C. of the Brighton district orders swan-shot to be purchased and made up into cartridges; and on the 11th October more detailed instructions are issued owing to information that a run "will take place near Beachy Head to-night."

With the approach of winter, and the probable reappearance of armed parties on the coast, the stations were reinforced by 60 men from Ireland.

From a mezzotint after Sir Francis Bourgeois.

SMUGGLERS ATTACKED

At the same time, the I.C. of the Folkestone district, with a view to easing the strain on the men and encouraging zeal, gave permission for the chief officers to reserve a couple of tubs for the use of the crew when a seizure was made—" to be distributed at periods of need to afford cheerfulness and buoyant spirits."

CHAPTER II

MORE STRENUOUS TIMES FOR THE COASTGUARD

THE year 1832 afforded many lively and interesting incidents for the new coastguard force, for the smugglers of the south-east coast, impressed by the energetic measures adopted, now had recourse to sundry ruses for the introduction of their wares. Thus, the coastguard stations in the Hastings district were warned that "the notorious smuggler Cobby has been afloat at night in his duck punt and has, it is to be feared, been employed towing a small number of tubs ashore, to be pulled over the beach with a line." Another ingenious device is thus alluded to: "A seizure was recently made at No. 2 Tower, Dungeness, as follows: The day look-out man observing a feather remaining stationary on the water, he stripped and swam out to it, and found the feather attached to a small cork, to which a piece of twine was made fast, and on hauling on it he soon got hold of a piece of $\frac{3}{4}$-inch rope, and drew thirty-two tubs of spirits on shore."

At Deal (October 17th) the punt *Gloucester* was seized with ten bales of tea weighing 490 lb. concealed under her nets.

During this month the I.C. of the Deal district calls the attention of station officers to the following discreditable affair: "A big landing of goods was discovered to have taken place on 29th Sept. at Hope Point, Kingsdown Station, after sunrise, on

the guard of Henry Cogen, boatman; who deserted. The I.C. finds that the chief officer used to tell the men over-night their guard for the morning; hence the smugglers with their usual cunning would not have trusted so valuable a cargo to *chance* had they not, from this improper practice, known where to find this corrupt character."

As a set-off to the above may be quoted an order from the I.C. of the Hastings district: "The Comptroller-General has been pleased to promote B. Buckle, boatman of 50 Tower Station, on my representation of his manly conduct in proceeding instantly to the boat and securing one of the smugglers on the night of November 20th, when a run was attempted." And again, in December a General Order is issued to the coastguard notifying that the crew of the Camber Station has been awarded £10 each, besides the seizure share, and were to be promoted, for courageously supporting their officer, Lieutenant Parry (since promoted to Commander), during a desperate affray with armed smugglers on the night of February 1st last.

The smugglers having been suspiciously quiet for some time past, the I.C. of the Hastings district issued the following warning, under date December 10th: "As the season is far advanced without smuggling, I think it extremely probable that much will be attempted these darks. I therefore again call on the officers and men to use every exertion, and I beg the officers will impress on the men—particularly at Hastings, Priory and 39 Tower Stations—to beware of surprise day and night, and to be firm, cool, and determined."

After a brief respite the smugglers broke out again with all their wonted violence and daring, appearing

in great force on the morning of January 24th, 1833, near Eastbourne, when a Chief Boatman was shot dead and several were wounded on both sides. The *Sussex Advertiser* of January 28th contained the following detailed account of the affair : " A terrible encounter took place on the morning of the 24th inst. at Eastbourne, between a large party of armed smugglers and the Preventive service stationed at that place. A boat landed about 2 a.m., and the smugglers, amounting, it is said, to many hundreds, commenced running the contraband goods, when the coastguards made their appearance, and a serious and fatal skirmish took place. Shots were fired on both sides, and one of the officers of the coastguard was killed upon the spot, and another desperately wounded. The smugglers ultimately made off, leaving only a few tubs of spirits and the boat in possession of the Preventive men."

From another source we gather that, while the coastguard patrol on the beach at East Dean was holding a conference with the Chief Boatman, George Pett, the sound of a horn was heard close in shore which was answered from the land with a shrill whistle. This put the men on the alert, and on mounting the cliff one of them discovered a number of men and immediately called out, " The Company ! The Company ! " At the same time, Pett fired his pistol in the air as a signal for assistance. An immense body of smugglers then rushed to the spot, and poor Pett was shot and mortally wounded. The boat then came ashore and a general skirmish ensued, while a number of armed men formed in line on each side of the working party engaged in clearing the cargo. Three other C.G. were seriously wounded. Up to this time the smugglers had

escaped unscathed, but, during their retreat the mounted guard came up with them and fired into their midst, repeating this several times, and tracks of blood showed that some of the smugglers were wounded.

The *Gazette* of February 5th contained the following notice :

"PARDON AND REWARD.

"Whereas it has been humbly represented to the King that early in the morning of Thursday the 24th day of January last, a large body of armed smugglers assembled in the parish of Eastbourne in the county of Sussex for the purpose of effecting the landing and running of uncustomed goods, and that violent attacks were made on George Pett, chief boatman of the coastguard station there, who was killed by a shot from one of the smugglers, and on two other boatmen of the coastguard service who were severely wounded;

"His Majesty, for the better discovering the persons who have been guilty of this felony and murder, is hereby pleased to promise his most gracious pardon to any one or more of the persons so assembled (except those who actually perpetrated the act) who shall discover any of the parties concerned in the felony and murder aforesaid, so that he or they may be apprehended and brought to justice.

"(Signed) MELBOURNE.

"And the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs are hereby pleased to offer a reward of £1000 to any person or persons who shall discover or cause to be discovered any of the persons concerned in the said

felony and murder, so that he or they may be apprehended; such amount to be paid on conviction by the Collector, H.M. Customs, Rye.

" By order of the Comrs.
" *Custom House, London*, 5 Feb., 1833."

Notwithstanding that the parties concerned in this outrage must have been perfectly well known over a large extent of country, none of them were ever discovered, in spite of the large reward offered.

In the graveyard of St. Mary's Church, Old Eastbourne, near the N.E. corner, stands a melancholy memorial of this affray, in the shape of a headstone with the following inscription :

" To the memory of
MARY, WIFE OF G. PETT,
who departed this life Sep. 11, 1832, aged 35 years.

Dangers stand thick through all the ground
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wail around
To hurry mortals home.

Geo. Pett, Chief Boatman, husband of the above, who was shot in an attack by smugglers, 24 Jan. 1833, aged 43 years."

In consequence of this affray the Depôt Company of the Rifle Brigade was ordered to proceed from Dover to Hastings by forced marches, " the whole of that coast being in a state of great excitement in consequence of the proceedings of the smugglers who had lately killed a Chief Boatman and wounded others. After an hours' rest," continues Sir W.

From a mezzotint after Sir Francis Bourgeois.

SMUGGLERS DEFEATED

Cope, in his *History of the Rifle Brigade*, " the men were divided into parties under officers and directed to patrol the beach for miles : this continued for six weeks, no smugglers being met with the whole time."

Was it likely the smugglers would be such arrant fools as to run their heads into a noose so clumsily prepared and so widely advertised? Naturally, they bided their time till the coast was clear.

It was in connection with the sad affair above described that the I.C. of the Hastings district cautioned the officers that " Should such an attempt be made in this district, I trust the officers and crews will abandon the boat and cargo to follow the assassins up into the country, and that they will behave with coolness and not throw away their fire."

The I.C. of the Brighton district also issued a warning in connection with the same affair : " The darks—(*i. e.* no moon) are again commencing, and the morning of the 24th January has taught us that we have no common enemy to contend with. I trust that the honourable feelings so inherent in British officers and seamen will render any observations of mine as to the strict performance of duty unnecessary, and that this appeal will not be made in vain."

Later on (February) the Sergeant of Mounted Guard writes from Hythe : " The Iden and Rye party have sent a boat across with two Rye men, two Hastings men, and one from Eastbourne. They commence spotting to-morrow night : their first spot the Camber : their spots are to be very wide." Commenting on this bit of news, and in an appeal to the officers and men to frustrate the smugglers' intentions, the I.C. warns

them that "a steady and determined use of fire-arms must be had recourse to if necessary: in which case I recommend, in firing, that an aim be taken at the enemies' knees."

This was all very well, but it is an open question whether fire-arms should be entrusted to rash and inexperienced individuals who, on occasions of emergency, have to use their own discretion. The coast-guard contained many men who had never been trained to the use of arms, and who, for lack of instruction and experience, were quite unfitted to be entrusted with weapons to be used at their own discretion. An order has already been quoted with reference to a backwardness displayed by some of the crews in using their arms when attacked. The following order points out a danger of another sort: "Complaints having reached me," writes the I.C. of the Hastings district, "that cutters' boats have been threatened to be fired into at night while on the look-out, and as such a measure is highly illegal, even in the case of a smuggling boat, I request the officers will point out to their crews the impropriety of such conduct, and that, in the event of death being caused, they would undoubtedly be tried for their lives."

The Chief Officer of Birling Gap station writes: "I have this morning observed two very suspicious characters in this neighbourhood: one of the two, I saw when the goods were run at Crowlink; likewise before the tubs were taken at Seaside. The same person was seen this side of Crowlink flagstaff the same morning that Hayward discovered the smuggling party on his 5th guard."

On March 14th the Chief Officer of Priory Station writes: "9.30 p.m., I have just received information that a boat will attempt to land a crop of goods

between 50 Towerand Langney to-night or to-morrow. If not run to-night I shall be informed to-morrow where the party was assembled. This information is from a person who has before given it to my predecessor."

Under date April 23rd the Commander of the *Stork*, R. C., writes: "These last three nights I have observed lights shown at the back of Crowlink

THE "PREVENTIVE" WATER-GUARD OR COASTGUARD.
A CARICATURE OF 1833.

Station, apparently smuggling signals: possibly to some vessel in the offing unable to get in owing to the calms." And on June 17th, the stations in the Brighton district are warned that a ten-oared galley is expected to try one of the harbours; and that a party of twenty-four batmen is engaged to cover the landing of the goods.

An affair of a serious nature, details of which are lacking, is alluded to in a General Order to the

Hastings district, notifying that the Board of Customs had awarded £100 for distribution in the proportion of £10 to each officer and £5 to each of the men who were engaged on that occasion, "for their praiseworthy exertions in preventing a run when the smugglers were armed, and following them up to intercept their retreat, on the night of the 17th March last."

The following extract from the Comptroller-General's Report on Smuggling on the coasts of Kent and Sussex during the winter 1832–33 is of special interest :

"It is impossible to speak in terms of too high commendation of the extraordinary zeal, energy and perseverance manifested both by the officers and men employed on this dangerous and harassing service, or the cheerfulness with which they have borne the privations inseparable from it. The Inspecting Commanders specially selected for the commands of these districts have set an example of vigilance and activity which has been most laudably followed by those under their command. Scarcely a complaint has been preferred against anyone, and the whole force appears to have been actuated by one common determination to execute their duty faithfully and creditably."

Early in August the stations were warned to be vigilant, "as the smugglers will no doubt attempt a run prior to the Brighton races." On the 19th the I.C. of the Hastings district writes from Romney, 10 a.m. "Having last night in company with the mounted guard encountered near Dungeness a party of smugglers assembled for the purpose of forcing a landing in that quarter, but in consequence of our force being unfortunately discovered through

the misconduct of one of the coastguard, they immediately dispersed and flashed the smuggling galley off. The spots selected for this night and to-morrow are some part of the coast near Hastings and Eastbourne, and should there be sufficient wind, the importing boat will be towed across by a lugger." And in further allusion to the affair, the following General Order was issued: "The I.C. considers the conduct of the Commissioned Boatman at No. 2 Battery on the night of the 18th inst., while watching the movements of a company of smugglers in the rear of that station, as highly disgraceful and evincing a considerable degree of timidity, and his firing and thereby alarming the whole coast, void of the slightest necessity, the said C. B. being fully aware that had the smugglers approached a competent coastguard reinforcement was at hand ready to reinforce the crew and totally overthrow the smugglers' contemplated operations by the certain capture of both goods and offenders, the officers in command are hereby made acquainted with the reprehensible occurrence in question, that they may caution their respective crews against conduct of this nature, bearing in mind that when a co-operative force is collected to counteract offensive measures on the part of smugglers, the greatest secrecy and cunning in ambush is invariably and imperatively necessary to ensure through such stratagem the most entire success; and the officers will also impress on the mind of each individual that by throwing away their fire they not only render themselves defenceless, but also weaken the rest of the force in such manner as to give to their opponents incalculable advantages."

The preceding pages have been concerned with

import smuggling. The following extract from a General Order, November 1833, refers to another species of trading which the revenue officers had to guard against: "The Nottingham manufacturers

ONE OF THE SUSSEX "BATMEN"

having complained to the Government of the illegal exportation of Bobbinnet machinery, orders are issued to the coastguard to put a stop to it."

Coming events are wont to cast their shadows before. Thus the I.C., of the Brighton district warns

the crews that " the brother of Grisbrook, commander of the *Hope*, of Rye, lying off Birling Gap, has purchased 150 feet of ¾-inch rope, supposed for the purpose of hauling a raft of tubs ashore."

The summer and autumn passed off so quietly as to encourage a belief that the smugglers had been thoroughly cowed, and that further armed resistance need not be expected. But appearances are proverbially deceptive: It was the calm before the storm. The early morning of November 18th, 1833, will ever be memorable in coastguard annals as having witnessed one of the most desperate and prolonged affrays with armed smugglers that took place on the coast of Sussex; resulting fortunately, however, in the complete rout of the smugglers, three of whom were killed and several wounded, and the capture of all their goods, together with several prisoners: without any casualty on the part of the Government forces.

The affray was on so considerable a scale that it might almost be dignified by the name of battle. The following account is from the *Sussex Advertiser* of November 25th, 1833.

DESPERATE AND FATAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN A LARGE PARTY OF SMUGGLERS AND THE COASTGUARD.

" On Monday morning, about four, a boat laden with contraband goods came on shore near No. 28 Tower, Pevensey, which was perceived by one of the coastguards, who discharged his piece as a signal for assistance, when a great number of smugglers rushed down to the boat and commenced unshipping her cargo, consisting of contraband spirits and tea;

the boat was surrounded and protected by armed smugglers, who kept up a constant fire during the unloading of the boat. Having cleared the cargo the smugglers proceeded with it towards the marsh, flanked and covered in their rear by their armed companions; they had gone about a mile and a half from the boat across the marsh, when the C.G. had concentrated their force and come up with them, upon perceiving which the Smugglers drew up in line, and upon the word ' fire ' being given, some guns were discharged at the coastguard, who instantly returned the fire and the smugglers again commenced a retreat. Upon advancing, the guard discovered one of their antagonists lying dead on his face, with a percussion gun under him, a ball having passed through his head. In his pockets were found a powder flask, slugs and an iron spike, with which it is supposed they load their guns. Five of the armed smugglers at this time returned, to bear off, it is conjectured, their most severely wounded comrade, but meeting with a sharp reception, they again retreated, pursued by the coastguard, when a sort of running fight was kept up for nearly two hours, covering a distance of six or seven miles. Five prisoners were ultimately captured, together with 68 tubs of spirits and a quantity of tea. On Tuesday an inquest was held on the smuggler found dead before J. Whiteman, Esq., mayor and coroner for Pevensey.

" A second smuggler named Page has, we hear since, died of his wounds, and from tracks of blood which were discovered in several directions it is conjectured that more of them must have been wounded. The coastguard, we understand, escaped without any serious injury. It has since been reported that a third smuggler is dead."

A correspondent writing under the same date from Lewes reports that "Five smugglers passed through this town yesterday under a strong escort on their way to Horsham Gaol. They are charged, we understand, with being implicated in the late affray at Pevensey. Their names are James Page, 41; William Chatfield, 21; William Marchant, 28; Charles Sands, 25." On December 16th the above-named were tried at the Sussex Winter Assizes held at Lewes for "feloniously assembling, armed, to the number of three and more, for the purpose of assisting in landing certain smuggled liquors and teas."

The jury returned a verdict of guilty against the whole of them, but recommended Sands to mercy, as having been persuaded by others. Mr. Baron Vaughan, in passing judgment, said that although by law the lives of the prisoners were forfeited, under all the circumstances of the case he should recommend them to His Majesty's mercy; but that they could only expect mercy on the condition of leaving this country for life.

The official version of the Battle of Pevensey Sluice, the last serious affray with Sussex smugglers, appeared in a General Order; and, as it supplies some missing details, we give it *in extenso:*

"GENERAL MEMO.

"*Coastguard Office,* 6 Dec., 1833.

"The Comptroller-General has much pleasure in communicating to the service generally the following particulars relative to a serious conflict sustained by the coastguard in the Hastings district on the night of the 17th ult., with an armed body of smugglers in which the latter were completely defeated

through the brave, judicious, and exemplary conduct of the officers and men.

"A boat was seen near Pevensey Sluice by Dennis Sullivan, a boatman on probation, who hailed her, and on discharging his pistol as an alarm was immediately fired at by several armed smugglers. The tub-carriers rushed to the boat, which was cleared in two or three minutes, and Sullivan got in the midst of them, by which he avoided the smugglers' fire and saved his own life. Lieutenant Hewlett, C.O. 57 Tower, with part of his crew, came along the sea-wall just inland of the smugglers, who at once faced round and fired, retreating to the marshes, about eighty yards from the water's edge, and were lost sight of for a time.

"The alarm being given, Lieutenant Fothergill, C.O. 53 Tower, with three of the mounted guard, a part of his own and Lieutenant Hewlett's crew, overtook them about 1½ miles inland, when, by word of command, they discharged a volley of from twenty to thirty shots at Lieutenant Fothergill and party, who returned their fire, and after three rounds had been exchanged between them, the smugglers retreated as fast as possible, leaving 17 tubs behind and one man shot dead, his musket under him, and bullets, powder and percussion caps in his pocket.

"From the fog and the many impassable ditches with which the marshes are intersected, Lieutenant Fothergill's party could not come up with them: Lieutenant Hewlett, however, with part of his crew and that of Langley Ford, fell in with the retreating smugglers about seven miles inland (between the villages of Boreham and Watling Hill), where they attempted to make their last stand, but upon being charged by the mounted guard broke and fled in

all directions, leaving 48 tubs. Five prisoners were captured, four of whom were fully convicted for felony—two were killed and a coroner's inquest has returned a verdict of justifiable homicide. The boat, which is calculated to carry from 80 to 100 tubs, was also seized, and during this desperate affray only one of the coastguard has received any injury, and that a very slight one in the hand.

" (Signed) WM. BOWLES."

In due course, officers and men who had fought in the Battle of Pevensey Sluice received a more substantial mark of approval, as notified in the following Memo :

" January 2, 1834. I have to acquaint you that the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury have been pleased to sanction payment to the officers and crews of the Pevensey Sluice Station, of the sum of £20 per man, being the highest rate of reward payable on conviction of the smugglers who were killed or captured on the night of the 17th Nov. last.

" (Signed) S. SPARSHOTT."

This extraordinary affair took place, be it noted, in one of the most civilised parts of the kingdom, and within the recollection of people who were living when these researches were first undertaken. To realise the full significance of such an occurrence—to understand how such scenes were possible, only some ninety odd years ago—one must needs have some acquaintance with rural conditions at the time in question. To obtain this, the reader is advised to procure and study a " Report on the Disturbed

Districts of East Sussex," by Mr. Majendie, describing the condition of things in the early part of the year 1833. The Report is too lengthy for insertion here. We cannot forbear, however, from reproducing the more important passages.

Under the head of "Smuggling," he writes: "Since the establishment of the Preventive service,[1] smuggling is much diminished. This diminution has had the effect of increasing the poor rate, or, as was expressed by an overseer, who is supposed to have had formerly a very accurate acquaintance with the business, 'the putting down smuggling is the ruin of the coast.' The labourers of Bexhill, and of the villages proceeding eastward towards Kent, used to have plenty of work in the summer, and had no difficulty in finding employment in smuggling during the winter.

"The smugglers are divided into two classes, the carriers or bearers, who receive from five shillings per night and upwards, according to the number of tubs they secure, and the batmen, so called from the provincial term of 'bat' for a bludgeon they use, consider themselves as of a superior class; they go out in disguise, and frequently with their faces blackened, and now with fire-arms; they confine their services to the protection of others, and are paid twenty shillings or more per night; and many, perhaps most of them, are at the same time in receipt of parish relief.

"Large capitals have been invested in this business, particularly at Bexhill. Many of the small farmers, if they do not participate, certainly connive at these practices; those who do not directly profit

[1] The recently established "Coastguard" is probably referred to.

by smuggling, consider that it is advantageous as finding employ for many who would be otherwise thrown on their parishes. The smugglers are now much more ferocious since the use of fire-arms is more constant."

His observations relating to the encounter near Eastbourne, when Chief Boatman Pett was killed are especially worth noting :

" The offer of £1000 reward by the Secretary of State for the detection of some men engaged in a desperate affray caused much sensation, but was ultimately ineffectual. Many people left the country for France and America, but have returned since the failure of the prosecution for want of satisfactory evidence ; though probably not less than 500 persons in the district were fully acquainted with the transaction."

The reader will notice how little public sentiment in regard to the offence of smuggling had altered since the days when the Hawkhurst and other criminal associations roamed at will through the southern counties, terrorising the inhabitants and committing every sort of outrage with impunity.

The chief difference between the two periods lay in the fact that, whereas in former times employers of labour suffered from the rival and vastly superior attractions of the smuggling trade, farmers now deplored the decadence of smuggling, which afforded employment for their hands during the winter months, when work on the land was slack.

On December 21st the districts were cautioned against an English smack laden with spirits and dry goods intended to be run in Kent and Sussex, but prevented by stress of weather, and forced to put into Calais about a fortnight ago : " A spotsman

from near Bexhill left Eastbourne for Calais on the 13th and another has also gone over. The vessel and cargo, which is very considerable, are stated to belong to Bexhill people, and if put off from that vicinity will attempt another part of the coast between Eastbourne and Hope Gap near Seaford, as two spotsmen are engaged. An armed party with fire-arms will cover the smugglers' operations."

At the same time the stations in the Deal districts are warned to look out for Curtis of Rye, " a notorious smuggler who is absent on a smuggling trip," to which is appended the note that he " has just been discharged from H.M.S. *Winchester*, where he had completed five years, having been sentenced to serve in H.M. Navy for smuggling."

In view of possible attempts to force runs during the ensuing winter, the men of the Folkestone district are cautioned that, " when firing is heard, the crews of flanking stations should not proceed in a straight line, but make an angle inland, to ensure cutting off the smugglers' retreat."

Early in January, 1835, the *Fly* and *Fortune* luggers are reported as absent from Deal on smuggling trips; also the long galley, *Bee*. The men of the district are warned by the I.C. how to carry their arms to avoid being overpowered by surprise, as, " I have lately," he writes, " found certain night sentinels so completely buckled up that it was quite impossible to defend themselves."

Next month the lugger *Fly* is again reported absent on smuggling business : " She took six men from Walmer Castle and stood across to Calais," from which the reader might be led to infer that the " Warden " had embarked on a little venture on his own account, to beguile the monotony of existence

while in residence. Later on, the " old *Grey Cock* " of Deal is seized with ten cases of spirits concealed in ballast bags of shingle.

On the 15th February the *Fly* is off again, having " taken on board ten men, all noted characters (seven from Walmer Castle), and started for the opposite coast "—unbeknown, we trust, to His Grace. On February 11th the C.O., Holywell Station near Hastings, reports : " The *Stork*, R.C., Lieutenant Laurie, has just made the signal that he has made a seizure, having a Rye smack in company with a large tub-boat on deck." The said seizure consisting, we find, of 106 tubs and nine men; 200 tubs having been previously thrown overboard.

The unwonted activity of the Walmer smugglers is accounted for by an entry in the Station records, to the effect that " a boatman of the Walmer Station, Robert Bunt by name, was dismissed for receiving a bribe of £20 from smugglers, and arranging for a landing of goods on his guard, without the knowledge of his officer."

Early in March the I.C., Hastings district, writes : " I am informed there is a smack hovering about the coast with a cargo intended for some spot in this neighbourhood where they have tried before; and my informant says there are to be two boats, one as a decoy, and the other to work east or west of where she comes in, when the firing takes place."

Very suggestive, too, is an order issued by the new I.C. of the Folkestone district, on assuming charge, wherein he cautions the officers against " the practice of the smugglers when a new officer joins a station, or an I.C. a district, to give him, what they call ' a trial,' calculating on some relaxation of discipline, change of system, or other result."

Early in April warning is sent round concerning a cutter of about 80 tons, expected from Nieuport with dry goods worth between three and four thousand pounds : " She is supposed to be the *Eliza*, and has a new mast. There are three others over there of 35 and 40 tons."

It was further reported that several English rowing boats were assembled in the ports of Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and Gravelines, ready to take the first favourable opportunity of putting to sea with spirits, tea and silk goods. At Deal the open lugger *Fortune* was reported as having sailed with five men, a punt, a coil of new rope, and two anchors; also the galley *Betsey:* both bound for the opposite coast. Also a master boat-builder of Deal, called Maurice L——, was reported to have gone across to Flushing " for the purpose of freighting a vessel with contraband, the goods to be concealed under what the informer terms ' night soil.' " It is added that " Forsett of Dover and Brockett of Deal, two notorious smugglers, are employed by the principals in this venture."

Rumours of the intended reappearance of armed parties on the coast having reached headquarters, the I.C. of the Brighton district warns the crews, under date 6th September, that " an attempt will immediately be made to run a considerable quantity of goods in this district, and that an armed force will be assembled to cover the landing. A company was seen to the eastward last night." At the same time, the I.C. of the Folkestone district warns his officers " to strongly impress on their crews, when compelled to use their arms in self-defence, the worse than carelessness of throwing away their fire in endeavouring to intimidate the smugglers by firing

over their heads. The life of the party so acting often falls a sacrifice, while those brought against us gain confidence by our indecision. The men are firing at a party of hired assassins, who, by the very act of carrying arms in their illegal proceedings, have bid defiance to the laws of their country, and care little whether they commit murder so that their plans succeed, or by so doing they can escape capture."

The following orders were issued for the guidance of the mounted guard when firing occurred on the shore: "On a pistol being fired by the patrol on the beach the mounted guard are to repair to the back of the guard, but some distance inland. On a second pistol being fired they are to gallop direct to the spot, but if cut off from speedy communication by dykes or other causes, they will repair to such passes as their knowledge of the country tells them the smugglers are likely to resort to with their goods, or in retreat. When passing carts or other conveyances at night at unreasonable hours, in bye places and under suspicious circumstances, they are to examine the same."

The following description of "the notorious smuggler Charles Whitpain," who escaped from H.M.S. *Beacon* in the Mediterreanan, merits notice—

Committed. Dec. 20, 1833.	Ship *Beacon*, surveying ship near Smyrna.	Born Suffolk Place, Brighton.	Stoutly made, broad-shouldered. Has served in H.M. ships *Victory*, *Endymion*, *Caledonia*.

The same month a General Order reflecting little credit on those concerned appeared: "Confidential communications have in some instances become

known to the crews, who, it is to be feared, have too often divulged the particulars to the smugglers."

In spite of rumours and warnings, the winter passed off without any rencontres. The severe drubbing administered to the Sussex smugglers at Pevensey Sluice (November 1833) had not been without effect. Wherefore, baffled in attempts to force the running, the smugglers had recourse to bribery. And from an order issued by the I.C. of the Deal district we not only get an insight into their methods, but learn the precautions taken in order to discover cases of this sort. "The discovery of a bribed man can with ease be done," runs the order, "by looking to the mode of living of the men, and by ascertaining if the men off watch are really in their beds: as a case lately came to my knowledge where a bribed character (a boatman in this district) actually assisted the smugglers in working a cargo of fifty tubs upon the guard of one of his messmates after he had been relieved from day watch, and of course supposed to be in bed, for which he received a bribe of £10, and returned to his quarters ready for midnight relief."

The Deal smugglers are very busy at this time; and the movements of the open luggers *Po* and *Tally Ho* form the subject of a general warning from the I.C.; the former is reported as having been "cut from her berth on the beach at 4 a.m. this morning, with her crew concealed: she stood across to Calais, followed soon after by the galley-punt *Betsy* and the *Lark*."

The I.C. of the Brighton district warns the crews that "the smugglers have adopted a system of sinking small lots of tubs a little outside of low-water mark, for working in foggy weather." And later on,

that a galley of 45 feet keel is building at Barfleur for smuggling; also that "the *Robert* of Dover, but belonging to Sandgate, has sailed from Boulogne with 250 tubs to be run west of Beachy Head, having on board the notorious smuggler Jerry Curtis, Dight and others. She is 30 feet by 5 feet 4: has three lug-sails and jib, and pulls four oars."

That these warnings were not uncalled for is shown by an incident reported from Littlehampton, in the same district. On the 27th of October (1835) a run was effected there in broad daylight in the following manner. A raft of eighteen tubs was sunk on the night of the 26th, at high water, opposite one of the large groynes. When the coastguard were observed to retire to their quarters at daylight next morning, one of the smugglers, under pretence of shrimping, carried down a line, bent it on to the tubs, and cut them from the sinkers, and a party, under the cover of the groynes, pulled them up the sands. Two small carts were in readiness to convey the goods away, and the run was effected in less than five minutes.

Later, the crews are warned to be on the look-out for "the well-known smuggler, Henry Smith, alias Big Harry, on board the *Rambler*.

The winter months 1835–36 passed off quietly, without incident worth recording. But in October the I.C. of the Folkestone district warns the officers of "a company forming to effect a large smuggling transaction in the district. The avowed object of the informer being, as he says, to prevent bloodshed, he states that four men of desperate character are hired to secure two adjoining patrols, two to each. If they succeed, the boat is to come in immediately; but if they fail the run is to be

forced. The cargo is said to be principally dry goods."

At Deal a number of empty half-ankers are found, on information, buried in the sand, off one of the stations, " the contents," so runs the record, " having no doubt been run off by the numerous shrimpers, and conveyed by them in small bladders between their legs, or in hollow poles to their shrimp-nets."

The winter of 1836–37 passed off as quietly as the preceding one, the smugglers having, it would seem, abandoned the more daring methods in favour of a policy of circumvention. Thus, early in 1837 news came of a vessel taking in tubs at Dunkerque : " The smugglers will cover them with sprats, but they will not sail till they stink so much that the vessel will not be thoroughly examined." Attention was further called to the practice of small vessels and long galleys covering over their names when crossing for cargoes. The coastguard were cautioned to look for nail-marks, as proof of what the boats have been doing lately.

From Dunkerque a correspondent writes again, under date February 14th : " The smugglers from this place select their hours of sailing so as to get across on Sunday, as they boast that the coastguard are less vigilant on that day and night of the week." And on the 20th comes news of a French smuggling vessel, the *Aristide* of Barfleur, " built to resemble a small revenue cutter, for which she might easily be mistaken, as she carries a small four-oared galley painted white." The correspondent adds that " she will probably try Pagham harbour, Sussex, having recently landed a large cargo in Christchurch harbour, where the goods were conveyed over the mud at high-water in a flat-bottomed galley."

DIGGING UP BURIED TUBS ON THE SANDS AT FOLKESTONE

[After J. M. W. Turner, R.A.]

In July came news from Boulogne that "two white, eleven-oared galleys have been launched to-day from the smuggling depôt. They have two masts each. Six or eight Englishmen are with them, and they will take about 100 tubs each." And again, in November: "A tub boat has just taken in 100 tubs. There have been several Hastings smugglers over here lately."

The year 1838 is notable for having witnessed a great recrudescence of smuggling, together with the reappearance of armed parties, on the south-east coast.

In January news comes from Boulogne of a large four-oared double-banked galley, taking in 200 tubs, and soon after of another having taken in tubs "painted yellow"—possibly for rafting up tidal harbours.

On February 7th the I.C. of the Folkestone district received information of a forced run to be attempted near the "Ness": "The fighting gang belongs mostly to Ickleshawn and Breeds. The attempt will be made during the moonlight nights." So ran the information.

On the 23rd the Boulogne correspondent writes that "smuggling has been carried on here to a great extent during the past three months: over twenty vessels of different sizes have left with cargoes." Great activity is also shown by the smuggling galleys.

Again, writing on March 9th: "Eight tub-boats and three eight-oared galleys are quite ready here, also a lugger of 40 tons, employed to tow the boats across."

In April two forced runs with fire-arms take place at the Camber Station, in consequence of which the I.C. of the Hastings district issues a warning to the

crews: "As the smugglers have again had recourse to fire-arms, I have to call the officers' attention to the system I consider best, when a run is attempted by force, or otherwise."

Early in May, news from Boulogne that a white galley rowing eleven oars is taking in sixty tubs; also that a nine-oared galley is getting ready; and a little later that the eleven-oared galley sailed on the 19th, and the nine-oared galley is taking in tubs. And again in June the eleven-oared galley is taking in tubs at the same place.

That a great recrudescence of smuggling had taken place there can be no doubt. That the authorities took a very serious view of the situation, moreover, is evident from the significant fact that, in the Folkestone district, carbines were supplied for the use of the chief officers, in case of attack. The Collector for the county of Sussex, in his Report, declared that "smuggling on the coast of this county is greatly increasing; several cargoes of contraband goods have been run there, and the packages are in many instances conveyed across country to Kent and neighbouring counties, and even to London."

It would seem, however, from the statement that follows, that the running of contraband was chiefly effected by bribery and corruption, rather than by the violent methods which formerly found favour. Thus, the I.C. of the Hastings district addresses the chief officers in December: "You have no doubt heard with regret of the injurious effects caused by bribery in the districts right and left, and I have now to inform you that the smugglers are tampering with and tempting men in this district by the offer of considerable sums; and it is to their wives and daughters that these offers are made."

CHAPTER III

THE ALDINGTON GANG

"UNLESS prompt measures are taken immediately for making an awful example of those who on this occasion have trampled on every kind of legal authority, the smugglers on all parts of the coast will not hesitate on proceeding to the destruction of those employed in support of the Revenue." (Report by Captain McCulloch.)

These remarks, read under the mellowing effects of time, may appear somewhat sensational—the ill-considered utterance of an impetuous person, writing under the influence of panic. As a matter of fact they represented the deliberate opinion of a singularly cool and clear-headed officer, whose facilities for drawing sound conclusions were unequalled, and who was gifted with a prescience few of his contemporaries could boast. The extent to which these gloomy predictions were justified will be shown in the sequel.

The year 1820 was not only rendered notable by the daring outrage at Dover, but it marked the commencement of a new era in the history of smuggling—the reappearance, after an interval of many years, of armed gangs for the purpose of "forcing the runs."

Ever since the establishment of the coast blockade, a very fierce and dangerous spirit had been developing amongst the smuggling classes, who clearly

foresaw that, unless a desperate effort was made to smash the chain which was gradually tightening its grip along the coast, their calling was doomed. To quote the words of one of the most intelligent officers of the force—"The free-traders, finding it impracticable to elude the vigilance of their opponents, and driven to distress by the suppression of the contraband trade, had no other choice than a desperate resort to the use of armed associations; and several powerful gangs were organised accordingly."

In short, the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, with the expressed determination of Government to tackle the enterprising folk who had been so busy defrauding the Exchequer, seemed, instead of bringing peace to the country, to threaten a reversion to the state of unrest which existed when the Hawkhurst and other gangs had terrorised the countryside.

Signs of an impending storm had not been lacking. During November, 1819, there had been four instances of firing on blockade sentinels near Folkestone; and in no single instance had the offenders been discovered. Omitting minor affairs, there had been a very serious affray in March 1820, when Lieutenant Dickenson, of the coast blockade, acquitted himself so gallantly as to elicit the approbation of the Commander-in-Chief at the Nore and the Board of Admiralty. And at Stangate Creek, near the island of Sheppey, Mr. Francis Baker, Admiralty midshipman, with only one man to support him, was overwhelmed by a band of three hundred armed smugglers, and so desperately wounded as to be left apparently lifeless on the spot.

It was obvious that there could be but one result

of this return to the brutal ways of former times. As many an old smuggler afterwards declared, " It was that taking up arms that put the finishing-stroke to smuggling ! " This was foreseen by some of the more experienced and cooler-headed men, who had the good sense to withdraw from the business before it was too late. " Smuggling was all fair enough," people would say, and " there was no harm in cheating Government, because Government cheated you." But shooting and killing was quite another matter, and could end only in the gallows and the total suppression of the trade. These views found expression in some doggerel verses :

> " We all went down to the sea-shore,
> Our company behind, and the batsmen before :
> I thought that game would not long last,
> Our batsmen went on much too fast :
> For to kill a man is a very bad thing,
> When out on duty and serving the King."

The stern lesson the eighteenth-century smugglers had been taught, that the arm of the law, if slow to extend, clutches with a firm and sure grip at last, had been forgotten, and a repetition of the lesson was needful.

Of the armed gangs which now came into existence, the chief were those organised respectively on the north and south coasts of Kent; though this development of smuggling was by no means confined to one county. The Sussex coast was equally disgraced by the outrages of armed ruffians, who went about in large bodies. For the present, however, the exploits of the former will suffice to engross our attention. And when the story has been fully unfolded, with a wealth of detail only possible now that all the actors have vanished from the stage, it

will be conceded that few more sensational chapters of domestic history could have been unearthed.

Of the gangs above-mentioned, the most formidable, by reason not only of its numerical strength and organisation, but also owing to the strong yet mysterious personality of its leader, his strategic skill, and the system of cunning and terrorism combined, by which he not only managed long to elude capture himself, but rendered abortive, for a period of six years, all efforts to break up the gang, was that whose field of operations extended from Rye on one side to Dover, and at times as far as Walmer, in the other direction. And not the least singular feature of its history is the circumstance of its leader having been perfectly well known, while his confederates moved about the country, in pursuit of their several callings, without fear of arrest, though hundreds of people must have been cognisant of their guilt and the desire of the authorities to effect their capture—to say nothing of the substantial rewards awaiting the "informer."

So widespread, however, was popular sympathy with smuggling, and so deep-seated the fear of that retribution the smugglers had the power to inflict on all who ventured to thwart them, that the perpetrators of every outrage were sure of being shielded from discovery. For many a story was then still current along the countryside of the horrible punishment meted out to informers by the Hawkhurst and other smuggling gangs, in days not so long past that the terror their name was wont to inspire had been forgotten. The Government, moreover, was not so beloved amongst rural folk that the latter were prepared to risk their skins by assuming the detested rôle of informer against their own kith and kin.

Of the two gangs, the one organised in the north of the county was the first to take the field; though operations were commenced almost simultaneously in both divisions. But from the first the North Kent gang was somewhat heavily handicapped by reason of the peculiar character of the locality. The north-east corner of Kent, unlike Romney Marsh and the wild tract of country adjacent to it, was even then a civilised and populous district, with a well-to-do class of residents—people who, though very ready to wink at breaches of the revenue laws, were not to be terrorised, not even to be depended on to condone crime by screening offenders. Smuggling was one thing, but taking up arms against King and country was something very different; estranging a considerable section of the populace which would otherwise have been sympathetic.

The North Kent gang was recruited, for the most part, from Ickham, Wingham, Wye, Canterbury, and the Isle of Thanet, with the intention of working the coast between Dover and Whitstable. And there is reason to believe that it made its first essay at Stangate Creek, when Mr. Baker was nearly killed. The first affair when fire-arms were used, however, of which authentic details are forthcoming occurred on the night of June 16th, 1820, at a spot about half-way between Herne Bay and Reculver, where the smugglers came into collision with a party of blockade-men under Lieutenant Douglas, stationed at Bishopstone, when a midshipman and several seamen were wounded. The wounded smugglers were carried off by their comrades: no arrests were made, nor any clues obtained as to the parties concerned.

Encouraged by this success, the smugglers made

another "forced run" near Birchington Minnis, on the night of July 22nd. On this occasion, a horse and cart with its load of tubs were seized, together with five smugglers, who, the following morning, were taken before a justice of the peace for the town of Margate, and committed to Dover Gaol, when a singular display of sympathy with the smugglers took place outside the court-house, where an enormous crowd had gathered during the trial in the hopes of effecting a rescue. Beyond an assault on a blockade-man, however, and the use of strong language, no violence was shown, and the smugglers were placed in safe custody, the man who committed the assault being arrested and sent for trial.

But these affairs were mere flashes of summer lightning compared with the storm that was brewing and burst in the spring of the following year with tragic results.

Early on the morning of April 30th, 1821, a large body of armed smugglers who, to avoid suspicion, had assembled the evening before at a rustic fair at Herne Street, a small hamlet about two miles inland, came down to the beach at Herne Bay, many of them in a state of intoxication; and being opposed in their attempts to work a cargo of spirits by the resolute conduct of Mr. Snow, midshipman, who with a small party of blockade-men happened to be on the spot, one of the ruffians shot the young officer in the back, inflicting a wound from which he died almost immediately.

Such is the bare outline of the affair furnished by an officer employed at the time on blockade service. Since then many additional details have been gathered.

The smugglers, who numbered between one

hundred and a hundred and fifty, came down, at about 3 A.M. to a spot in front of the "Ship" public house, organised in three divisions, one of which began immediately unloading the boat; while the other two, carrying fire-arms, formed in line across the beach, at a short distance on each side of the boat, and, on the approach of the blockade-men, fired repeated volleys, to keep them off, until all the tubs had been placed in carts and carried away under a strong guard. At this moment Mr. Snow, who was in command, rushed forward, and, alone, attempted to seize the boat, which with five or six men in her remained on the beach. Meeting with resistance, the young officer pointed his pistol, which missed fire, and he was instantly shot at by three men, and fell, one ball having passed through his thigh and another through the shoulder, lodging under the blade-bone.

The unfortunate young man lingered on for a while in great agony, before he expired "lamenting that his life had not been yielded in open battle with the enemies of his country," pathetically observed a brother-officer, "instead of being sacrificed in a vile midnight encounter with a gang of outlaws."

No sooner was intelligence of this outrage received at headquarters than application was made to Mr. Birnie, the Bow Street magistrate, for assistance in tracing the offenders. A letter from the Law Agents of the Admiralty, dated April 28th, will explain what steps were taken:

"I beg leave to inform you that the Bow Street officers sent down to discover the persons concerned in the murder of Mr. Sydenham Snow, Mid., of the

Severn, at Herne Bay, on the morning of the 24th inst., have returned this morning, bringing with them a smuggler who was present at this transaction, and who immediately afterwards volunteered to Lieutenant Snow, the brother of the deceased, to give evidence.

" I have taken his information on oath, as to the identity of sixteen of his accomplices, against whom I have obtained warrants from Mr. Birnie, and a party of the police is about to proceed to Canterbury for the purpose of apprehending them. But as this step cannot be effected without the aid of the military, Mr. Birnie has desired me to submit to you the expediency of an immediate application being made to the Commander-in-Chief for an order to the officer in command of the troops at Canterbury to render the requisite assistance.

" The man who is supposed to have shot Mr. Snow is Morris L——, who, in the name of Edward M——, has served in the coast-blockade as a boatswain.

" I have, etc.,"

In the sequel five men were brought up for examination before Mr. Birnie, at Bow Street, on the 10th of May, on the charge of being concerned in the outrage of April 24th.

One of the chief witnesses called for the prosecution was a quartermaster of the blockade, who, after describing the circumstances under which his officer was killed, explained that, at the time the shots were fired, Mr. Snow was so hemmed in by the smugglers that, although he tried to rescue him, the fire was too heavy.

A smuggler, who had turned King's Evidence,

was next examined. He said there were about sixty of them out that night. They met first at Grove Ferry, and then went to the house of John Richardson, where guns and pistols were distributed, with about seven or eight rounds of ball cartridge. They then went and lay in a meadow at the back of some houses at Herne Bay:—that was about a quarter before three a.m.: the boat soon came in. He saw two blockade-men standing a few yards off who snapped their pistols, but they did not go off. His party then fired, and the man who snapped his pistol rushed in amongst them, having first drawn his cutlass, and he saw no more of him (this was believed to have been Mr. Snow). They landed sixty tubs. Witness admitted firing six or seven times, but said it was only powder, as he had torn the bullets from his cartridges. (Here the other prisoners smiled, and tossed up their heads in astonishment.)

Another of the party who had turned King's Evidence, describing the plans and organisation of the smugglers, who seem to have worked together like disciplined men, said that, seeing a man lying on the beach, he called out "Holloa"; the man answered, "I am a dead man." The witness did not stop to assist, as his comrades said it was only a sham. James West was master of the company and paid witness seven shillings for the night's work. He fired two or three times himself.

The prisoners were all remanded by Mr. Birnie for a week, and were removed, heavily ironed.

While the prisoners were under remand, some officers of excise, acting on a search warrant, discovered in a house in Broad Street, Canterbury, a horse pistol, a pouch with eight ball cartridges, and upwards of a hundred made and unmade cartridges,

together with the implements for making them up. The owner of the house said they had been left by a noted smuggler supposed to have been concerned in the affair at Herne Bay.

On June 9th, the five men charged with being concerned in the shooting of Mr. Snow on April 24th were brought up for trial at Bow Street; and the evidence having been gone into, the judge summed-up, and the jury, after retiring for half an hour, returned a verdict of " Not Guilty " for all the prisoners.

An officer of the blockade, commenting on this lamentable miscarriage of justice, remarked that " owing to the great lenity of the judge, the men were acquitted, upon the ground of some slight deficiency of evidence; and the authors have reason to believe that the actual assassin was living in 1839, and boasting of his exploit, in a parish near Herne Bay."

Though the perpetrators of this outrage went unpunished for a time, there is reason to believe that most of them subsequently came within the law's grip.

The unhappy young man who fell a victim to these ruffians was buried in the churchyard of Herne. His grave—formerly enclosed by a railing, since removed to enable a path to be made—is close to the west end of the church, marked by a stone bearing the following simple inscription: " In memory of Sydney Sydenham Snow, who died April 21st, 1821, in the 24th year of his age."

The summer of 1821 passed off quietly. Doubtless the smugglers concerned suspected that their movements were being watched, and that it would be well to lie quiet until the excitement had subsided.

The lengthening nights of autumn found the

smugglers on the warpath once more. "Encouraged by the immunity attending their attack upon Mr. Snow at Herne Bay," wrote an officer, "the armed smugglers of east Kent, soon after, made another attempt at Marsh Bay, near Margate, where they were opposed by Mr. Washington Carr, whom they attacked and wounded in the head by a cut from his own sword, which they had wrenched out of his hand."

From various sources, official and otherwise, the details lacking in this meagre account can now be filled in.

It appears that, early on Sunday morning, the whole coast in the vicinity of Margate was alarmed by successive discharges of fire-arms, the flashes being distinctly seen from Margate pier. Soon after, news was brought in that a six-oared galley, in attempting to land a cargo of spirits, had been discovered by one of the blockade sentinels, who instantly gave the alarm, when Mr. Washington Carr, midshipman, accompanied by one of the seamen, proceeded towards the spot and there encountered a party of smugglers numbering nearly a hundred, most of whom were armed, in the act of working the cargo. Mr. Carr and his men were repeatedly fired at as they approached; but, rushing in, they forced the smugglers to drop their tubs, and, aided by the fire of two other blockade-men, caused the whole party to disperse, leaving behind a musket, the stock and lock of another, two hats, a handkerchief, and several large bludgeons. From the quantity of blood that marked the line of retreat it was believed that several smugglers were wounded. No captures were made, however; the wounded having been carried off by their comrades. The boat also escaped,

with part of the goods; and it seemed as if, once again, the perpetrators of the outrage would elude discovery.

Happily this calamity was averted by the chance recognition of one of the party by a seaman of the blockade, who during the fight detected the face and form of a well-known local smuggler. The sequel is thus described by an officer of the blockade:

"One of the gang having been recognised during the affray, the circumstance was communicated upon the spot to Lieutenant Barton, one of the most zealous, able, persevering, and honourable officers in the service. He immediately perceived the vast importance of keeping secret the clue he had received; and on the following morning he applied privately for a warrant against the offender to the Rev. F. W. Bailey, vicar and Justice of the Peace, at Margate. The clerical gentleman hesitated to issue a warrant which would probably consign a fellow-creature to the gallows, while, as vicar of the parish, he (the Justice) was preparing to ascend the pulpit on the Sabbath morning. At length, however, he yielded to the urgent solicitations of Lieutenant Barton, and before noon the culprit was not only in custody, but had turned evidence against his confederates. The proceedings were then confided to Mr. John Boys, solicitor of Margate, who employed Bond, a Bow Street officer, to arrest several of the gang."

The "culprit" above mentioned—a man called Taylor—was arrested at his residence in Covell's Row, Margate, early on Sunday afternoon. After a brief examination he was remanded until Monday, when he was committed to Dover Gaol. From this man it was elicited that there were sixty persons concerned in the affair, fifteen of whom had carried fire-arms.

At the same time a notice was inserted in the *London Gazette* of September 11th, signifying that a free pardon was offered by His Majesty to an accomplice, with a reward of £500 by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, for the discovery of the persons concerned in the felonious affray at Marsh Bay.

The immediate effect of Taylor's arrest was to drive the incriminated parties into hiding. Meanwhile the leaven, in the shape of the £500 reward, was at work, with results that were little foreseen.

The next blow was struck on September 26th, when, early in the morning, James Rolfe, a labourer, was arrested at his house in Ivy Lane, Canterbury, by Bond, the Bow Street officer, under a warrant, backed by the Mayor, charged with a capital felony. The prisoner, according to the *Kentish Gazette* (September 28th, 1821), "immediately on his apprehension was taken to the barracks, and put under a military escort from this city to Margate, to prevent the possibility of any rescue (as heretofore) by the lawless gangs of smugglers to whom he was attached, and who are equally a disgrace to the country and the name of Englishmen. He was yesterday conveyed under a similar escort to the county gaol, Maidstone, to which he was committed by the Justices of Margate. This is the second offender in this transaction who has been taken and fully committed for trial at the next assizes. We are informed that the prisoner showed some signs of contrition, and was willing to make every atonement that disclosures of accomplices might afford; but the solicitor for the prosecution being already in possession (from a variety of good private information) of the names of most of the principal offenders, and finding the prisoner's name to stand amongst the list

of those who made use of fire-arms in the attack, refused to admit him to become evidence for the Crown; and especially, as he had made no offer to impeach his accomplices until he was apprehended."

Nothing further occurred until December 28th, when news was received of the arrest of eleven out of the fifteen men who carried fire-arms, two of whom had turned King's Evidence, and another was expected to do the same. A noted ruffian, called Daniel Fagg, was also "wanted," on suspicion of being one of the gang. This man had already, on one occasion, escaped from some constables who were in pursuit of him, by swimming a river, and had been heard to declare that he would not be taken alive.

The story of the capture of this enterprising burglar, as told in the *Kentish Chronicle* of December 28th, is too interesting to omit. "Bond, an active officer belonging to Bow Street, was not intimidated by his (Fagg's) reported threats, and undertook to go in pursuit of him. The name of Bond was already well known to the gang of smugglers, as he had previously apprehended six of them. Last Monday evening he received private information that Daniel Fagg was in a house at St. Mildred's, in Canterbury, where he repaired, accompanied by two able assistants, aware that he should meet with a desperate resistance, and to guard against an escape, one of these he stationed at the front door, and the other at the rear. Bond contrived to gain admittance to the house, but not without a considerable degree of management and manœuvring, and proceeded with all speed to search the house, having no doubt that Daniel Fagg was in it. In the lower part of the house he heard a noise which he had no doubt proceeded from the rattling of bricks: he followed the noise,

and found it proceeded from making an aperture through the wall under the cellar stairs into an adjoining house, which no doubt had been previously arranged and prepared to assist him in escaping. The officer found Daniel Fagg in a state of nudity except his breeches, in the act of clearing away the bricks to escape into the adjoining house : his state of nakedness was, no doubt, to avoid being held, and he made a desperate resistance; but Bond at length succeeded in securing him by handcuffs, and conveyed him to Margate, where he underwent an examination before the acting Magistrates, and from the evidence produced, he is suspected of being the man who attacked Lieutenant Carr, wrested his sword from him, gave him a desperate wound on his head, of about three inches in length, and afterwards threw the officer's sword into Pluck's Gutter. The Lieutenant was knocked down, and was supposed to have been killed with the blow."

This desperate fellow was placed, for better security on board the *Severn* in the Downs, to await trial. Further arrests followed; and eventually eighteen were laid by the heels, pending trial at the Spring Assizes for the county of Kent.

The Spring Assizes at Maidstone (1822) caused immense excitement in the town, and attracted vast numbers of people from all parts of the county, to witness the trial of the smugglers, which lasted the whole day. The proceedings may be thus epitomised :

On the 25th of March, 1822, Daniel Baker, John Buffington, Francis Carden, Joseph Clements, Daniel Fagg, Joseph Gilbert, John Gill, Stephen Gummer, John Fagg, John Meredith, Thomas Mount, James Rolfe, Henry Smith, Thomas Stokes, James Taylor,

Charles White, John Wilsden, and Thomas Woollett, in custody, were indicted, together with Stephen Lawrence, Henry Lemar, John Mills, and John Pollard, not in custody, for having on the 2nd of September last, with other persons unknown, feloniously assembled together, armed with fire-arms and other offensive weapons, in the Parish of St. John the Baptist, in the Isle of Thanet, in order to be aiding and assisting in the illegal landing and carrying away of uncustomed goods, and for having maliciously shot at and wounded Washington Carr, Thomas Cook, and John Brimen, being in the execution of their duty as officers on the Coast Blockade Service.

Mr. Gurney and Mr. Knox conducted the case for the prosecution. The prisoner Taylor, the only one represented by counsel, was ably defended by Messrs. Adolphus, Walford and Ryland.

Much of the evidence was necessarily a repetition of facts previously adduced, the only fresh points of interest being to the effect that the party on this occasion had been hired by a man called Lawrence, who had so far escaped arrest; and that, on the approach of the boat, the smugglers were divided into two parties, one of fourteen, armed, to cover the landing, and the other of about forty to work the goods. The operations were disturbed by the approach of Mr. Carr with four men, when a desperate struggle took place, in the course of which Mr. Carr and two of his men were wounded, while on the other side two smugglers, at least, received serious wounds. The affray, during which fire-arms were freely used on both sides, lasted about a quarter of an hour, when the whole body of smugglers effected their retreat with the goods. The principal

body of evidence was adduced for the purpose of tracing the prisoners to and from the scene of action, and of proving their possession of arms immediately before the transaction; the most important evidence being that of the four accomplices who had been admitted as "King's Evidence," and this, amply corroborated by independent testimony, went to fix the prisoners' guilt.

The prisoner Taylor endeavoured to prove an alibi, and several witnesses were called to show that he was two miles off at the time the affray took place. He was the first of the party who, it will be remembered, was arrested as the result of the Sunday morning conference with the vicar of Margate, and being a resident of that place, a great many "respectable" inhabitants were called on his behalf, and gave him an "excellent character," as no doubt he well merited from their point of view! Unfortunately for worthy Mr. Taylor, Counsel for the Prosecution put in a written examination taken by a magistrate's clerk, in which the prisoner had given a different version of his movements on the night in question.

Mr. Baron Wood summed up, and the jury, after a few minutes' deliberation, found all the prisoners guilty: sentence, Death. They were afterwards, however, reprieved by the judge, with the exception of Edward Rolfe, John Wilsden, Daniel Fagg, and John Meredith, who were left for execution.

The last scene of this grim drama was enacted on Thursday morning, April 4th, 1822, when the capital sentence was carried out on the four smugglers above named. The execution took place at Penenden Heath, near Maidstone, in the presence of a vast concourse of people. A Naval officer who

appears to have been present on this impressive occasion has left the following particulars on record: "The unfortunate smugglers appeared perfectly resigned to their unhappy fate. Wilsden and Meredith observed that it would be well if all men, particularly the instigators to the baneful pursuit which led to their untimely end, were as well prepared to meet an offended God as they, the sufferers, were. The parting between these deluded men and their families was truly heartrending. After ascending the fatal drop, and joining fervently in prayer with the chaplain, they repeated several times to the spectators, 'God bless you all,' when the dreadful bolt was withdrawn, and they ceased to exist. There can be no doubt," he continues, "but that these wretched victims were encouraged to the last moment by the hope of a rescue, either before or at the place of execution; and, as is always the case among characters of this description, they were abandoned by their associates from the first hour of their apprehension. There were about 40,000 spectators present at the execution, but not a sound broke the awful stillness of the procession, nor was a word spoken, except by the clergyman, from the gaol to the gallows."

On Monday morning, May 13th, fifteen men, being the remainder of the nineteen capitally convicted at the March Assizes, were removed from Maidstone Gaol to Portsmouth, for transportation: five for life, the rest for seven years: their destination being Van Diemen's Land, as the island of Tasmania was then called.

"This dreadful example," wrote a naval officer, "had the desired effect; for from that moment the heart of smuggling appeared to be broken"—a

statement, however, which could only refer to the part of Kent wherein these ruffians had plied their trade.

The man Taylor, the first to be laid by the heels, was arrested, it may be remembered, before the appearance of the offer of reward in the *London Gazette*. The remainder were captured subsequently; and it is in connection with the correspondence regarding the distribution of the £500 amongst the parties instrumental in effecting the several arrests that a curious sidelight is thrown on the manners and customs of the period.

Thomas Avis, one of the first claimants, had been once keeper of St. Augustine's Gaol at Canterbury, from whence he was dismissed; and from being supposed to be acquainted with most of the loose characters about Canterbury, was employed, in the early part of the business, in helping to apprehend one of the accomplices, who afterwards turned witness for the Crown. But as Mr. Avis appeared, on one occasion, at the magistrate's office in a state of intoxication, his further services were dispensed with. As he had already received a honorarium of £5 2*s*. 4*d*., his claim for further remuneration was disallowed.

The next was John Wixson, who was employed in the apprehension of several of the smugglers, and was chiefly instrumental in the discovery of John Buffington and James Rolfe; "but," observes the solicitor appointed to adjudicate on these claims, "it has been represented to me that in eight instances Wixson connived at the escape of several of the offenders whilst the officers were in pursuit." Mr. Wixson's occupation, when not engaged on amateur detective work, was that of

gardener, earning about three shillings per diem. While assisting the police, however, he was paid at the rate of ten shillings per diem. But as he had already received about £20, besides compensation for some windows, "alleged to have been broken," cautiously observes the man of law, his claim was considered to have been satisfied in full.

The next is a lady, Mrs. Everitt, of Canterbury, who contributed by her information to the apprehension of three of the convicted persons, viz. James Rolfe, Francis Carden, and Thomas Stokes, for which she was paid "at the time" she furnished the information, "as a *sine qua non* before giving it." Cautious Mrs. Everitt! These sums, amounting in the aggregate to £17 15*s*., were thought to be sufficient.

Having struck these rather shady claimants off the list, there remained the more deserving ones to be dealt with; and in adjudicating on their respective claims the solicitor observes: "The persons to whom the discovery and conviction of most of the offenders was due, were four accomplices: viz. James Justice, Samuel Kirby, Thomas Meers, and Thomas Powell. These men are therefore entitled to share in the reward offered."

Amongst those who, by their exertions, had contributed to the apprehension of the men, the most active was Mr. Robert Stride, officer of Excise at Canterbury. As, however, he had already received £250, his claim was thought to have been amply met. Another was a Peace Officer, William Meers, who was reported to have lost his life owing to his exertions, and whose widow and family were reported as "deserving of reward." John Reynolds, too, "has been ruined in business," ran the report,

" through the displeasure of his neighbours at the assistance he rendered."

That official consideration of the claims was conducted with no unseemly haste may be inferred from the fact that the " Scheme of Distribution " was not completed till November 8th—more than seven months after the conviction of the offenders. The £500 was to be divided amongst twenty-eight persons, in sums varying from £100 to £5; the largest sum being awarded to the widow of constable William Meers who died of cold, caught in consequence of his activity in apprehending the offenders: viz. £100. James Justice, an accomplice, who made full disclosure of the names of the gang, and did not carry arms on the occasion, received £50. Two other accomplices who assisted by their evidence to convict, £40 each. Thomas Cook, a seaman of the blockade who received a gunshot wound, and recognised Taylor, £10. The only other participator deserving of mention was a constable of Margate, " who was the means of getting several arrested by the conversations he overheard amongst those under arrest."

The most edifying part of the correspondence, however, was that concerned with the damage sustained by a Margate gentleman owing to his zeal on behalf of the Crown: a dangerous rôle to play in those stirring times, as the sequel proves.

Under date February 20th, 1823, the Crown solicitors wrote—with reference to the affray of September 1st, 1821, at Marsh Bay: " The gang was chiefly composed of the same persons concerned in the murder of Mr. Snow in the preceding April. It consisted of fifty-nine persons, the names of all of whom were discovered through the active agency of Mr. Boys,

solicitor of Margate. . . . The result of the measures taken on that occasion has been that, since then, the coast blockade have met with no serious interruption to their work, nor has there been any running of contraband goods under the protection of armed bands, as had repeatedly before taken place, to the destruction of many lives.

"In prosecutions of this kind," the writer goes on to say, "the offenders are only to be discovered by the evidence of accomplices, because the offences are committed at night, by numbers combined, all strangers to the officers and men of the coast blockade; consequently, unless the offenders are apprehended there are no means of identifying them. Thus the prosecution of Mr. Snow's murderers failed for want of corroborating testimony; but in the present case the difficulty was overcome through the diligence of Mr. Boys, Clerk to the Justices of the Peace at Margate, who zealously co-operated with my agents and discovered corroborative evidence to sustain the testimony of four accomplices, who it was found necessary to admit as witnesses for the Crown. By this means an alibi one of the prisoners falsely set up was defeated and the conviction of the whole nineteen prisoners secured.

"In this respect Mr. Boys' conduct was entirely the reverse of that of many professional gentlemen on the coast, one of whom not only refused to render me his professional assistance, when sought, but actually defended a smuggler prosecuted by me at the same Assizes, under similar circumstances, and obtained his acquittal.

"All this successful result," observes the writer, "is attributable to Mr. Boys."

As regards the loss and damage sustained by

Mr. Boys, owing to his zeal in the cause of justice, the Crown solicitors point out that, "as a solicitor, carrying on business for the past twenty years in Margate, Mr. Boys must have many clients more or less engaged in smuggling, who would feel that his action with the Crown would tend to the prejudice of their interests. I also know," continues the writer, "that several of these joined in the obloquy cast on him at Margate for thus embarking in the service of Government. One of his clients, who was supposed to have great influence over him, was actually engaged under instructions of the solicitors for the defence of one prisoner, to try and obtain from Mr. Boys a copy of the evidence of private examinations which had been taken against the prisoner, in order the better to enable the solicitor to shape his course at the defence."

The writer than goes on to notice the several departments of business in which Mr. Boys suffered losses, amounting, in the aggregate, to at least £300 per annum; and thus concludes the report: "Mr. Boys was during the proceedings the object of almost general hatred in the town and neighbourhood of Margate—that he was placarded on the walls as an informer and hunter after blood-money—that his house was frequently assailed and his windows broken and his person assaulted in the dark and the fruit trees destroyed in his garden in the night, all of which has been confirmed to me by the Rev. Mr. Bayley, the Vicar of Margate, and the Justices by whom most of the convicted persons were committed for trial."

Such was merry Margate, in the years of grace 1821–3.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALDINGTON GANG IN THE MARSHES

The North Kent gang took the field in June 1821. Its southern counterpart, the Aldington Gang, appeared rather later, on November 8th, at a point about midway between the "village of Sandgate," as it was then called, and the Shorncliffe Battery. Here, at about 11 p.m., a large boat, laden with spirits, tobacco and salt, supposed to be from Boulogne, came ashore and was immediately surrounded by a party of between two and three hundred men, who had been collected from twenty miles round, and formed into three parties: the most numerous to work the goods; while the other two, called "fighting parties," carrying bludgeons and fire-arms, were posted on each side of the boat, at a distance of about forty yards, and extending from the sea right across the public road towards the hills, so as to protect the men engaged in clearing the boat.

The affray began by an attack of several armed smugglers on two of the blockade sentinels, one of whom, James Walker, was wounded in the right leg, near the groin, by buckshot from a pistol; the other, Daniel Sheahan, being badly mauled with bludgeons.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Peat—who had distinguished himself at Lydd—the stormy petrel of the coast, an active, zealous officer, and a hard fighter of

reckless courage, who had been lying concealed, with his orderly, John Green, at the back of the Shorncliffe Battery, in expectation of a run, immediately rushed into the thick of the fray, meeting the fighting party posted to the west of the boat, one of whom shot him in the leg, while others fell upon Green, who was overpowered and bound.

Nothing daunted by his wound, Lieutenant Peat discharged his blunderbuss into the thick of the party, at close range, and then cut a way out with his cutlass.

The goods having been cleared—the work of a few moments—the smugglers retreated inland and dispersed, leaving the boat on the beach. A quantity of the run goods was seized next morning, at some distance from the coast, by two riding-officers. But no prisoners were taken, the suddenness of the attack having prevented Lieutenant Peat from collecting a sufficient force to deal with the large body of smugglers, the greater number of whom were disguised in smock-frocks and with blackened faces.

Reports of the affray no sooner reached headquarters than instructions were given to the Law officers of the Crown to send one of their agents into Kent to collect evidence with a view to discovering the offenders. Reporting his arrival on the coast, under date November 12th, the legal gentleman wrote from the Swan Inn, Hythe: "It is whispered in the neighbourhood that, of the smuggling party which consisted of about three hundred men, three were killed and a dozen wounded; . . . although the secrecy of the inhabitants of this coast is such as to afford us no certain prospect of success." And again: on December 4th, he reports

that one of the smuggling party was recognised by Daniel Sheahan—William Foster, a blacksmith at Sandgate, who had made himself notorious by repeatedly insulting the seamen of the blockade. Amongst others who had been abused and threatened by this fellow was John Horton, Quartermaster, stationed at Sandgate, who complained that for the last two months this man had abused him while on duty on the beach, and that recently he said to him: "Well, old gentleman, you are alive yet; but you'll not be so long; we are looking out for you, and you and another or two are marked." And again, on the morning after the affray, the blacksmith said to him: "Well, old gentleman, you got a good drubbing last night, you'll have another in two or three nights, and you and two or three more are marked: you'll get a ball through your head and then you'll not trouble us much longer." And on the night of the 7th November, while Horton was on the beach, near the blacksmith's shop, a musket was, he believed, fired at him, and when he got further east, a pistol was fired at him, as he was the only person on the beach at the time.

It appeared that Lieutenant Peat and his party, on their way back to Sandgate after the affray, had arrested a man named Byers, a gentleman's servant, dressed in a smock-frock, who was found loitering about in a suspicious manner. "His master," wrote the law agent, "will prevail on him to disclose information on his return to London, where he will be out of the influence of the smugglers."

It was further believed that a Lydd man had been recognised amongst the fighting party, and hopes

were entertained that some further clues might be obtained by means of diligent inquiry. "But," cautiously observed the agent, "as most of the inhabitants of Folkestone, Sandgate, and Hythe are in connection with the smugglers, and many of them are supposed to have been of the party assisting on this occasion, no information can be obtained or expected from them, tending to discover the smugglers."

As many of the smugglers were believed to have been disabled, hopes were entertained that some discoveries might be made through the medical gentlemen called in to attend; and instructions were issued by Captain McCulloch to some of the petty-officers to try to find out the places where they visited. "But this has hitherto been ineffectual," wrote the agent, "and I am informed that it is the practice of the smugglers to carry off their killed and wounded into the interior of the country for the express purpose of preventing discovery." And, after stating that the man Byers, arrested on suspicion, was too ill to be examined or to identify any of the suspected men, the agent suggests the offer of a reward of £500, which was advertised accordingly.

Lieutenant Peat's report of the affair, as well as the evidence of the other officers and seamen engaged on the night in question, throw an interesting light on the manners and customs of the seaboard populace of those wild days.

Lieutenant Peat stated that, on the night in question, which was by no means a dark one, he was going his rounds, from Folkestone where he resided, accompanied by his orderly, Green, and, having reason to expect a landing near Sandgate, he lay

DRAGOONS DISPERSING SMUGGLERS

down behind the Battery to watch. Hearing shots fired on the beach a short distance off, he ran down, meeting some of the fighting party, who called to him, "Keep off, you b——!" and then endeavoured to work round them, upon which several called out, "Shoot the b——!" and three pistol-shots were fired at him, which he returned with the blunderbuss. This had the effect of stopping the smugglers for a moment: they then called out, "Let's surround him!" and advancing in a semicircle, the first man struck at him with a bludgeon, which he evaded by springing to one side and firing his pistol at the man, who was dressed in a dark gaberdine, or frock. The shot seemed to take effect. The party having now surrounded him, he seized his cutlass, which was hanging to his left arm, and cut his way through backwards, retreating about fifteen yards to a house called Ivy Cottage, or the Kettle-Net House, where he reloaded his blunderbuss and pistol, and then followed up the party, who, having by this time cleared the boat, were retreating inland. Upon perceiving him, some of the smugglers called out, with surprise, "Here comes the murdering b—— again!" and made off. He then went down to the boat, which was lying half afloat and empty, with no one in her. Here he was joined by Mr. Bolton and a seaman from Fort Twiss, and they turned and followed up the retreating smugglers, who by this time had got into a field. The rear-guard, numbering about sixty, on perceiving the blockade-men, now turned about and, forming a sort of half-crescent, called out that if they advanced any closer they would murder them. Several pistol-shots were then fired by the smugglers, one of which wounded John Lardner, and the fire was returned

by Lieutenant Peat, who discharged both blunderbuss and pistol. Several shots were thus exchanged, the smugglers meanwhile retreating in a compact body, followed by the blockade party, and alternately halting, forming up and exchanging fire, and then retreating again, until they reached the top of the hill, whence they dispersed inland. It was now between half-past eleven and twelve, and on returning to the boat Lieutenant Peat found the wounded seamen and two Midshipmen. By this time the wound in his thigh which had been received early in the affray was getting stiff, and two riding-officers coming up, they carried him and the two wounded seamen to the Sandgate watch-house.

Equally interesting was the evidence of James Walker, one of the wounded seamen quartered at the Tower near Sandgate, and who, on the night of the affray, was posted on the beach between Shorncliffe Battery and a house called the Squire's House. He stated that at about eleven o'clock five men armed with pistols came down the beach where he was and told him to keep off. He told them to keep off, whereupon he instantly found himself surrounded by a large party of smugglers, one of whom made a blow at him with a bludgeon, which he warded off with his pistol, and knocked another man down with the edge of his cutlass, upon which the rest called out, "Shoot the b——!", and a pistol was fired at him, wounding him in the thigh. He returned the shot and a man fell, upon which some one called out, "A dead man!" and the body was picked up and carried off. The smugglers fired several shots at him, and he fired his pistol three times, and then dropped down, faint from loss of blood. Almost immediately after this, he

saw a boat come in, and about 250 men come down to unload it. He then got up and walked towards the Tower, meeting Mr. Shallard and his party on the way. He further stated that he could see by the light of the pistol-shots that the smugglers had their faces blacked, or covered with black crape.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE, AS PERFORMED NIGHTLY ON THE SEABOARD

A CARICATURE BY GEORGE CRUICKSHANK.

Daniel Sheahan, describing the treatment he received after being knocked down and badly beaten with bludgeons, said the smugglers talked of murdering him, and continued to kick and ill-treat him : his appeal to them, as Englishmen, to stop such cowardly treatment being unheeded.

The only independent testimony obtainable was that of Joseph Arundel, servant to Mr. Magniac, of Kensington, who was staying at Sandgate. He

said that, at about half-past eleven on the night in question, Thomas Byers came to the back door, opened the latch and wanted to come in, but he would not let him. Byers, who was dressed in a smock-frock, asked him if he heard the firing. Just before Byers came to the door a wounded man had come to the garden adjoining, and a servant from next door went to his assistance. Shortly before this he had heard a great deal of firing in the road. He further stated, that about a fortnight before Byers had come to the back-door, dressed in the same manner, with the lower part of his face blacked, and asked for small beer.

Incredible as it must seem, all efforts to discover the parties concerned in this daring outrage proved futile: the law agent having to return to head-quarters not a wiser but a sadder man.

It was never discovered who captained the smugglers on this occasion; though the excellence of the arrangements, by which so large a body of men were collected from a wide extent of country, at a pre-arranged time and place, without the knowledge of the revenue authorities; the masterly manner in which the parties were handled, and their retreat covered, to say nothing of the admirable arrangements for removal of the killed and wounded, not only gave evidence of a degree of discipline scarcely to be expected amongst a casual assemblage of rustics, but implied no mean powers of organisation on the part of the captain. Everything, indeed, pointed to the redoubtable leader of the "Blues" as the moving spirit in the business. It was subsequently ascertained that his right-hand man was actively engaged in the exploit.

And what of the wounded? It was a point of

honour amongst their confederates to convey wounded smugglers to some remote inland cottage, where they were well cared for, free of cost, until able to resume work. The surgeon called in to attend such a case could always be depended on to keep his own counsel: it was no business of his how the poor fellow came by a bullet in the leg: no questions were asked; and wise people minded their own business, and held their tongues. To have manifested too much curiosity would have spelt professional ruin in those wild, lawless days. As long as the fees were forthcoming, that was all a medical man need trouble about.

Encouraged by the success of their first attempt, the gang came down to the coast on the following night, November 8th, in even greater numbers, near Dymchurch, where, after surprising the blockade sentinels, and before a force could be assembled to oppose them, they succeeded in running the whole of their goods, consisting of 450 tubs and a number of packages, with the loss of only one tub and the boat. As for the latter, the smugglers attached no importance to it, boats of the description used could be built in France for about £40. And as the profit on a cargo of, say, 300 tubs amounted to from £450 to £500, an ample margin was available for contingencies of this sort.

And here it may be well to explain that owing to a heavy bond being required from all owners of boats on this side of the Channel—which bond was forfeited, together with the boat, if found engaged in smuggling—a number of English boat-builders had started business on the French coast to meet the requirements of the trade: a circumstance so notorious as to form the subject of a report from

Captain McCulloch. These boats, built chiefly by men from Deal, Dover and Sandgate, were from 38 to 40 feet in length, and of the lightest framing and of the cheapest materials consistent with safety; and were navigated under licence from the French Government on condition that one-third of the crew were Frenchmen. No less than eighteen were under construction at this time at Boulogne.

CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE OF BROOKLAND

THE next three months passed off quietly. There was no relaxation of vigilance, however, along the coast; rumours of impending operations on a large scale having reached the blockade authorities; and although it was impossible to foresee where the storm would break, the whole force was alert. "At length," wrote an officer employed on an adjacent part of the coast, on the morning of February 11th, 1821, "the Blues made their attempt at Camber, near Rye, marching down to the beach with twenty-five armed men on each flank, and an unarmed working-party to carry off the goods, stationed in the centre." Intimidated by this formidable array, the blockade sentinel fired the alarm, and, though the smugglers succeeded in landing their cargo, they were pursued into the marshes, and attacked by Messrs. McKenzie, Digby and Newton, midshipmen, assisted by some straggling blockaders. The contest was very bloody; the working-party of smugglers who carried the tubs being guarded as described on each wing by parties of armed men, who regularly halted, faced, fired, retreated, and reloaded, according to word of command given by their leaders. Still, the pursuers continued to follow the fair-traders for miles into the interior, pouring in frequent volleys, and the Mids. charging repeatedly sword in hand. "The result of this conflict," continues the narrator,

" was, that Mr. McKenzie, a fine, gallant young officer, was killed; and the two other Mids., with several of their men, were wounded. On the part of the smugglers, four were found dead on the high-road, while sixteen were carried away wounded."

Such, briefly, was the Battle of Brookland, one of the bloodiest conflicts between smugglers and Preventive-men that ever disgraced our coasts. And when the details have been filled in, with a completeness which research has now rendered possible, the reader will be tempted to ask, in the words used by James, the novelist, with reference to a scene enacted a century earlier: " Is this a scene in North America, where settlers are daily exposed to the incursions of savages? This could not have happened in England, within the last hundred years! " To which we would reply, this happened in the county of Kent, within the recollection of people with whom the writers have personally conversed, people who actually helped to carry the wounded from the field of battle.

The spot selected for the landing was on the southern shore of the " Marsh," about five miles west of Dungeness, near " Thanet's Watch-house," a spot offering many advantages, the great bank of shingle behind the beach affording convenient cover for the working-parties, out of sight of the blockade sentinels, and yet within easy reach of the margin of the tide. While at the back, the country was intersected with deep ditches, which, while offering insuperable obstacles to rapid movement, were turned to advantage by the smugglers, who, under the guidance of Marsh Pilots—" lookers," or farm-hands—were enabled to thread their way with ease through the intricacies of this region, while the

Preventive-men, impeded by heavy clothing, and the weight of arms and ammunition, and ignorant of the line of retreat, would often fall victims to their own indiscreet zeal, by immersion in a ditch.

Here, close to the blockade Watch-house, between two and three o'clock on Sunday morning, the fatal affray commenced; and in course of the long, running fight that ensued, two of the smugglers were captured, conveyed subsequently to London, and after examination at Bow Street Police Court (16th February) committed for trial.

At the Old Bailey Sessions, April 17th, 1821, Richard Wraight, aged thirty-eight, and Cephas Quested, aged thirty, were capitally indicted for assembling with several other persons, armed with fire-arms, at Lydd, in the county of Kent, and carrying goods liable to pay duty.

The principal witness for the prosecution was Mr. Newton, Master's Mate (a rank corresponding with the present Sub-lieutenant), whose evidence, from his having been in the thick of the fight, was of great interest. He said he was stationed at Thanet's Watch-house, about five miles west of Dungeness lighthouse, and had charge of the watch on the morning of the 11th of February. At about half-past two, while in company with John Thredder, he observed a flash to the westward; and they both ran in that direction: he, at the same time, ordering the watch to cut inland, for the purpose of intercepting the smugglers. He gave the usual alarm by firing off his pistol. On proceeding to the place they met two of his own party, near Hervey's Watch-house, and cutting inland towards the north, observed a large body of men apparently covering another body who were retreating inland. He

instantly called upon them to stop, and was answered by a volley of musketry. His party now lay down to avoid the fire, and the balls flew over them. They then discharged their own pieces, and pursued the smugglers, firing their pistols from time to time, which fire was returned by the smugglers during the whole time of their retreat. In the course of the pursuit they were joined by Mr. Jones, midshipman, and five or six men from another station. Messrs. Jones, Digby and himself were wounded, as well as Crockford, Churchill and Jackson, seamen. Afterwards they were joined by twenty other persons belonging to the blockade, and proceeded to a farmhouse (Lee's) near Lydd. The smugglers then halted, formed line, and fired upon them. They lay down and heard a number of balls fly over their heads in all directions. In this way a running fight was kept up for about five miles into the country; and whenever the smugglers got sight of the blockade party, they fired volleys of musketry at them, in consequence of which nearly every one of his party was wounded. After pursuing the smugglers into the public road, they saw two men presenting their muskets at them: upon which they ran up to take them, but they escaped. Following them up, several muskets were again discharged at them from a field on the left of the road: five or six of the smugglers were also posted on the right of the road. One of these, mistaking him for one of their own men, came up to him and putting a musket in his hand, told him to shoot, saying at the same time that he was done with the affair. He seized the man and gave him in charge of his party. At this time there was firing on both sides of the road. In the confusion, their party was divided, and he mistook the smugglers

for his own men. The smugglers called out, "Who are you?" and a volley was fired upon him. One ball struck a button on the waistband of his trousers, which split it, and cut him in the body; another ball passed through his frock, and grazed the skin on the left shoulder: he fell down, upon which the smugglers exclaimed, "The b—— drops!" He got up, and succeeded in joining Mr. Jones and his party. They lay upon the ground about an hour, and saw two men coming along, each carrying two tubs on their shoulders. They pursued them, whereupon the tubs were thrown down, and the men escaped. Some of the smugglers were found lying dead on the road. They then met another party, consisting of about twenty, some of whom were on foot and some on horseback: one of those on horseback rode up and challenged them to fight. A gun was then fired at one of the blockade-men. Several tubs of spirits were found on the field of action, and on searching the pockets of the prisoner Wraight they found some wet powder and shot. In consequence of a want of ammunition, they were compelled to return to a place called Jew's Gut Watch-house (now known as Jury's Gap).

The prisoner Wraight put in a long written defence, in which he denied knowledge of the transaction; and accounted for his being on the spot by saying that he left his mother's home on the evening in question for the house of a person named Baker, fifteen miles distant, and that on his journey he missed his way and wandered during the night, till he fell in with the Preventive party, who took him into custody. He accounted for having the powder and shot in his pocket by stating that he had been shooting rooks the day previous, and that by putting

his hands into his pockets, and then to his face, he had dirtied it. Several witnesses were called, who confirmed the statement of the prisoner in every particular. One of them, a publican, said he saw the prisoner in the early part of the evening, with the marks of dirt on his face, a considerable time before the affair with the blockade-men took place. All the witnesses joined in giving the prisoner a good character. Several respectable persons also gave Quested a good character.

Mr. Justice Park summed-up with his usual impartiality, and the jury immediately returned a verdict of guilty against Quested, and acquitted Wraight.

On July 4th, Cephas Quested was executed at the Old Bailey, for unlawfully assembling with others on the coast of Kent, and firing upon the custom-house officers in the execution of their duty.

With regard to Mr. Richard Wraight, he may not have been over-endowed with the bump of locality; but as the night was by no means dark, and the road from his home to Rye clearly defined, one wonders how he came to be in a field several miles to the westward of his course, in a country intersected with drains, and on the scene of a bloody encounter. The coincidence was singular, to say the least, and the jury gave him credit for being a much more unsophisticated person than he really was. As for the "respectable" people who came forward on his behalf, it is notorious that any number would come forward to vouch for a smuggler's good character in those days. All that can be gleaned about this man is contained in a brief reference to him in a letter from the Crown solicitors to the First Lord of the Admiralty, written the day after the trial, in which

the steps taken for the discovery and conviction of the offenders are thus briefly described: "The landing of the goods was effected by upwards of 300 men, of whom about 60 were armed with guns. The blockade party pursued the smugglers in the dark, over a country intersected with ditches, for upwards of five miles, into a spot within about a mile of the village of Brookland, where a conflict occurred in which Mr. McKenzie was killed. This occurred about five in the morning, before which period both the prisoners had been secured, on which account the Law officers thought it would not be desirable to charge either of them with the murder of this officer. The prisoner Quested was apprehended with a loaded gun in his hand, so that his guilt was unquestionable, and the prisoner Wraight had been secured about a quarter before four by George Mockford and John Nicholls, two seamen who had lost their party and who found Wraight in a field through which the smugglers had recently passed, and in which some of the officers and seamen had been fired at and wounded; but no arms or tubs were found upon him: his pockets, however, appeared to have been lined with gunpowder, and some partridge shot were found in them. These, the learned Judge observed, were strong circumstances of suspicion, coupled with the fact of being at an unseasonable hour upwards of twelve miles from his home. . . . The prisoner called witnesses who accounted for these circumstances by deposing that he had been sent in the evening from Aldington, near Hythe, to the neighbourhood of Rye, on some farming business, and that he had lost his way in the night, and that he was in the habit of carrying powder and shot about with him to kill rooks, and

this defence appearing to the Judge and jury as satisfactory, the latter, without hesitation, acquitted him.

" From private information, however, which I had obtained, but which could not be made use of as legal evidence," adds the writer, " there is no doubt but that this man is a leader of smugglers and was engaged in the transaction. . . ."

The only further allusion to the ingenuous Mr. Wraight occurs in a letter from Captain McCulloch who, under date April 26th, wrote : " One of them, who is notoriously known to have been a principal in the several attacks on our parties on November 8th, and December 25th, 1820, as well as on the 11th February, 1821, has been acquitted from a want of evidence. . . . I am very credibly informed," he adds, " that the acquittal of Wraight is considered as a complete triumph over the blockade, and over the law itself, as well as an assurance of their future safety. . . . Even if he had been convicted, they would have considered it easy to avoid in future, by a determination to rescue all who fall into the hands of the blockade, and which, even on that occasion, they might and certainly would have done had they known of their arrest in time."

The most interesting feature of this correspondence is the mention therein, for the first time, of the obscure Kentish village of Aldington—a place destined to earn a lasting notoriety in connection with the exploits of a gang of ruffians already alluded to under the title of the " Blues."

As regards Richard Wraight, we regret to say that all attempts to clear up the mystery concerning his personality and subsequent history have failed. The above occasion (February 11th, 1821) would

seem to have been his first and last appearance on the public stage in the rôle of smuggler. His name was, and is, unknown to fame in and around Aldington. Not one single person that we have questioned concerning him—and many were well acquainted with all the smugglers of the locality at the time of the affray—could give the least scrap of information about the man; the very name was strange to them.

In some sketches of blockade life, compiled by an officer who had been employed in that service, we are told, with reference to the Battle of Brookland, that "one half-witted creature, named Cephas Quested, was taken prisoner, and afterwards hung opposite the debtors' door at Newgate." Now, this is not only a gross libel on Quested, who would have been the first to resent the imputation, but a reflection on the learned Judge who passed the death sentence, and who would, most assuredly, have coupled it with a recommendation to mercy had there been any grounds for suspecting the man's sanity.

None the less wide of the mark were the versions of Quested's capture current in his native village of Aldington, the commonly accepted one being that he was found by some blockade-men, the day after the affray, lying drunk in a reed-bed.

The fact is, that from the moment of his arrest he was never seen again alive by any of his late comrades.

Whether he was deserving, or not, of the "good character" vouched for by "several respectable persons" at his trial, it will be for the reader to decide after perusal of the following reminiscences of the man, imparted by old people who had known him.

CHAPTER VI

THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN THE BATTLE OF BROOKLAND

CEPHAS QUESTED was a labouring man who, like most of his class in those days, increased his earnings by smuggling. Ignorant, and entirely uneducated, he had a turn for adventure which proved his undoing. For, being a man of spirit, he was persuaded to join the " fighting parties " on the occasion of a landing, when, having the misfortune to mistake a foe for a friend, he was captured, as already described.

A village ancient who was dozing away the evening of life in the Ashford Union contributed the following recollections of the man :

" Quested was a rough-like, drinking sort of a chap. Many's the time I've seen him come home drunk at six o'clock in the morning. One time I was out working in a wood where some tubs had been laid, when Quested and a man called Gardiner tapped one of the tubs, and drank till they laid down : they lay out all night—a cold, frosty night it was, too ; and when my uncle went to work next morning, he found them still lying. Gardiner, being a weakly sort of a chap, was dead. But Quested, who was a strong hearty fellow, seemed none the worse : he was just like iron, or he would never have stood it. When my uncle lifted up Gardiner's head, and said he was dead, Quested called out, ' Well, he died of what he loved ! '

" I can remember the time Quested was taken,

very well. It was a Sunday night when we heard of it : you see the tubs had been landed on a Sunday morning ; but Quested was a bad man for that sort of work, for he'd tap the very tubs on his back ! But, there, smuggling was mostly done for drink : the chaps would go out just to get money to drink.

" The same night Quested was taken, George Finn was brought home in a cart, wounded, along with Chapman and Giles. Finn was carried to his house in Church Street, just below Aldington church. It must have been about seven o'clock on Sunday evening : you see they had been kept hid away all day out of sight, and then brought along in a cart. The other two men belonged to Bilsington and were left there. Finn was a labouring man, and worked at Court Lodge farm—a very good worker he was, too, till he got in along with the smugglers. He got a shot in the thigh that night, but it wasn't bad, and it wasn't a great while before he was at work again. He was married, and had a large family. I was out along with Finn once, myself, working for some parties who lived down at Burmarsh. There was a ' pretty passel ' of us out that night : we met at West Hythe, and managed the business all right. So, you see, I knew the man well."

Another old man imparted the following : " I remember Cephas Quested quite well : he was a great, strong, blustering chap—rather a ' rough 'un,' as we call it. He was never at any place of worship, unless it was for a christening ; and then it took a lot of trouble to get him there. I've seen him lying about drunk, many a time ; but he wasn't bad company when he was in drink, he didn't get quarrelling, like some on 'em—the drink seemed to make him helpless-like.

"My father was out carrying tubs the night Quested was taken: he used to say it was a pretty big skirmish."

"I remember the time Finn was shot, down at Brookland," said another old fellow who had been mixed up with the smuggling, "for you see the chaps came and asked me to lend a hand to carry him into his house, the Sunday he was brought home in a cart, with a shot in the thigh and bullet through one hand. He'd been kept hidden away down in the Marsh all night—you see, it would never have done to have been moving about in the dark. He was tended by Dr. Everish.

"His wife went up to see him every week: I heard all that was said, when she came home, and got talking about him. He was given the chance of breaking up the gang at the trial—indeed he was offered his pardon if he'd only split on them, but he wouldn't. 'No,' said he, 'I've done wrong, and I'm ready to suffer for it, but I won't bring harm on to others.' You see, he might have 'diwulged,' but he wouldn't split, and so he suffered for what he'd done. He was an entire uneducated man, but he learnt to say the Lord's Prayer while he was in prison. He told his wife he would not have learnt that unless he had been there. The last time he saw her he said, 'We eat and drink to-day, Pat, and to-morrow we die': he used to call her 'Pat.' He seemed quite prepared to meet his fate."

"Quested was kept in jail a long time before he was hung," said another of his village mates; "so he had plenty of time to turn King's Evidence—that was why they kept him so long, but he said he'd die for what he'd done.

"His wife went up to fetch the body after he'd

been hung, and when it had been brought down to Aldington I remember going along with my father and mother to see it lying in the coffin; indeed all the neighbours went in to see it the Sunday afore he was buried. The coffin lay in the house where he had lived: in the end nighest this way. His wife took it pretty well: she'd not much care nor fear 'afore it happened. There was a tidy lot at the funeral, though nothing like there would be now-a-days, in the way of a crowd: indeed, it was just the relations as far as I remember. He was buried up at Aldington church yonder: there's no stone to mark his grave, but I know where it is, though there's been others buried into the same spot since.

"The place where he lived was like forest: there was bog, where you could hardly pass in winter-time: indeed it was 'uncultiwated' in two ways—land and people."

The antiquary will be interested to learn that Quested's cottage still stands—a typical Kentish home of a hundred years ago—with red bricks, toned and mellowed with age, and a lichen-covered roof—just such an one as Birket Foster loved to paint.

There was a tradition in the village of Aldington that on the eve of his execution Quested addressed some verses to his wife. Through the courtesy of Mr. T. W. Smith, of Aldington House, Margate, whose family were long connected with the parish of Aldington, we are enabled to present a copy of the original letter, supposed to have been written by Quested to his wife just before his execution: copies of which, after the manner of those days, were hawked about the country:

"*Newgate Cell, 30th June*, 1821.

"DEAR LOVING WIFE,

I am sorry to inform you that the report came down on Saturday night, and I was ordered for execution on Wednesday. I sent for Mr. Hughes on Sunday, and he and the Sheriff came in the afternoon, and, Dear Wife, they told me that it was best for you not to come up. Dear Loving Wife, I am sorry that I cannot make you amends for the kindness you have done for me, and I hope that God will be a Father and a Husband to you and your children for ever: and, dear wife, I hope that we shall meet in the next world, and there we shall be happy. And, Dear Loving Wife, I hope you will not fret, or as little as you can help. And Father and Mother, I send my kind love to you, and to all my kind Brothers and Sisters: and, dear Brothers, I hope this will be a warning to you, and all others about there. Dear Father and Mother and Brothers and Sisters, I hope that you will not frown on my dear loving children. Dear wife, I am happy in mind, thank God for it, and I hope you will keep up your spirits as well as you can.

"Farewell, my dear friends, I must away,
Death calls me hence, I can no longer stay:
Farewell, my truest comfort here below,
Christ bids me welcome to his heavenly joy.
Farewell, adieu! my grief,
To every trouble death is a kind relief.
Farewell, my fading joys, I go to prove
The endless pleasures of the Saints above.
Farewell, my pains, begone my rousing fears,
In heaven are neither grief nor tears.

All earthly happiness I now resign;
Vain world, farewell! but welcome joys divine.

"So no more from your unfortunate husband,
"CEPHAS QUESTED."

A touching memento of the smuggler, in the shape of a wooden snuff-box carved by him in resemblance of a Bible, while awaiting trial, is treasured by a descendant.

The Aldington Parish Register contains the following entry:—

"BURIALS.

Cephas Quested . . . . July 8th, 1821. . . . Age 32. Aldington. Performed by John Hollams Curate."

A previous entry appears to refer to the death of a son:—

"Cephas Quested. . . . May 5th, 1819. . . .Age 14 months."

The name frequently appears in the "Parish Relief Book," as in receipt of relief; especially during 1817.

It may be added that the widow found solace, soon after, in a second husband, and lived for a number of years.

"Now, tell us," said we to one of our informants, "did the hanging of Quested cause much of a scare amongst the smugglers?"

"Well, there was a bit of an excitement, just at first, for fear he should split; but when they found he didn't, why, they didn't care much: it only

made them a bit more crafty in the business; and they soon got to think themselves masters in the place."

The fact is, Quested was regarded by his confederates as a fool for being caught. "I am credibly informed," wrote Captain McCulloch, "that the smugglers consider the fate of this man as due to his own stupidity, as of no importance, and as not likely to occur again."

The actual spot where poor McKenzie received his death-wound was a short distance from Lydd, at a place called Westbrook. An old man who well remembered the affair stated that after being shot McKenzie wandered about for some time; having lost his way in the Marsh. At last he got into the Lydd road, and reached a cottage at Mydley, where a man named Burgess lived. Knocking here, he called out, "Let me in! I'm wounded." Burgess opened the door, and seeing it was a blockade officer, took him in and went off, at once, for a doctor from Lydd, and to get a conveyance to carry the officer back there. McKenzie reached the George Inn on Sunday morning, where, after lingering for a day or two, he expired.

The *Kentish Chronicle*, February 21st, 1821, contains the following: "The remains of Mr. McKenzie, who it appears was a Master's Mate of the Coast Blockade, were interred at Lydd, with Naval honours: the officers and men on the station attending the funeral."

The Burial Register of the parish contains the following: "John James McKenzie, buried 15th Feb., age 28, abode Lydd."

Local tradition affirms that poor McKenzie's

body was removed by his relatives for interment elsewhere; which seems to be borne out by the absence of any memorial stone.

A pathetic sequel to all this was chanced on by the present writers in the course of research, in the form of a document entitled:

"Petition on behalf of the family of James McKenzie, late a mid. in H.M. Navy, who, in the performance of his duty in the Preventive service at Lydd, in Kent, under the command of Captain McCulloch, was, on the 11th of February, shot by a band of smugglers."

The petitioner, who appears to have been the unfortunate young man's father, states therein that, "Having been deprived of his son, and the hope which he had entertained of deriving from him some assistance towards the support of himself and wife, and four unmarried daughters," he requests that some remuneration may be granted to the family for the irreparable loss they had sustained; adding that he had heard from Captain McCulloch that his son was on the point of being recommended for promotion.

Enclosed was a statement of the professional services of Mr. McKenzie: whence we learn that he entered the naval service in 1807: was engaged in two severe actions, and in the capture of the *Junon* and *Necessité*, French frigates; besides several important actions in the *Undaunted;* and that, until his death, he had never been off the books of the service.

One can only hope the application was successful.

It is only fitting that the "Casualty List" for the two encounters, of November 6th, 1820,

and February 11th, 1821, should find a place here :—

	Killed.	Wounded.
Nov. 8th .	3 Smugglers.	1 Officer, 3 seamen.
		12 Smugglers.
Feb. 11th .	1 Officer.	3 Officers.
	4 Smugglers.	6 Seamen.
		12 Smugglers (reported).

" The melancholy death of poor McKenzie was deeply deplored by all his associates; and by none more sincerely than his former commanding officer, who, by this record, has endeavoured to rescue from oblivion the untimely fate of a distinguished, amiable, brave, and excellent young man," were the words of a naval officer whose reminiscences have been previously quoted.

There now only remains the pleasant duty of chronicling the rewards bestowed on the young officers through whose courage and activity, on the fatal night of February 11th, the capture of Messrs. Wraight and Quested was effected. Their meritorious conduct was especially brought to the notice of the Admiralty, in the first instance, by the legal gentleman who conducted the case on behalf of the Crown, in the following words : " I beg leave to add that in the course of the trial the Judge bestowed great commendation on the before-named officers—Messrs. Digby, Newton and Jones, Mids., for their vigilance, bravery, and good conduct on that occasion."

By orders of the Admiralty, these young officers were at once promoted to lieutenants.

And now, for some unexplained reason, the activities of the " Blues " were suspended; their move-

ments for the space of four years being shrouded in an impenetrable mystery which the utmost efforts have failed to dispel. The only reasonable explanation is to be found in certain transactions that were taking place elsewhere, which, one may well believe, were not without effect along the entire seaboard. For it was in the year 1822 that retribution overtook the North Kent gang; and the punishment meted out to those ruffians may have damped the ardour of their southern counterparts, the "Blues."

CHAPTER VII

THE ALDINGTON GANG—(*continued*)

THE Blues, in no wise disconcerted by their losses, made another attempt to run a cargo near Romney; thus described by Captain McCulloch in his Report to headquarters, under date December 26th, 1821:

"A large boat made an unsuccessful attempt on the night of the 22nd to land a cargo of about 500 casks of spirits near Romney, when she was beat off, as was also the armed party of smugglers which had assembled on the shore to run the goods, by the gallant and determined conduct of Mr. Wm. Hry. Dunnett, Adly. Mid., and Mr. Wm. Higginson, Mid., and the parties of the Coast Blockade stationed on that part of the coast.

"The boat was observed in the evening, hovering under her fore and mizen Lugs, between Dymchurch and Romney and was watched by Messrs. Dunnett and Higginson, as it was supposed she would land to the eastward. About half-past nine o'clock she appeared to be preparing to run on shore when the officers sent the sentinel to direct the reserve of their party to the spot, and immediately afterwards she ran on the beach, having dropped an anchor outside, with a hawser attached thereto and leading into her bows.

"On her touching the beach the armed party ran down, one of whom, calling out to the smugglers in the boat, 'Tom, you're too soon,' determined the

two officers to board her instantly, relying on their party to attack the armed gang.

" Mr. Dunnett was wounded on boarding, but did not desist from his endeavours to gain possession. In getting on board he was again wounded and the smugglers succeeded in throwing him overboard, when they fired a wall-piece at him which was mounted in the boat's bows, and wounded him a third time. Mr. Higginson having in the meantime got hold of the bow, shot the bowman through the body, who fell to the bottom of the boat, when the smugglers called out to their party on the beach, ' It won't do ! ' and began to haul off, of which Mr. Higginson was not aware, until he found himself out of his depth. He then endeavoured to cut the hawser with his sword, but being knocked down with an oar, or the butt-end of a musket, and having received a severe blow on the sword-arm, he failed in his attempt and the boat having got her foresail set, put to sea."

From another source we learn that at this moment two volleys were fired upon the young officers from the fall of the beach, and Mr. Dunnett being in the water, wounded, and declaring his inability to swim, Mr. Higginson immediately swam to his assistance.

" Messrs. Cobb, Shiriff, Brooman and Miller, Adly. Mids., with their parties, were on the spot in a few minutes," continues Captain McCulloch, " and instantly beat off the armed smugglers, but they were not in time to assist the two gentlemen engaged with the boat, which was not four minutes on the beach altogether. Not an article was landed or moved from the boat, which must be attributed to the spirited conduct of these two officers. I beg to recommend these officers to the favourable consideration of the

Lords Comms. of the Admiralty. I herewith transmit a return of the wounded."

"ENCLOSURE

"Mr. Wm. H. Dunnett: wounded by three balls in the left thigh near the inner hamstring, not yet extricated but not dangerous: he has also received several severe contusions from the violence with which he was expelled the boat and thrown overboard, besides some slight abrasions from the passage of balls through his clothes.

"Mr. Wm. Higginson—received a slight wound in the right arm with contusion of the head from a violent blow with the butt-end of a musket or loom of an oar while endeavouring to cut the boat's cable: he has also several shots through his hat and clothes.

"JOHN WILLIAMS, Surgeon."

Both these young men recovered from their wounds and were promoted for gallantry displayed on this occasion. Of Mr. Higginson, Captain McCulloch wrote, "He is the only officer of his class (Midshipman) not served his time employed on the blockade, having been landed to fill a vacancy, being short of officers."

No prisoners were taken, nor were any of the parties concerned in this outrage discovered. The authorities, however, had very shrewd suspicions as to the moving spirit in this and previous affrays, and a carefully-laid plan was made for his arrest. But through the vigilance of his confederates he eluded this and every attempt to capture him for the space of five years, openly bragging of his determination never to be taken alive.

An officer stated, in allusion to the Battle of Brookland, that " this desperate affray considerably staggered the courage of the Blues; yet they continued to appear at times, skulking along in the dark, dressed in long white gaberdines, their faces blackened, and their feet muffled by worsted stockings drawn over their shoes, by which means they hoped to single out solitary sentinels of the coast blockade, and thus assassinate them in detail."

A more inaccurate statement could scarcely have been penned. So far from being " staggered " by recent events, the so-called " Blues " became more truculent than ever. Even while the fate of their comrade, Quested, was in the balance, these ruffians recommenced their old games, a party of them disgracing their manhood by a dastardly outrage perpetrated on a couple of wounded and perfectly helpless men, whose only offence was an attempt to carry out their duties in a strict and fearless manner.

The fact of one of the victims of this outrage being our old friend Lieutenant Peat—with whom, it may be remembered, we parted on the night of November 8th, 1820, with a gun-shot wound in the leg—lends additional piquancy to the affair, and shows that this energetic officer was out and about once more. For the following account of his next adventure, we are indebted to a brother-officer :

" Going through some lonely marshes on a dark night, attended by a trusty quartermaster, Lieutenant Peat detected an ambuscade of armed smugglers, one of whom he fearlessly seized, when a whole volley was discharged, which killed the quartermaster and badly wounded the lieutenant. The latter, knowing that no mercy would be shown to him, had the presence of mind to feign death by

lying motionless, when he overheard his assailants coolly discussing the question as to whether they should fire another volley at his body or not, one of them declaring that *Peat had more lives than a cat*, and would certainly recover if they did not make sure work. Thus urged, the smugglers deliberately reloaded their muskets, fired another volley at their prostrate enemy, and fled, leaving Lieutenant Peat still alive, but with *fourteen* gunshot wounds in different parts of his body!"

The scene of this outrage lay just to the eastward of Folkestone, near the Martello towers overlooking Eastware Bay. The circumstances are so graphically described by Captain McCulloch in his official report that they shall be quoted *in extenso*:

"*Folkestone, 7th June*, 1821.

"Sir,—I have the honour to acquaint you that the smugglers having desisted from any attempt to land on this coast for some time, and being of opinion that it was probable they would make a push to bring in their goods during the first quarter of the moon, when the tides would best suit their purpose, I sent a reinforcement of ten men to the Folkestone district and twelve marines to the Hythe district, on Saturday, and as it appeared to me that the west side of Dungeness was the most probable place where any armed force was likely to assemble, being the spot where our party was attacked on 11th Feb., when Mr. McKenzie was killed, and the wind being last night particularly favourable for the smugglers landing on that part of the coast, and in Eastware Bay, where I knew that excellent and zealous officer Lt. Peat would

keep a vigilant look-out, I left Rye last night at seven o'clock and remained on the beach between the Harbour and Dungeness Point until eight o'clock this morning, when I received a telegraphic message that Lt. Peat had been attacked by a large party of armed men in Eastware Bay. I instantly proceeded there, and found that this officer, having remained in the bay during the night and proceeding about daylight towards Martello tower No. 2, when he heard the report of a pistol which was fired as an alarm from Tower No. 1 by Mr. John Lascelles, Adv. Mid., who heard a noise in an adjoining field.

" Lt. Peat, accompanied by Richard Woolbridge, Q.M., Robert Hunter, and John Walker, seamen, immediately ran towards the spot, where they fell in with a large armed gang of smugglers retreating inland. Lt. Peat went up to the smugglers to ascertain whether they had goods, and on getting close to them found they had nothing. They called out to him to keep off and immediately discharged a volley of musketry which killed Richard Woolbridge, the Q.M., and wounded himself and the two seamen.

" Mr. Lascelles on coming up with his party found the Lieut. and the three men lying on the ground unable to stand, the smugglers having made off. Lt. Peat is most severely wounded, and from head to foot completely riddled with musket and pistol balls and slugs. Eight balls have already been extracted and he has received in all about twenty wounds. He is suffering very much, but I am happy to inform you that the surgeon does not at present apprehend danger. Hunter and Walker are wounded severely, but are doing well. Woolbridge fell

covered with wounds, two balls having passed through the lungs.

"This is the second time that Lt. Peat has been severely wounded in the gallant discharge of his duty within a very short time: he has been my chief support, and in all cases when courage and steady conduct were particularly necessary: I am now deprived of his services, on which I could at all times rely, and I trust I may be permitted to express my most anxious hope that my Lords Coms. of the Admiralty may consider him deserving of their favour and support.

"The boat which the smugglers expected did not come in, but I think it is probable she will make an attempt in the same place to-night, and I shall be on the spot myself.

"I herewith transmit a list of the killed and wounded.

"I have, &c.

"H. McCulloch."

"Enclosure.

"Lieut. David Peat,—most severely wounded, having received a pistol ball through the outside of the left leg, another through the outside of the right knee joint, and two buckshot wounds in the upper and outer part of the same thigh: a musket ball through the calf of the left leg, and a musket ball and buckshot lodged in the metatarsal bones of the same foot. In the upper extremities a pistol ball through the wrist joint and back of the right hand, another over the head of the radius and following its course, and a buckshot wound over the elbow-joint running downwards, another above the elbow-

joint across the outer surface of the right arm, and a third across the muscles of the same arm : on the back part of same shoulder a fourth. The left arm slightly wounded with a similar shot.

" Robert Hunter,—wounded by a pistol ball which struck the right tibia and became flattened against the surface of the cone.

" John Walker,—wounded in the left hip by a pistol ball which entered anteriorly, and passing posteriorly was extracted from the outer part of the right nates.

" Richard Woolbridge,—killed.

" JOHN WILLIAMS, Surgeon."

At a coroner's inquest upon the body of Woolbridge, a verdict of " Wilful murder " was returned against some persons unknown. " The deceased," observed a contemporary, " was a man of brave and exemplary character, had long served in the Navy, and was universally respected by his officers."

And what of Lieutenant Peat? " To the utter discomforture of the free-traders, he recovered, was promoted and pensioned by the Admiralty, and he astonished the inhabitants of Folkestone by appearing at the theatre in his uniform as a Commander," wrote a brother-officer.

" For his gallant conduct and sufferings he was advanced to the rank of Commander, by commission bearing date the day of the occurrence ; and awarded, 29th July, 1822, a pension of £91 5*s*. per annum." [1] His subsequent career was uneventful. On recovery

[1] Captain Boteler writes in his autobiography, in allusion to this affair : " He was supposed to be lamed for life. I knew him well, as he was staying with us at Canterbury, and at that time was able to get about with the help of a stick : one shot was still embedded in the leg and could not be got at."

he was employed as Inspecting Commander of the Coastguard, in the Hastings district, from July 1836 to 1839; and again from March 1840 till promoted to Captain, January 1st, 1847. His reminiscences would have been a valuable contribution to an " Adventure Series."

The smugglers lay quiet till November 10th, when another attack in force was made close to the scene of their first exploit, at Sandgate, the tactics pursued being very similar to those so successfully employed on former occasions. And, although the smugglers managed to run a portion of their goods, the smartness with which the blockade-men turned out enabled much booty to be secured. Unhappily there was further loss of life, while many were severely wounded. The following account may be accepted as authentic.

" Another and very daring affair (when the brightness of the morning is taken into account) with smugglers took place at Sandgate on Saturday morning. It appears that at about a quarter-past two on the morning of November 10th a large boat put on shore a few yards to the westward of Sandgate Castle, and was at once attended by a body of about 300 smugglers, a number of whom were armed with guns and pistols. An alarm was at once given by the blockade sentinel on duty, on which Thomas Moore, master-at-arms, left the watch-house with five seamen, and when within pistol shot they were received with several ill-directed volleys, which they returned on the smugglers, who in the space of a few minutes had discharged the cargo, consisting it is supposed, of about 300 parcels. The blockade party being now reinforced by the arrival of Mr. Lowry, Admiralty Mate, with four men, followed

up the smugglers, who retreated up the Military road, leading to the Artillery Barracks, leaving behind them 34 half-ankers and one package of tea, which, together with the boat were secured and left in charge of Moore.

" Mr. Lowry, after following up the smugglers for some distance, brought them to action on the heights above Sandgate, and in the course of the affray that ensued was severely wounded in the right thigh and slightly in the breast : two of the seamen were also slightly wounded. Nothing daunted, however, Mr. Lowry with his party continued to pursue the retreating smugglers till, from the stiffness of the wounded limb, the ball having injured the hamstring, he was obliged to stop.

" On the alarm reaching No. 4 Tower, Mr. Shallard, Master's Mate, who had only come off duty at twelve o'clock, and had retired to rest, set off with his party to endeavour to intercept the smugglers inland : but, from the distance of his station, and the time necessarily occupied, this officer's zealous efforts were ineffectual, although he continued his search from three o'clock until half-past seven."

The riding-officers, and the parties of the 9th Lancers on the coast duty, had by means of false information been drawn off to the westward and there detained all night, but on the return of Mr. Eleazer Mowle to his house, about eight o'clock in the morning, he received such information as induced him immediately to proceed to a " shave " near Postling, about five miles from the coast, with a small party of Lancers, where they found four lots of tubs, amounting to 170 in all. On the approach of the officer two men were seen to quit the spot, one of whom, Richard Rolfe, of Lympne, was taken,

and had in his possession a pistol, powder-horn and slugs. Rolfe was conveyed to Hythe, and after examination before Wm. Deedes, Esq., was committed for safety to Hythe Gaol.

During Sunday a great number of suspicious characters were observed in the town, and apprehending that an attempt at rescue might be made, in the same manner as had been successfully carried out at Dover the year previously, the magistrates, for more perfect security, authorised the removal of the prisoner to the barracks of the Royal Staff Corps, picquets of which regiment patrolled the streets during the night.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MURDER OF QUARTERMASTER MORGAN, AT DOVER, AND ITS SEQUEL

PASSING over an interval of more than four years, we come to the year 1826, when, as if to make up for past inactivity, the gang broke out again with redoubled violence, perpetrating, in rapid succession, a series of outrages culminating in the murder of a quartermaster of the blockade; and, by filling up the cup of their guilt, fixing the authorities in a determination to track out and exterminate the ruffianly band.

Passing over certain minor affairs, such, for example, as the shooting of John Howlihan, a seaman of the blockade, during the winter of 1825, who, we learn from the register of Dymchurch parish, met his death at the hands of smugglers, we come to the official announcement of the "Blues'" reappearance, in a letter from Captain McCulloch, under date March 14th, 1826: "The armed parties of smugglers are again appearing on the coast within the limits of the blockade." And he encloses a letter from Lieutenant Hellard, to the following effect:

"About 1.30 a.m., on March 11th, a galley landed all but four tubs on the west end of Fort Twiss station. The sentinel stationed at the point of landing flashed his pistol as an alarm, and then retreated before a large body of armed smugglers. James Coghlin, a 'landsman' in the blockade service,

the next sentinel to the eastward of the spot, seeing the boat, ran to it, and although opposed to about forty armed men, rushed in amongst them and fired his musket. The smugglers then opened fire on him and he was wounded severely on the head, left shoulder and under the right eye: the effects of which felled him to the ground, when he was seized by the smugglers and dragged a short distance up the beach, but succeeded in getting from their grasp, though bleeding profusely, and followed them up, firing his musket. Others of the blockade party now came up, while the working party, which was between the two fighting gangs, carried up the goods, the blockade-men exchanging fire with the smugglers, who, however, kept the sentinels from the west at bay until the cargo, principally consisting of dry-goods, was got clear away."

The letter concludes with the following significant statement: "These public robbers belong to the parish of Aldington, and are headed by George Ransley, a smuggler of notoriety in this neighbourhood."

Two days later, Lieutenant Hellard reported another attempt to break through the blockade, on the west side of Dungeness, not far from the scene of the fatal affray of February 1821. It appears that Lieutenant Strugnell, the officer of the station, suspecting, from information received, that a run would be attempted, rowed round in his galley off the spot till 1.30 a.m., when, seeing a blue light to seaward from a lugger, he chased it till 3.30, when, on hearing an alarm from the shore, he rowed in to the spot, where a galley was found on the beach having run at least 200 tubs. This had been accomplished owing to the sentinel on guard (who was discovered with a bruise on the head, and stated that

he had been secured and carried off his guard), not having fired the alarm. The galley was forty-four feet long, rowed ten oars, and carried two sails. It was seized, together with eleven half-ankers.

It was evident that the gang meant business, and that an attempt was to be made to terrorise the blockade-men, so that the smugglers might, in future, be at liberty to carry on their operations without interference. It was imperative, therefore, that these desperadoes should be taught a lesson.

The Government forces were now thoroughly on their mettle. The officers in charge of the several stations were brave, capable, and active men, full of zeal, and jealous for the honour of their profession, and equally determined to "smash up" the ruffianly gang that had so long defied them.

That the crisis was viewed in the gravest light by the authorities is shown by a request made by Captain McCulloch for muskets and bayonets for the use of the blockade sentinels—"in consequence of the recent attacks by armed parties"; followed up by an application for "500 short pistols, to enable each man on the beach to have a brace, in order that, after firing an alarm, he may still have one to defend himself with; as in some instances the men have had their swords beaten down by long bludgeons."

A General Order issued at this time contains the following significant warning: "In consequence of the system adopted by the smugglers of appearing in armed bodies, the officers of stations are admonished to be present at these attacks, and are therefore to be on the alert from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m." Whereupon we find a Lieutenant Parry requesting to be superseded, "as his health will not admit of it." There was no room for valetudinarians in such a service.

The next attempt was at No. 27 Tower, near Hythe, on April 5th, at about 9 p.m., when a party of nearly 100 smugglers, armed with clubs only, came down to work a cargo; but were beaten off by the determined attitude of Mr. Eugene O'Reilly, Admiralty Mate, and his small party, who not only drove the smugglers from the beach, but followed them a considerable distance inland, keeping up a steady fire, which, it was supposed, proved fatal to several. The only man wounded on the side of the blockade was the sentinel at the point where the smugglers came down, who directly he fired the alarm received a violent blow with a "bat" on the right shoulder. Before retreating, however, the smugglers "flashed" off the boat.

The interest of this affray centres round the unfortunate death of Lieutenant George Dyer, R.N., who was accidentally shot by one of his own men. He was watching the beach near Fort Twiss, in company with a petty-officer, when, as they were walking together, a little before 1 a.m., firing was heard in the direction of Shorncliffe. At the same moment a man named Lemon who was on the beach as sentinel, near by, fired. The petty-officer at once called out, "You d——d fool, what do you fire for?" Lemon replied, "I did not know who was coming: I hailed, but there was no answer." "Were it so, if they were smugglers, why did you fire without an act of violence?" Lieutenant Dyer's orderly then called out, "Good God! Mr. Dyer is shot!" And it was found that the unfortunate officer had received four gun-shot wounds in the upper part of the body: Lemon being fifty yards off when he fired the fatal shot.

In explanation of the unhappy affair, it was

stated by Lieutenant Hellard that a message had been passed along the beach, just previously, to give warning of an armed party of smugglers being out; and furthermore, that several blockade-men had been shot and wounded by smugglers in the vicinity of Fort Twiss. Under these circumstances there was no doubt but that Lemon fired under the impression that he was about to be attacked.

No further smuggling incident of importance occurred till July 30th, when Quartermaster Morgan was murdered on the beach at Dover by a party of smugglers. This outrage, perpetrated under circumstances of singular daring, brought matters to a crisis.

In the disused old burial-ground of St. Martin's, Dover, will be seen by the curious the epitaph on the unfortunate Quartermaster, whose murder it was that roused the Government to a belated suppression of the formidable gang responsible for his death:

SACRED

to the memory of

RICHARD MORGAN,

First-Rate Quartermaster of H.M. Ship *Ramillies*, who was unfortunately killed while in the execution of his duties on the Blockade service, 30th July, 1826.

Aged 34 years.
Left surviving Mary his wife

Stay, Reader, stay, incline your ear
To know who this is buried here.
A husband dear, a brother kind
A friend to all the well-inclined.
In doing duty he hath gained.
The threat of some malicious men;
But those who serve their god and King
Care not for men or worldly things.
His death, was sudden, but we trust
In Jesus' arms he's now at rest.
No more in this vain world will he be tos'd,
Though many friends are left to mourn his loss.

The first public intimation of the affair was conveyed by the *Kentish Chronicle*, in its issue of August 1st, 1826, under the heading, "Another Dreadful Affray": "Early on Sunday morning (July 30th) a smuggling boat, heavily laden with tubs of spirits, arrived off Dover, and in a short time the crew, with the assistance of several other men, endeavoured to run the cargo. A man, however, belonging to the blockade service, peremptorily ordered them to surrender, declaring, if they did not he would fire: the threat was only laughed at by the smugglers, and the man immediately discharged his pistol in the air, while the smugglers unceremoniously set to work and removed the whole cargo, consisting of 200 tubs, which were secured by several persons on the beach, and the boat immediately put off. We regret to say, that the moment the Preventive man fired his pistol for the purpose of obtaining assistance, one of the men on the beach fired his also, and shot the poor fellow through the head. No trace can be obtained of the boat."

Lieutenant Hellard, in reporting the affair, under date 30th July, within a few hours of the occurrence, wrote from "The Casemates. Dover, 8 a.m.," as follows: "Richard Morgan, who met with his death at about 1 a.m. near the bathing machines, was coming back from the Townshend Battery, and when near the spot where he met his death, he observed a boat in the surf, and called out to Richard Prickett, 'What boat is that?' and immediately ran forward with the look-out man, when a party of smugglers armed with long duck-guns levelled their pieces at them and shot Morgan in the left side near the heart. Three shots struck him within three inches of each other, one of which appears to be a musket ball.

Prickett, also, received several blows from the armed party with the butt-ends of their muskets. A quantity of goods were got off clear, only thirty-three half-ankers being seized."

And in reporting, further, the same day at a later hour, he wrote : " There are a number of strangers, of the lower orders, at this moment in Dover; and I submit to you, Sir, the propriety of one or two of the most active officers from Bow Street being immediately sent to this town, which I am firmly convinced would secure the arrest of some of this lawless party."

The " Casemates," whence Lieutenant Hellard wrote, it may be well to explain, were used by the blockade party stationed at Dover as a barrack. That they were but ill-adapted for the purpose, may be inferred from the following statement concerning poor Morgan's death : " This was mainly due," wrote Captain McCulloch, " to the want of proper assistance being rendered by the party, owing to the extreme difficulty of egress and ingress from the quarters, so far up the cliff." And he referred to the circumstance of several other runs having been effected at the same spot, owing to the same difficulty.

No prisoners were taken at Dover on the night of July 30th, and it seemed as if the Government forces had again been bested; while the smugglers, elated with what they considered a fresh success, and confident in supposed security—the country folk having been thoroughly terrorised by these ruffians—seemed disposed to carry matters with a higher hand than ever. And really, in the absence of any organised force such as police, in rural districts, for the enforcement of the law and arrest of offenders, the

smugglers seemed likely to have it all their own way.

But influences were at work, unknown to both smugglers and Preventive-men, which in due course produced some startling developments. As a matter of fact, the overbearing behaviour of the "new school" of smugglers had evoked a spirit of revolt along the seaboard. Many who sympathised with the "free trade" and had been wont to regard the interests of the Revenue as a mere "Government affair" had been, first, alienated and then disgusted by the wanton outrages and bloodshed which now seemed inseparable from a "run of goods," and would welcome relief from an incubus that had become unbearable.

Meanwhile, the "Blues," nothing doubting a continuance of their good fortune, followed up the Dover outrage by an attack on some blockade-men at Fort Moncrief, near Hythe, six days later. The affair was thus described by Lieutenant Hellard, the officer in charge there, "As Lieut. Johnstone was proceeding along the beach, at about 1 a.m., on the morning of August the 6th, he observed two flashes when near the circular redoubt, and heard the noise of boats' oars. This was at once followed by the discharge of a musket to the eastward and westward. Lieutenant Johnstone at once ran towards the firing, accompanied by Joseph Shord and Robert Phelan, and on passing the west end of the Redoubt met another man belonging to 28 Tower, who called out, 'A fighting party.' On reaching the spot they found a large galley on the beach, and a party of smugglers working her cargo. A sharp and continuous firing now commenced from a large party of armed men formed up in a semicircle, the working party being

enclosed between each end and passing through the centre. Lieutenant Johnstone immediately ordered the three men forward, and on the first discharge of their fire-arms three smugglers fell, one of whom the Lieutenant seized, but being overpowered and his fire-arms discharged, Shord came to his assistance, when they (Shord and the wounded smuggler) fell from the bank, on which they lay, and the leader of the gang called out, ' Kill the b——s,' upon which the wounded man, who was dressed in a white jacket, fired his musket at Shord, but missed him, and turning round, felled him to the ground by a severe blow from the butt-end of a musket. The lieutenant, having by this time recovered himself, discharged his fire-arms again, when the smugglers began to retreat, leaving a man, who states his name to be James Bushell, wounded in the right knee-joint, together with fourteen tubs, in the possession of the blockade party. At this moment, Lieutenant Westbrook was heard coming up, cheering on his party, who at once pursued the smugglers through the marshes, where three muskets and one empty tub were found, the latter having been shot through the bilge, so that it is fair to calculate that the man who carried it was either killed or wounded."

Though the smugglers, on this occasion, saved the best part of their goods, they had the misfortune to leave one of their party in the hands of the enemy. And it was of this man that Lieutenant Hellard wrote, later : " James Bushell was wounded in the right knee-joint, which rendered amputation necessary. His present condition prevents the possibility of my getting any particulars from him, except that the party assembled at the village of Alkham, about four miles from Folkestone, and that he belongs to

the parish of Hawkinge, the adjoining parish to Alkham. I hope in a day or two to get some good information from him, as he appears inclined to be communicative. I regret to say," he adds, "that Wm. Spillane, ord. seaman, was dangerously wounded in the left arm and breast, and little hope is entertained of his recovery, but the wounded smuggler is doing well."

Meanwhile, the net which had been so carefully spread was closing round the incriminated parties, Lieutenant Hellard's suggestion regarding the employment of Bow Street officers had been acted on, and was producing excellent results, as the following letter from the Bow Street officer sent down makes clear. Writing from the "Packet Boat" inn, Dover, under date August 7th, this officer, after mentioning having met "the person named before"—whereby hangs a tale—goes on to say that he had heard of the affray at Brockman's Barn near Hythe, on Saturday night, August 5th; and that, although the smuggler taken on that occasion "says his name is James Bushell, I think it will turn out to be James Quested, who had a brother, or some relation, hung at Newgate [1] some time since. . . . I have no doubt he was with them who shot Morgan at Dover. The person I met yesterday with Lieutenant Hellard is making every inquiry to find who were the parties on both the last occasions, and I shall meet him at Lieutenant H.'s to-night in hopes they may have some information. Captain P—— (Pigot) and Lieutenant H—— are desirous that I should bring M——h to London. The prisoner, in the meanwhile, will, when able, be brought round to Deal and

[1] Cephas Quested, who was captured at the Brookland affair in February 1821.

put on board the *Ramillies*, and from thence to London.

" Your obt. servant,
" J. J. SMITH."

The mysterious allusions to " the person named before," and the individual denoted by the letters "M——h," will doubtless excite the reader's curiosity. A clue to their identity is supplied by a letter from Captain Pigot—recently appointed to the command of the blockade service, vice McCulloch. In this document—which the present writers were fortunate enough to discover—we learn that " a person named William Marsh has had several interviews with Lieutenant Hellard (Right Division) and offered to give information as to the persons actually engaged in the outrages in question, and as it appears to me that through the said quarter several of the offenders may be brought to justice, I have found it expedient to authorise Wm. Marsh to be supplied with a small sum of money for subsistence."

As a matter of fact, " the person named before," the Mysterious M——h, and William Marsh were all one and the same individual. The letter, moreover, gives a clue to the sinister influences, above alluded to, which were working, all unsuspected by the " Blues."

The affair of August 5 was followed by a brief respite, due, no doubt, to the capture of Bushell; for there was nothing so much dreaded by the smugglers as the capture of one of their party, who, in order to escape punishment, might, under pressure, turn informer.

Within a month, however, the gang were at work again, appearing in force, and with all their wonted

swagger, near Walmer Castle. For an account of what followed we are indebted to Lieutenant Richard Williamson, whose report may be thus epitomised: At about 1.45 a.m. on the morning of the 2nd September an armed party came down to the shore, near Walmer Castle, and hailing the sentinel stationed there, called out, "Don't fire, mate, we won't hurt you." At the same moment a galley was observed near the beach: the sentinel, Timothy Sullivan, "landsman," at once fired his musket at them when they fired twice and dispersed. At 2.45 a.m. James Ash, stationed at the Haunted House, in passing across the Turnpike road, opposite the Barrack gate, heard the noise of a large party of men coming along the high-road from Walmer. Two men were ahead of the main party, with a musket each, which they carried under their arms. He drew his cutlass and challenged them with a "Hulloa," upon which, they rushed up to him, and pointed their guns at him so close that he parried them off with his cutlass, calling out to them, "Keep off!" The two men then called out to the others, "Yo, ho!" and the party retreated towards the village of Walmer, upon which the two men with guns ran down towards the cavalry barracks. Ash pursued them, but lost sight of one: the other he followed and arrested near the Standard Boat-house. The man had dropped his musket, but it was picked up soon after in the road along which he had run, and when asked where his gun was, he pretended to be foolish and would give no answer: he also refused to give his name, or any account of himself, except that he was a native of East Kent. "I have every reason to believe," adds the lieutenant, "that this man and his party were those previously dispersed at Walmer Castle." It only remains to

add that the firmness of Sullivan and Ash was highly commended.

The capture of another of their party showed the smugglers that the fickle goddess Fortune had deserted them and gone over to the enemy. From the two links now in safe keeping—to wit, James Bushell and the man above-mentioned—the chain of evidence destined to bring the entire gang within the law's grip was slowly but surely being forged.

CHAPTER IX

ARREST AND TRIAL OF GEORGE RANSLEY AND OTHERS —END OF THE ALDINGTON GANG

As the weeks and months slipped by, without any response to the reward of £500 which had been advertised in connection with the murder of Quartermaster Morgan at Dover, the conviction began to gain ground that all attempts to discover the guilty parties were doomed to failure. But currents were at work beneath the surface of which the public knew nothing. The authorities were already in possession of two witnesses who, to save their necks, had turned King's Evidence.

But other influences were working for the destruction of the gang. For some time past there had been a traitor in the camp—a man living in their very midst—who, disgusted with the truculence of the smugglers, had now decided to place his services at the disposal of Government.

Naturally, not a whisper of impending proceedings was allowed to leak out. The coup was first announced to the world by the *Kentish Express*, in its issue of October 20th, 1826, under the heading "MURDER OF MORGAN," as follows: "This morning (October 18th) intelligence was brought to Dover that one of the party concerned in the murder of Morgan, of the Coast Blockade, had made disclosures implicating, some reports say twenty, others thirty, in the barbarous action; but it is certain

that eight persons are now in custody on this information. A reward of £500 was offered for their apprehension at the time, and a reward is said to have tempted the informer, an inhabitant of Deal, to come forward voluntarily and give information."

The statement concerning the habitat of the informer was entirely wide of the mark. So well was the secret kept, indeed, that not the remotest suspicion as to the identity of this particular individual, the chief agent in the arrest of the "Blues"—(the Aldington Gang of smugglers)—ever obtained currency before the present disclosure, in these pages.

So well was the whole affair managed that not an inkling of what was on foot reached the public until eight of the most desperate members of the gang, including their leader, the redoubtable Ransley, whose exploits had rendered him almost as famous, over a wide district, as the celebrated highwayman, Dick Turpin, had been swept into the carefully-prepared net and confined in the lock-up at Hythe, whence, after a Magisterial Enquiry, they were shipped off to H.M.S. *Ramillies*, to appear, in due course, at a London Police Court.

The scene now shifts to the heart of the metropolis, where, on the morning of Friday, October 27th, 1826, the redoubtable leader of the Aldington Gang made his bow to the public for the first time, and sensation-loving Londoners were treated to a most unusual spectacle. News having got about that prisoners of a very different type from those with which habitués of the London Police Courts were familiar, were expected at Bow Street, the approaches to that famous resort were soon packed with an excited crowd, eager to get a glimpse of

a real live smuggler. For popular imagination was wont to invest that individual with a veritable halo of romance, having associated his calling with a species of heroism which existed nowhere outside the fertile imagination of the novelist. Not since the well-remembered trial of the crew of the smuggling vessel *Four Brothers* at the Old Bailey, three years earlier, had Londoners been treated to such a spectacle; and they were not slow to avail themselves of it. Here is the scene as depicted by a contemporary:

"Considerable interest was excited at this office (Bow Street) on Friday morning in consequence of the news having been circulated that a desperate gang of smugglers had been apprehended in the county of Kent and would be brought up for examination. About half-past twelve George Ransley, Samuel Bailey, Robert Bailey, Richard Wire, William Wire, Thomas Gillian, Charles Giles and Thomas Denard, all men of fierce aspect, were brought to the office and charged with the wilful murder of William Morgan, a Quartermaster of H.M.S. *Ramillies*, on the beach at Dover. The prisoners were all dressed in smock-frocks, with the exception of Ransley, the captain of the gang, who was a very fine-looking man, apparently possessing great muscular strength."

The occasion, though lacking in certain picturesque accessories, such as the red frocks and other dainty touches which, besides enhancing the interest of the former trial, had enlisted the sympathies of the audience—the female portion especially—on behalf of the smugglers, was not without a touch of grim realism. There, for example, were the smock-frocks, the reputed "fighting costume" of

the smugglers; while rumour had been busy with the exploits and antecedents of the men, raising the expectations of the spectators to the highest pitch. Nor were their hopes of listening to the unfolding of a sensational story of crime in any way disappointed.

The examination of the prisoners was conducted by the famous Bow Street Magistrate, Sir Richard Birnie, and as the evidence throws an interesting light on many hitherto unexplained matters relating to the "Blues," it shall be given in detail.

Mr. Jones, Solicitor to the Admiralty, appeared for the prosecution; the prisoners being defended by Mr. Platt, a gentleman associated with most of the smuggling cases of those days, assisted by another very able "limb of the law."

The prisoners were then formally charged by Mr. Jones with the wilful murder of Richard Morgan, on the 30th of July, and also with unlawfully assembling in arms, with the intention of running smuggled goods, on the Kentish coast. On the occasion of the murder of Morgan, an inquest was held at Dover, and the jury returned a verdict of "wilful murder" against some person or persons unknown. With a view to establishing the charge of murder against the prisoners, Mr. Jones said that he should call a material witness.

Michael Pickett was sworn and examined by Mr. Jones: Deposed that on the night of Saturday, the 30th of July, he was stationed opposite the bathing machines at Dover. Quartermaster Morgan was the visiting officer of the party to which he belonged. After being at the station for three-quarters of an hour, witness saw Morgan coming from the westward; he walked with him on his

beat; presently heard some people in a French galley hailing some persons on shore; he knew the galley was French from her great length, and because it was unusual to see a vessel of that description on the coast. To the best of his belief the people in the galley called out, "Jack ashore," or some such exclamation. They hailed in this manner three times, and on the third occasion they were answered from behind the bathing machines. Witness then ran towards the galley, when he saw her approaching the beach. He took a pistol in his right hand, on full-cock, and stood by the bow of the boat until such time as he saw the working party surround the galley on both sides. The working party consisted of about fifty men, besides the "fighting party." The latter, who were armed and numbered six or seven, drew up in line on the beach at high-water mark, and the working party ran down in a line to the galley. It was the latter end of the moon, but the stars were sufficiently bright to distinguish persons at the distance of fifty yards. He next saw some of the men in the galley hand out two tubs and put them on a man's shoulder, upon which he called out to the party, "You ——, if you stir a peg I'll blow your brains out." Witness snapped his pistol, but it flashed in the pan: there was nothing in the pistol but powder. Morgan then hailed witness and asked him what boat that was: before he had time to reply, Morgan fired his pistol for an alarm. Morgan was at this time about fourteen yards behind the witness, and was in the act of running towards him. The armed party of smugglers then opened fire at Morgan and he fell. They fired a volley, and witness heard two or three

shots after the volley was fired: he was in the act of priming his pistol, when one of the armed party came up to him with a musket and said, "What are you up to? I'll do for you." The man did not present his musket at him, but turned the butt-end and struck witness with it, knocking the pistol from his grasp as he held up his hands to ward off the blow. Witness told him he was not afraid of him, and on the smuggler raising his musket again, witness drew his cutlass and cut the man across the shoulder, upon which he returned to his party, and the smugglers continued working the tubs. Witness then struck at another of the party, and believed that he must have cut him across the neck, as the man had only his cravat on. As soon as one man got a tub on his shoulder, he ran with it to the town, and other men came down to fetch more. Witness struck at another man, who snatched hold of his cutlass, to try to get it away, and witness drew the cutlass through his hands, when he ran towards the beach: he struck two or three more, and at last a man, who appeared to be one of the heads of the party, cried out, "There's no use in striking all the b——s', shove off the boat!" Witness kept the men from taking away any more of the tubs; thirty-three of which were seized that night and lodged in the custom-house: some contained brandy, others gin. He then ran to where Morgan lay, about fourteen yards off, and asked him if he was killed: Morgan only exclaimed, "O God." He lay on his back, with a pistol on each side of him. Witness took up the pistols and loaded them, and said he would have satisfaction for him (Morgan). Both pistols had been fired. He ran as far as the bathing

machines after the party, but did not come up with them. He then saw a man run across the beach, and thought it was one of the smugglers, but it turned out to be Peter Prendergast, one of the Quartermasters: he told him Morgan was shot, and they both went back and found the man dead. Witness told Prendergast he had got some tubs, but he replied, "D——n the tubs, let's follow the party." They pursued the smugglers, but did not come up with them.

Witness deposed that he observed the dress of the smugglers. The man who first came out of the boat wore such a jacket as the prisoner George Ransley had on, a sort of shooting-jacket made of fustian. The man who struck witness had on a similar coat: the rest of the armed party appeared to be in dark dresses, blue or black coats and dark trousers. The man witness last struck had on a red cap. Some of them had light green jackets, such as the prisoner, Samuel Bailey, has on now. Could not swear to the man who struck him with the musket: he was like Charles Giles, one of the prisoners.

At this point Mr. Jones said it was now necessary for him to show that some of the prisoners at the bar were present when the murder took place: to prove which it would be requisite to call an accomplice, who came forward as an approver. Whereupon, to the consternation of the prisoners, they were confronted with Edward Horne, the smuggler captured on the night of September 2nd near Walmer, who, after feigning imbecility, had consented to turn King's Evidence.

Edward Horne, described as "a good-looking young man," said he lived in Ruckinge, Kent,

near Ashford, and was a labourer: knew all the prisoners: was at Dover on Saturday night, the 29th of July last. All the prisoners, excepting Giles,[1] were with witness that night: was sent a message by George Ransley, and went in consequence to meet him that night. Met him at Lydden, at a public-house within five miles of Dover.

By Sir R. Birnie: Knew George Ransley for nearly ten years: had met him before by appointment.

Mr. Platt submitted that unless Mr. Jones meant to bring forward other charges than that of murder, it was not necessary for the witness to state the business on which these appointments took place.

Mr. Jones: "I do not mean certainly to confine myself to that charge: I have at least thirty distinct charges against the prisoner Ransley and I mean to bring several."

Mr. Platt: "It is not exactly fair, I must say, and not customary with the Crown, to excite prejudice against a prisoner in this manner."

Sir R. Birnie felt very sorry that his question should have been the cause of exciting these observations.

The examination of Horne was then resumed: He met Ransley between nine and ten o'clock at night, at Lydden.

Mr. Jones: "Witness, in answering the question I shall now ask you, you are not to name any persons but those who are present now. My object is, that the names of persons not yet apprehended shall not be made public."

Examination continued: None of the prisoners

[1] He had been wounded in the affray at Dymchurch on May 11th.

except Ransley were at Lydden that night. Met other prisoners there, and went with them to a place called the Palm Tree, about two miles from Dover. Met there with the whole of the prisoners except Giles: there were between fifty and sixty persons assembled there besides: from a dozen to sixteen had fire-arms. Samuel Bailey, now present, had a musket, and so had Thomas Denard, Thomas Gillian, Robert Bailey and Richard Wire. Ransley was not arrived. Proceeded towards the bathing machines, between twelve and one o'clock at night. A boat was on the shore. Witness and others who were armed, were stationed at the back of the bathing machines, near the road. Heard no hailing: there was a signal made by George Ransley to go down to the boat:—he shouted, "Hullo! Come on." Ransley was the commander of the party. There were pistols fired: that interrupted the smuggling party, and witness heard afterwards that a man of the name of Morgan had been shot. Witness himself was armed with a fowling-piece. There might have been five or six shots fired. Saw the man who was shot fall. The party with witness carried off about seventy tubs, but could not work the whole of the cargo, because of the interruption given by the blockade. Witness and the rest of his party were not engaged more than five minutes when they were obliged to leave the shore. Took the tubs to the Palm Tree and counted them. The armed party was in the road to prevent surprise. Ransley was with the other party who were counting the tubs. The parties were about forty rods apart. "The fowling-piece I had belonged to Samuel Bailey: I borrowed it from him: he usually makes up the ammunition."

After the tubs were counted they were put into the cart and carried away. Went nearly all the way home with Ransley that night. The tubs were conveyed to within nearly two miles of Ransley's house, but he would not show witness where they were concealed. Saw Ransley about a week after: he paid witness 23s. for the night's work. Does not know what the rest of the party received: none of them were paid in the presence of witness.

Mr. Jones here intimated that he did not mean to examine the witness any further, and Mr. Platt immediately rose to cross-examine him.

Mr. Platt: "Pray, Horne, where did you come from now?"

Mr. Jones: "I am really very sorry to interrupt the learned counsel, but I am afraid I must oppose the line of cross-examination I presume he is about to follow."

Mr. Platt: "If you, Sir Richard Birnie, as the magistrate sitting here, say that nothing shall be said against the character of the witness, I am of course bound to submit. If the prosecution are afraid of his character being exposed, they are right to prevent that exposure. Perhaps I could show that this witness is the very man who fired his gun at Morgan. How can anyone say he is not the man? I mean to say that none of the prisoners were present on that occasion."

Mr. Jones: "I have made out a case against the prisoners sufficient, I think, to call for their committal."

Mr. Platt: "The magistrate cannot see that there is sufficient evidence to send these men to prison. I consider it a great hardship that the prisoners, who have already been in custody so

long, since the 17th of this month, should now be committed on such evidence. Here is Giles, one of the prisoners, against whom there is not a shadow of evidence."

Sir R. Birnie: "You had better, Mr. Jones, produce any evidence you have against the prisoner Giles at once."

Mr. Jones: "I must send for a witness to the Tower."

Mr. Platt again urged that the prisoner Giles was entitled to his discharge. The warrant, he said, was for the death of Morgan, and there was not a shadow of evidence to implicate Giles in that transaction.

Mr. Jones: "I charge Giles with being armed, and near Dymchurch, on the coast of Kent, on the 11th of May last, when William Wynn was shot."

Sir R. Birnie: "Are you prepared to prove that case?"

Mr. Jones: "I will prove it within an hour."

A messenger was then despatched to the Tower for a material witness. The prisoners were removed, and the case stood over until the witness's arrival. After the lapse of an hour, the witness who was sent for arrived, and the prisoners were again brought forward, with a view to prove that Giles was implicated in the smugglers' concerns.

William Wynn, the witness, whose presence was required, was then sworn: Was stationed at Herring Hang, in the parish of Dymchurch, Kent, on the 11th of May last: was sent out about ten o'clock on to the beach. About twelve o'clock, a party of smugglers came to the Herring Hang house. A boat then came in: was about a hundred yards from her, but could not see her quite plain, or the

men in her. To the best of witness's judgment a hundred and fifty men came down to the coast. They were armed, and fired on witness : and witness fired at them in return : a volley was fired at witness while they rushed to the beach. On the second volley, witness received a slug in the face. Two of his assistants, Whelan and Regan, came to his assistance : the former had a shot lodged in his coat pocket. The smugglers escaped, but they left a fowling-piece behind them.

Edward Horne, the approver, again called : Recollected a transaction that took place at Dymchurch on Saturday, the 11th of May. Went to George Ransley's house at Aldington Fright for the purpose of being on the look-out. All the prisoners, except Robert Bailey and William Wire, were there. Left Ransley's house about seven or eight o'clock : went to Herring Hang, a distance of seven or eight miles, and got to the sea-shore some time between twelve and two in the morning. Thomas Denard was armed : Samuel Bailey, Thomas Gillian, and Charles Giles were also armed. He went forward to look out for the boat. Those who were armed were stationed at each side of the boat, to protect the men as they landed the cargo. Witness was armed with a gun : cannot say where it was got from. Ransley and Samuel Bailey are brothers by marriage : Ransley is married to Bailey's sister. The party ran from eighty to a hundred casks of spirits that night. Giles lost his arms on that occasion. There was firing on the beach between the blockade and the smuggling party while the casks were being landed. Giles was wounded by the firing. He was carried away into a little green field. Witness carried him on

his back. Ransley told him to carry away any of the party that might be shot. Witness carried Giles for forty or fifty yards, and then he walked a bit himself. On arriving at the high-road they met Ransley, who placed Giles in his cart and drove him away. Giles was wounded in the neck. Ransley paid witness 20*s.* for his night's work. The tub men were paid about 7*s.* each. "We generally spent the money we got at Ransley's house."

Sir R. Birnie: "Why, what house does Ransley keep?"

Mr. Jones: "He keeps a sort of public house; but I am informed by the magistrates that he is not licensed."

Mr. Platt: "Really I must say this is raising an unfair prejudice against the prisoner Ransley. I perceive that those gentlemen are taking notes. I am fully aware of the utility of reporting, but I fear that those loose assertions may injure my client if they go forth without comment to the public."

Smith, the officer, was then called: Took the prisoner Giles into custody at or near Bilsington, in Kent, on the morning of the 17th of the present month. He gave his name as Wood, but he afterwards acknowledged his name to be Charles Giles. Looked at his neck, and found the mark of a wound, which he accounted for by saying it was the effect of a blister.

William Spillane was then called to prove a third case against the prisoners: Was stationed in August last near Dymchurch, when he was wounded. Was on duty on the 6th of August: went out at dusk. At one in the morning saw two shots fired

at Half-east-road. Ran towards the spot, and saw two flashes. The first man witness met was Wynn. Saw a party of men on the beach, about thirty or forty yards off: thinks there must have been eighty to a hundred of them. Saw a boat near the shore. Two shots came from the shore: judged them to come from the boat. Ran up and the party fired very smart. Wynn and witness both fired, and the smugglers fired in return: was wounded in the arms and in the side. The shot was extracted from the back of witness.

Lieutenant Johnstone, the officer of the station, stated that the witness had been confined five weeks to his bed. Indeed the appearance of the young man, who gave his evidence with great difficulty, showed that he must have suffered greatly from the effects of his wounds.

Horne, the approver, again called: Recollected goods having been run on the 6th of August last, between Dymchurch and Hythe. Met at George Ransley's that night. George Ransley is called "Captain Batts." Proceeded in company with the prisoners, except Giles and Robert Bailey. There were fifty or sixty men on that occasion. When eighty or a hundred tubs are to be run, fifteen or sixteen men are required to protect those who carry off the casks. Thomas Denard, Thomas Gillian, and Richard Wire had muskets. Knew arms to be kept by Samuel Bailey. Reached the shore between twelve and two. Ransley was not armed: never knew him to carry arms. Ransley called out to witness and others to come up. Landed part of cargo, but were prevented by the blockade from landing more. Saw the blockade signals along the coast. About eighty tubs were worked

then. Took them up in carts, and guarded them for four or five miles. Was paid one guinea by George Ransley.

Lieutenant Johnstone recalled: Heard the firing, and rushed amongst the men who were working the cargo. Discharged a blunderbuss and saw two men fall. One of them (Bushell) has since had his leg amputated from the shot received on that occasion. An endeavour was made to rescue him at the time he received the wound, but he was finally secured. The night was so dark it was impossible to distinguish faces. Saw a man in a white frock. He wounded Joseph Shord. Pursued the smugglers into the marshes, and picked up three muskets: one of them was loaded with forty slugs: the other guns were broken. All the smugglers escaped, leaving fourteen barrels of foreign gin in the possession of witness.

The evidence being closed, Mr. Platt observed that he supposed the prisoners must be committed for trial. His advice to them, therefore, would be to say nothing at present.

The prisoners were then fully committed to Newgate to take their trial for the murder of Morgan, and also on two separate charges of carrying arms on the coast of Kent, with a view to run smuggled goods.

Mr. Jones having stated that it would be necessary to confine the prisoners in a place of more security than any afforded on the sea-coast of the county of Kent, as it was a notorious fact that the smugglers had broken open or pulled down every prison in that part of the country; Sir R. Birnie said that about five years ago they broke open the gaol of Dover at noonday, in the presence of several magistrates, and rescued fifteen of their gang.

An officer of the blockade who was present complained that he found a difficulty in inducing the magistrates of the Cinque Ports to back warrants against the smugglers, as it was said they were engaged in smuggling themselves. In confirmation of which may be quoted Sir R. Birnie's directions to one of his own officers, on sending him into Kent: "Ruthven," he said, "on your arrival in Kent it will be your duty to apply to some magistrate to back the warrants, and be sure you do not apply to one of the magistrates of the Cinque Ports, lest the object you have in view be thwarted by the party giving information to the persons accused, as was the case in a very recent instance, but go before some of the magistrates of the county, who are, I believe, most of them honourable men. Very recently, when Bond the officer went into Kent with a warrant to apprehend a smuggler, on going before the Mayor of —— to get the warrant signed, he was detained for some time, and the Mayor, in the interim, gave information to the wife of the smuggler, who immediately absconded." Sir R. Birnie said he had affidavits in his possession to support what he had stated.

CHAPTER X

TRIAL OF THE ALDINGTON GANG

By the capture of James Bushell at Fort Moncrief on August 5th, and Edward Horne at Walmer on September 2nd, two important witnesses had been secured. But, invaluable as their evidence was likely to prove as a means of securing conviction, *after arrest*, it was indispensable, first of all "to catch the hare." Before describing how this was effected, mention must be made of two other persons who rendered most important services: nay, without whose assistance the capture of the smugglers could never have been effected; but who were kept most discreetly in the background. One of these was the mysterious "M——h," otherwise, William Marsh. The other—who, by the way, has always hitherto been credited with the undivided glory of having betrayed the gang—was a native of Aldington, and personally acquainted with every member of it. Both these public benefactors shall be introduced later on.

And now let us step into the wings and learn something of the working of the various agencies employed in bringing about the *dénouement* to which a Cockney audience was treated on that October morning at Bow Street. For the arrest of these ruffians had been no easy matter: the net had to be spread well out of sight of the birds and with the utmost finesse. And even then, after every care

had been taken, the persons who effected the arrest of these desperadoes did so at the risk of their lives.

The first document to come under notice is Captain Pigot's letter of October 18th, 1826, announcing the capture of Ransley and his accomplices; and enclosing Lieutenant Hellard's Report giving full particulars of their arrest. Captain Pigot writes :

"With reference to my letter of 30th of July last, detailing the particulars of the murder of Richard Morgan, First Class Quartermaster, I have the honour to inform you that warrants having been obtained against the parties implicated; the same were entrusted to the execution of Lieutenant Samuel Hellard, superintending the Right Division, assisted by two officers from Bow Street; and I now have much pleasure in communicating to you that Lieutenant Hellard has succeeded in arresting George Ransley and seven of his gang.

"I cannot abstain from congratulating you upon this officer's success, particularly when it is considered that the leader of this ruffian band has defied the whole civil power of the country for the last six years : having repeatedly declared that he would never be taken alive, and completely baffling an attempt made about five years since to arrest him, when the village he lived in was occupied at midnight by upwards of 200 men.[1]

"I do myself the honour to enclose Lieutenant Hellard's report to me, detailing the occurrences, and I am most anxious to impress upon your mind

[1] This was probably after the Brookland affair. But prolonged research as well as careful inquiry on the spot have failed to elicit any particulars of this expedition. In fact there is some uncertainty as to Ransley's domicile at that time : he was a carter by trade.

my unqualified opinion of the energy, zeal, address and indefatigable exertion which characterised this officer's conduct upon the present and upon all occasions. I have therefore to request you will be pleased to recommend Lieutenant Hellard in the strongest manner to the notice of My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

"I further beg leave to acquaint you that the *Antelope*, tender to the *Ramillies*, will proceed immediately to Deptford, with the prisoners aforementioned, accompanied by Messrs. Bishop and Smith, officers from Bow Street, in order to their being disposed of as the case may require.

I have, etc.

"HUGH PIGOT, Capt."

Lieutenant Hellard, dating from his residence at Folkestone, immediately after returning from the "cutting-out" expedition, wrote:

"I have the honour to acquaint you that, in obedience to your orders, I, last night at 11 p.m., proceeded with a party of officers and seamen, previously assembled, from Fort Moncrief, accompanied by the two police officers named in the margin (Bishop and Smith), and having marched in the direction of Aldington, reached that place about 3 a.m. this morning: no time was lost in making the necessary arrangements, so that every house in which I expected to arrest a prisoner was surrounded by sentinels nearly at the same moment. I then instantly advanced to the dwelling of George Ransley, the leader of this ruffian band, and was fortunate enough to get so close to his house before his dogs were disturbed that he had not time to

leave his bed: the dogs were cut down, and his door forced, when I rushed in, and had the satisfaction to seize this man in his bedroom. Having handcuffed him to one of the stoutest men in the party, I proceeded to the other houses, and was equally successful in arresting seven others of the gang, whose names I subjoin.

"On my return to Fort Moncrief at 8 a.m., I immediately embarked the prisoners on board the *Industry*, for a passage to the *Ramillies*, where I presume they will arrive as soon as this reaches Deal.

"Before I conclude this report I consider it a most particular part of my duty to inform you, that the conduct of the officers and men employed under my directions on this service was most exemplary throughout the night, and during a most fatiguing march of nearly thirty miles.

"I have, etc.,

SAMUEL HELLARD, Div. Lieut.

"Names of the men arrested:

George Ransley	Aged 44	years.
Samuel Bailey	,, 36	,,
*Charles Giles	,, 28	,,
Thomas Denard	,, 21	,,
Robert Bailey	,, 30	,,
Thomas Gillian (alias Datchet Grey)	,, 24	,,
William Wire	,, 17	,,
Richard Wire	,, 19	,,

"* This man was wounded in the neck at the Herring Hang, on Dymchurch Wall, on the 11th of May last, and the gun he then carried is now at Captain Pigot's office."

Thus far the official narrative—the sole record extant of the events of that memorable night—is now divulged for the first time. The story in its bald, official form reads more like a romance than a sober relation of events in civilised England. And it may be questioned whether it has ever fallen to the lot of a Naval officer to carry out a more sensational piece of work, in time of profound peace than that which was so skilfully executed by Lieutenant Hellard on that night. A careless word, undue haste, or the least slip, and the whole carefully-laid plan would have collapsed, entailing the escape of the prey, to say nothing of a possible sacrifice of life.

The arrest of Ransley and his associates, besides creating a profound sensation, conferred a sudden notoriety on an obscure place, whose inhabitants now that their adventurous neighbours had been taken, seemed rather to glory in the exploits of the ruffians who, for six long years, had defied all the efforts of a mighty Government to effect their arrest.

Resuming our story. Of the entire body of desperadoes known as the Aldington Gang, only eight had been secured. Within a few weeks, however, of the grand coup, the rest had been swept into the net; though, strange to say, no official record as to the means by which this was effected is forthcoming. So that, by the end of the year (1826), all the miscreants concerned in the murder of Morgan and other outrages were safe in custody, waiting to take their trial at the ensuing Assizes at Maidstone.

Before introducing the reader to the closing scene, we shall place before him an interesting *résumé* of

the events that led up to it, compiled by the law agents to the Admiralty, under date January 13th, 1827:

"I take the liberty to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords Coms. of the Admiralty that in obedience to their Lordships' commands signified to me at various periods during the last year to take measures for discovering and bringing to justice the gang of miscreants by whom repeated outrages and (in four several cases) murders had been committed upon the officers and seamen of His Majesty's ships *Severn*, *Ramillies* and *Hyperion* since the establishment of the Coast Blockade Service, and with reference particularly to Mr. Barrow's letters of the 18th of March and 18th of May, and to your letters of the 1st and 6th of August last, I have at length succeeded in effecting this object as to the leader and principal offenders, members of this lawless gang, who appear to have been for a long time past a terror to the well-disposed inhabitants of the country situated between Dover, Canterbury, Ashford and Rye.

"The leader and organiser of this gang had, ever since the murder of Mr. McKenzie, a midshipman of the *Severn*, near Dungeness, in the year 1821, been ascertained to be George Ransley, residing on a common called Aldington Fright, in a wild part of the county of Kent, between Ashford, New Romney and Folkestone, the scenes of whose outrages had been on different parts of the coast from Deal to Rye. His associates, who regularly bore fire-arms, amounted to about twenty, all of whom were hired and paid by him at the rate of twenty shillings each for a night's work. The rest of the company of smugglers at the call of the leader

might amount to from sixty to eighty, who were merely employed as the carriers of the tubs of spirits, and were collected from the labouring class in the district before mentioned, receiving from Ransley about eight shillings each for a night's work. The armed men, who are denominated 'scouts' by the smugglers, were usually trained and mustered by Samuel Bailey (a brother-in-law of Ransley), a deserter from the *Bulwark*, who acted as a sort of lieutenant to him, and whose province it was, under the superintendence of Ransley, to deliver out to the scouts (when the company had reached the spot where the run was to take place, and which was only previously known to these two), the fire-arms, which in the case of the outrages at Deal, Walmer and Dover were conveyed in the cart of James Quested of Folkestone.[1]

"The working party was collected by James Hogben of Hawkinge, near Folkestone, an incorrigible smuggler who had his thigh broken by a pistol shot in an affray which took place with an officer and some seamen of the *Severn*, near Folkestone, in the month of April 1820, on which occasion he was considered to be, if not mortally wounded, so much disabled as to be incapable of further mischief, and on this account the late Captain McCulloch allowed him, though captured, to be placed under the care of some Folkestone surgeons on their promise that he should be forthcoming: he, however, got well, absconded and has ever since been an active agent of Ransley.

"In consequence of your letter of the 8th of August last, communicating to me their Lordships' commands to send my agent down to Captain Pigot

[1] He resided at Hawkinge, in a cottage which still exists.

for the purpose of inquiring into the circumstances of the outrage committed on the 6th of that month near Fort Moncrief, and of other attacks made on the officers and seamen of the *Ramillies*, my agent proceeded immediately to the coast, and with a view to the object expressed in that letter of taking the most effectual measures for bringing the perpetraters to justice, he collected the evidence of the several officers and men in such cases as appeared to be the most fit subjects for prosecution : viz. :

" 1st,—An attack near Hythe on the 11th of March last, when James Coghlan a seaman received a musket-shot wound.

" 2nd,—An attack on Romney Warren on the 16th of the same month, when Matthew Patterson, Quartermaster, and Edward McParthin and Patrick Doyle, seamen, were wounded in a similar manner.

" 3rd,—An attack near 24 Tower, Dymchurch, on the 11th of May, when Michael Power and William Wynn were wounded with slugs.

" 4th,—An attack on the 11th of June at Walmer, when Lieutenant H. Brady was wounded with slug shots.

" 5th,—An attack on the 8th of July, at Deal, when John Millings, a seaman, was wounded in the same manner.

" 6th,—The outrage at Dover, when Richard Morgan was killed.

" 7th,—The attack on the 6th of August, near Fort Moncrief, when William Spillane was shot and dangerously wounded, and on which occasion one of the working party of the smugglers, named James Bushell, was shot in the knee and was taken prisoner.

"On the occasion of this visit to the coast my agent proceeded to Fort Moncrief for the purpose of endeavouring to extract some discovery from the wounded smuggler, but Bushell having then undergone an amputation of the thigh, near the hip, he was reduced to such a state of danger as to be incapable of examination and not having shown the least inclination to make any disclosure, nothing could at that time be effected.

"It happened however, that on the 1st of September another attempt was made by Ransley and about fifty of his associates to work a boat at Walmer, and on this occasion the party having dispersed, one of the scouts, or armed men, named Edward Horne, was captured, and from this man and Bushell (as soon as the latter was capable of removal) disclosures were obtained which enabled me to obtain warrants for the arrest of George Ransley and the following seventeen other offenders, nearly all of whom were in the practice of carrying fire-arms; viz.:

Samuel Bailey	Robert Bailey	John Bailey
Thomas Denard	Charles Giles	Thomas Gillian
Richard Higgins	James Quested	John Horne
Paul Pierce	James Hogben	James Smeed
Edward Pantry	Richard Wire	William Wire
Thomas Wheeler	James Wilson	

NOTE.—James Smeed is a deserter from the Royal Marines.

"The arrest of these offenders was effected nominally by two officers from Bow Street, but actually by Lieutenant Hellard of the *Ramillies* and a party of officers and seamen under him,

whose exertions have been indefatigable and who surprised the delinquents in their beds in the middle of the night, and by the prudent arrangements made by that officer, and with the assistance of Edward Horne and another smuggler who acted as guides, they were secured without resistance, which service, if it had otherwise been performed, must have been attended with serious consequences, most of the delinquents having fire-arms in their houses, and having become desperate through their repeated crimes committed not only in the character of smugglers, but against the persons and properties of their neighbours.

"Of these offenders (seventeen) so arrested, all except John Horne and Edward Pantry (who were received as witnesses for the Crown) were committed to take their trials on some or other of the seven charges, to sustain which evidence had been collected by my agent on the coast, and of these charges all except that founded on the attack of the 11th of March were, on the evidence being submitted to the Solicitor-General and the Counsel for the Admiralty, considered as proper for prosecution."

CHAPTER XI

TRIAL OF THE ALDINGTON GANG (*concluded*)

JANUARY, 1827, found the town of Maidstone in a quite unwonted state of excitement, owing to the trial of the notorious Aldington gang of smugglers, concerning whose exploits the most sensational stories had been circulating.

Just five years had elapsed since the Assize Court had been the scene of similar proceedings, when another gang of desperadoes had been brought up to receive judgment; four of whom met their doom on Penenden Heath, in the presence of thousands of spectators gathered from all parts of the county.

Under the heading, "TRIAL OF THE ALDINGTON SMUGGLERS," the *Kentish Chronicle* supplied the following particulars:

"The only prisoners left this morning for trial were the sixteen persons indicted on charges connected with the murder of Richard Morgan, at Dover, on the 30th of July last.

"Some time before the opening of the Court at nine o'clock, the doors were besieged by an immense number of people, who were anxious to hear the trial of these prisoners.

"Mr. Justice Park took his seat on the Bench at nine o'clock, and the Court was instantly filled in every part.

"The following prisoners were first put to the bar: Robert Bailey, aged 30, Samuel Bailey, 42,

Thomas Denard, 20, Thomas Gillian, 24, James Hogben, 43, George Ransley, 44, James Smeed, 23, Thomas Wheeler, 32, Richard Wire, 19, William Wire, 18.

" The indictment, in the usual form, charged the prisoners with assembling with other persons unknown, to the number thirty, armed with fire-arms, at the parish of St. James the Apostle, of the Port of Dover, in the county of Kent, on the 30th of July; and that Richard Wire did then and there unlawfully, maliciously and feloniously shoot Richard Morgan three mortal wounds under the left pap of his breast, of which wounds he languished, and languishingly did live for the space of one hour, and then did die.

" The other prisoners were charged with being present, aiding, assisting and comporting the said Richard Wire in the commission of the said murder.

" Prisoners pleaded Not Guilty.

" The Solicitor-General, Mr. Horace Twiss, and Mr. Knox, were Counsel for the Crown; Mr. Platt and Mr. Clarkson for the prisoners.

" A consultation of some length was held between the Counsel on both sides, which terminated in a communication to Mr. Justice Park.

" His Lordship then ordered all the other untried prisoners to be brought from the gaol, and the following were put to the bar: John Bailey, 34, Samuel Bailey, T. Denard, T. Gillian, R. Higgins, 31, Paul Pierce, 34, G. Ransley, J. Smeed, J. Wilson.

" They were indicted for assembling, with numerous other persons unknown, on the 16th of March, at New Romney, armed with fire-arms, to aid and assist in the landing and running uncustomed goods.

"A second count charged them with aiding and assisting.

"A third count charged them with feloniously, wilfully and maliciously shooting at Patrick Doyle, and Cluryn McCarthy, persons employed by His Majesty's Customs for the prevention of smuggling.

"There were other counts, in substance the same as the last, but varying in form.

"John Bailey being first arraigned pleaded Guilty.

"The learned Judge said he was aware that the prisoners were in the hands of able and learned gentlemen of the Bar, or he should explain to him the consequence of pleading Guilty; but as they were so assisted, he had no doubt they acted under the advice of their Counsel, and he should interpose no opinion of his own.

"All the other prisoners then pleaded Guilty.

"The following arraignments on four several indictments then took place:

"S. Bailey, T. Denard, C. Giles, T. Gillian, R. Higgins, P. Pierce, G. Ransley, J. Smeed, J. Wilson, R. Wire, for assembling armed, etc., as set forth in the last indictment, and assisting in running uncustomed goods on the 10th of May, at Dymchurch, and shooting at William Wynn.

"S. Bailey, T. Denard, T. Gillian, R. Higgins, J. Hogben, P. Pierce, G. Ransley, J. Wilson, R. Wire, for assembling armed, on the 10th of June, at Walmer, and shooting at W. H. Brady.

"S. Bailey, T. Denard, T. Gillian, R. Wire, for assembling armed, on the 9th of July, at Deal, and shooting at John Willings.

"J. Bailey, S. Bailey, T. Denard, T. Gillian, J. Hogben, J. Quested, G. Ransley, R. Wire, W.

Wire, for assembling armed on the 1st of August, at Hythe, and shooting at Spillane.

"The prisoners all pleaded Guilty to their several indictments.

"The ten prisoners charged with the murder were then left at the bar and the Jury were impanelled.

"The Solicitor-General then stated that the prisoners having pleaded guilty to other charges, by which they had forfeited their lives to the laws of their country, it was not his intention to offer any evidence against them on the charge of murder. He could not say that their lives would be saved; but as far as his recommendation would go, they should have the benefit of it, but at all events they would most probably be sent out of the country for the remainder of their lives.

"By this merciful arrangement, two of the prisoners (Robert Bailey and Thomas Wheeler) are wholly acquitted, they having only been indicted for the murder.

"The fourteen prisoners who had pleaded guilty, were then put to the bar, viz.: J. Bailey, S. Bailey, T. Denard, C. Giles, T. Gillian, R. Higgins, J. Hogben, P. Pierce, J. Quested, G. Ransley, J. Smeed, J. Wilson, R. Wire, and W. Wire.

"Mr. Justice Park addressed the prisoners to the following effect: His Lordship said, they had pleaded Guilty to an offence of a most heinous nature, the commission of which struck terror into every well-disposed mind. They had assembled in numerous bodies to aid in the running of uncustomed goods, and in so aiding had fired upon persons who were only doing their duty. Perhaps from the darkness of the night it might have been

difficult to fix on all the crime of murder, but they had confessed being guilty of a very serious offence. Perhaps no human eye saw the hand that actually committed the murder, and his Lordship doubted not that, in the decision of the Solicitor-General, he had exercised a sound discretion; but it was very manifest that he had dealt with the prisoners most humanely; for if any of them had been convicted of the murder they would certainly have been executed on Monday next. His Lordship disclaimed being in any way a party in the course that had been adopted, for he should not feel himself warranted in recommending them to the mercy of the Sovereign, though the Solicitor-General had promised to do so, and doubtless would keep his word. Prisoners had admitted that they assembled in gangs of as many as eighty—a gang numerous enough to overcome the peaceable part of the community. These things could not be suffered to go on with impunity. He trusted that the present proceedings would have a proper effect, and convince the offenders that the arm of the law was long enough, and sufficiently powerful to reach and punish even the most distant and the most desperate. It must be made known throughout the country, that if an offence of this nature were again committed, no mercy would be shown to the offenders. His Lordship would now repeat what he had said to the Grand Jury, that if persons in the highest stations in life were not to purchase smuggled goods, there would soon be an end to smuggling, but many persons laboured under the delusion that defrauding the revenue was no crime. It was a serious offence against the laws of man, and a breach of the laws of man is also an offence

against the laws of God; and smuggling led to the commission of the greatest crimes, even (as these proceedings prove) the crime of murder. If the mercy of our gracious Sovereign were extended to the prisoners, he trusted they would receive it with due gratitude, and be still more grateful to their God, whom they had so grievously offended. His Lordship then passed sentence of Death on the prisoners in the usual form.

"The Calendar states that the smugglers are to be executed on the 5th of February, but it is not expected that any of them will suffer."

With the removal of the prisoners, the curtain falls on the most sensational trial of the century, so far as Kent was concerned. It was the last occasion on which an organised band of smugglers were brought to the bar of judgment for taking up arms against the Government and for killing and wounding the King's officers. The Court clears, the crowds disperse, and a rumour having gained currency that, after all, there was to be no hanging, public interest in the after fate of the Aldington smugglers quickly subsided.

But though the trial has ended, and the curtain been rung down on the Aldington smuggling drama, there still remains much in need of explanation. What, for example, was the purport of the mysterious consultation in Court which led to such an unexpected turn of events? No explanation of this has ever been vouchsafed to the world; and but for the chance discovery of a document of unique interest the mystery would have remained unsolved to the end of time. This document is nothing less than a report from Mr. Charles Bicknell, the Admiralty Law Agent, to whom the entire conduct

of the case had been entrusted, giving a most graphic account of the proceedings.

Describing the measures he had deemed necessary for securing the conviction of the smugglers, the writer proceeds :

" Under the advice of these officers (the Solicitor-General and the Counsel for the Admiralty), Indictments were accordingly preferred at the late special Commission for Gaol Deliveries for the county of Kent, and each having been returned a ' true bill ' by the Grand Jury, ten of the prisoners were on Friday, the 12th inst., arraigned upon the Indictment for the murder of Richard Morgan, and pleaded Not Guilty thereto. An intimation was then made by the Prisoners' Counsel to the Solicitor-General (whom by the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury I had retained to conduct the prosecutions) that all the prisoners indicted were ready to plead Guilty to the five other indictments provided an assurance could be obtained that their lives would be spared; and this, after some consideration on the part of the Solicitor-General and Mr. Twiss, who was also present, and having been assented to (the former undertaking to make the recommendation to the Secretary of State), they severally pleaded Guilty, accordingly, and no evidence being consequently offered on the Indictment for murder, they were, of course, acquitted of that charge, with an understanding that they were to be transported beyond seas for the remainder of their lives, and Judgment of Death was thereupon pronounced upon them all in a most impressive manner by Mr. Justice Park.

" By this arrangement," continues the gentleman from whom this is quoted, " two of the sixteen

"FOR OUR PARSON"

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offenders indicted, namely, Robert Bailey and Thomas Wheeler (who could not be included in the indictments on which the pleas of Guilty were accorded), have escaped. But as these men had been merely instruments of Ransley and not principal offenders, I humbly trust that the result of the measures which have been taken, and which have secured the convictions and transportation for life of George Ransley, the leader of the gang, and thirteen of his associates, many of whom I have reason to know were concerned in the murders of Richard Woolbridge and Patrick Sullivan, will meet with the approbation of their Lordships."

The prisoners left the Court, as will be remembered, under sentence of death; coupled, however, with a recommendation to mercy. The sequel is thus described by the *Kentish Chronicle* (February 9th, 1827) under the heading of "THE ALDINGTON SMUGGLERS":

"On Thursday morning last, Mr. Agar, Governor of the County Gaol, Maidstone, received a letter from the Secretary of State, signifying that the execution of the sentence of death passed upon the smugglers at the East Kent Assizes, should be respited until the further signification of His Majesty's pleasure. Agreeable to further orders, all the fourteen prisoners were, on Monday morning, removed from the gaol, to be put on board ship for the purpose of transportation for life: George Ransley, James Wilson, Charles Giles, R. Wire, James Hogben, James Quested, W. Wire, to be put on board the *Leviathan*, at Portsmouth; J. Bailey, Sam. Bailey, T. Denard, T. Gillian, R. Higgins, P. Pierce, J. Smeed, to be put on board the *York*, at Gosport."

With this valedictory notice, Ransley and his thirteen associates vanish from the public ken. There still remain, however, one or two matters requiring a little further explanation. To this end shall be quoted some further extracts from the interesting correspondence of the Admiralty Law Agent.

Under ordinary circumstances the rôle of approver is not usually regarded as an exalted one. There are cases, however, in which the ends justify the means. And public opinion has long decided that, as regards the Aldington smugglers, the mysterious persons who helped to discover and bring to justice the perpetrators of so many outrages rendered an important service to the State, and may be considered in the light of public benefactors, and to that extent as deserving of reward. That these services did not pass unrecognised may be gathered from the following letter.

Under date, April 27th, 1827, Mr. Bicknell writes :

" With reference to Mr. Barrow's letter of February last, communicating to me the commands of my Lords Coms. of the Admiralty to distribute a reward of £500 amongst the persons through whose information and means George Ransley and thirteen other smugglers were discovered and brought to justice, I take the liberty to transmit herewith a scheme of distribution which is most humbly submitted to the consideration of their Lordships.

" Upon this scheme I beg leave to observe that the distribution proposed to be made in the shares of the several informers is founded upon this circumstance that Ed. Horne and James Bushell were implicated in the offences touching which they made disclosures, and did not make any discoveries

until after they were arrested, and that, on the contrary, William Marsh and James Spratford were not implicated in these crimes, and voluntarily came forward with their discoveries in expectation of reward, and at great personal risk to themselves. Still, however, as the disclosures and evidence of Horne and Bushell were the most important and were indispensably necessary to the commitment and subsequent conviction of the offenders, it is but equitable (as I most respectfully submit) that they should receive a considerable portion of the reward, and I trust their Lordships will not deem it unreasonable that Lieut. Chas. Johnstone and Jas. Ash, through whose active exertions and vigilance Horne and Bushell were secured and their evidence obtained, should be indemnified out of this liberal grant for the loss they sustained by the admission of these two smugglers as witnesses."

It must be explained that, had the two smugglers above-mentioned not been accepted as witnesses for the Crown, their captors would have been entitled to a reward of £20 for each man as "head money."

The "Scheme of Distribution" mentioned by the writer took the form of an enclosure, thus:

"SCHEME FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF £500.

"To William Marsh for his discoveries and services from the month of May, 1826, until the arrest of the offenders, watching their motions and giving notice thereof, from time to time to Lieut. Hellard, and for assisting at the arrest, and afterwards in seeking out evidence until the trial, and for attending at Maidstone to be examined at the trial—£130.

"To James Spratford for similar services, and for conducting Lieut. Hellard and the officers and seamen under his command through a wild country in the middle of a tempestuous night, to the habitations of Ransley and seven of his accomplices, whom he pointed out and whose arrests were thereby safely effected—£130.

"To James Bushell, a smuggler arrested by Lieut. C. A. Johnstone and through whose discoveries evidence was obtained to support the indictment for the murder of Richard Morgan, and for the outrage committed near Fort Moncrief on the 6th of May, 1826—£100.

"To Edward Horne, another smuggler who was arrested by James Ash, and through whose information warrants were procured for the apprehension of many of the offenders, and evidence was obtained to support all the charges against them—£100.

"To Lieut. C. A. Johnstone, who would otherwise have been entitled to £20 on conviction of James Bushell—£20.

"To James Ash, do., do.—£20."

Transportation for life! Such was the revised sentence passed on George Ransley and his fellow-smugglers. It was a sentence that not only closed their careers as citizens of the United Kingdom, but in those times of slow travel and infrequent intercourse with Australasia, effectually consigned them to oblivion in the land of their birth.

Few, even among those free agents who left their native land of their own volition, ever came back; those who were transported were forbidden to do so, even though they might in the course of years become free men there and respected

colonists. It is true that, exceptionally, there were those "free pardons" that gave a right of return; but they were rare.

George Ransley, transported to what is now Tasmania, then styled "Van Diemen's Land," became a farmer in a good way of business, and, as a trustworthy employer, was himself the master of convict servants. He died in 1860, loved and respected.

There remains but one other document to bring under notice, and the official history of the Aldington smugglers may be regarded as closed. The document in question, like a former one, quoted in connection with the murder of young McKenzie at Brookland, five years earlier, forms a pathetic sequel to the story, taking the form of a request from the widow of the unfortunate man Morgan, whose murder at Dover led to the arrest of the gang, for a pension, in consideration of the loss of her husband while in the performance of his duty.

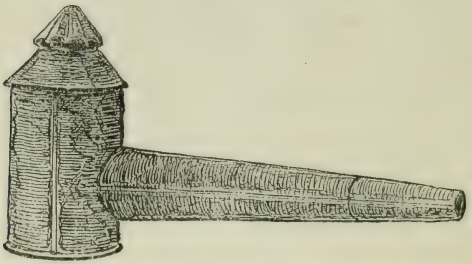
The said document is entitled, "A PETITION FROM MARY MORGAN," and it is therein stated that "Richard Morgan was several times engaged with smugglers on different parts of the coast since he joined the Coast Blockade Service in January 1821; and that, owing to his death, the widow is left without the means of subsistence, and is in great distress."

Lieutenant Hellard, the officer of the district, in forwarding the petition, states that "Morgan was respected by every officer for his courage, activity, and attention, and was beloved by the parties over whom he was placed, for his steady, correct conduct."

It was the accidental discovery of poor Morgan's

headstone in the disused burial-ground of old St. Martin's Church at Dover that led to the present researches, which have borne such strange and abundant fruit.

Some few authentic relics yet may be found of those wild old days (and nights!) along these coasts of Kent and Sussex. In particular, a grocer at the little village of Wittersham, near Rye, some years ago acquired, from the last representative of a



A SMUGGLER'S "SPOUT LANTERN"

smuggling family, one of those old "spout lanterns" used by the smuggler on land—by marsh, beach or cliff-top—for the purpose of signalling to their friends hovering out to sea and awaiting the signal to land, or to sheer off, as the case might be. It is a roughly-tinned affair, but very well made, on the "dark-lantern" principle, and with a long tapering spout, about eighteen inches in length, for the purpose of projecting a forward flash, while either side was obscured. This is, perhaps, the only surviving example of such a "spout lantern."

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST SURVIVOR OF THE ALDINGTON TUB-CARRIERS

(A Nonagenarian's Story)

THE following story, contributed by the last of the Crown witnesses who were summoned to appear against their whilom associates, at the memorable trial at Maidstone in 1827, supplies a more graphic picture of the old smuggling days than anything that has been presented heretofore. And a pathetic interest attaches to it from the fact of the author having passed away within a few weeks of imparting it.

The old fellow was born in 1804, at Aldington, where he remained the best part of his life. In his younger days, after the manner of the rural folk, he did a little smuggling, and went out once or twice with the Ransley gang, in the capacity of "tub-carrier," though he never actually joined the gang. Brought up amongst the "old school" of smugglers, who had their own ideas of chivalry and a decided repugnance to armed resistance, he had the prescience to withdraw from the business when the Aldington men took to carrying fire-arms; and from that time forward turned his energies into the more prosaic though safer path of agriculture. Yet, from living in the midst of it all, he was, of course, well acquainted with the local celebrities, and being a

man of keen observation, was perfectly cognisant of their exploits, and being blessed, in addition, with a retentive memory, proved a very mine of information.

Not uninteresting, either, is the fact of the old fellow having known certain members of the older, and still more famous, Hawkhurst gang, that was "smashed up" in 1749; thus enabling us to join hands, so to speak, across a century and a half. A circumstance quite possible, seeing that many of the gang were quite young men who may very easily have lived on into the nineteenth century.

The old man's subsequent career was uneventful enough. After toiling on through the active years of his life, he found himself stranded, like many others, at an age when self-help was no longer possible, and after drifting about from one relative to another, found a haven of rest at last in the workhouse, wherein, after a long search, at length he was found. Then was taken down, from his own lips, in a succession of interviews, the story of his life.

The kindly old fellow was then in his ninetieth year, and though feeble and suffering in body, was clear in mind—particularly with respect to the events of his early life, and his memory was taxed to the utmost in the endeavour to elucidate the past.

"Smuggling was mostly done for drink: the chaps would go out just to get money for drink. There was B——, now, at the Bank House farm, where I worked, the time Ransley's lot were out: he was a drunken fellow and nearly ruined his farm by it."

"I understand you used to do a little in that line once?"

"Oh, yes: I went out once or twice for people living at Burmarsh—labouring men, they were. The

first time I went out was when I was living at the Court Lodge farm : it was on a Saturday night : a ' passul ' of 'em was going out from about Aldington, and they asked me to go along with 'em. There was Finn and several others I knew. Oh, there was a pretty ' passul ' of 'em altogether. It was spring-time, and we started for the coast about eight or nine o'clock, and walked all the way to West Hythe. We lay out in a field, and were joined by another company that had assembled there before us. There was no waiting to speak of : we managed it all pretty quick, though it was a roughish job to get the pair of tubs : indeed, if you weren't smart, you got your fingers cut with all the knives working away. You see, the tubs were all tied to a rope : a boat had sunk them, and they were all pulled ashore. I got my pair all right, and threw them over my shoulder pretty smart, as they expected some of the Preventive men after 'em. I carried them five or six miles. I know. We went pretty much round about, going back : we didn't go the way we ought to have gone. It was roughish work, I can tell you : however, we got the goods all saved, but I never went out with that lot again."

" Were you ever out with Ransley's lot ? "

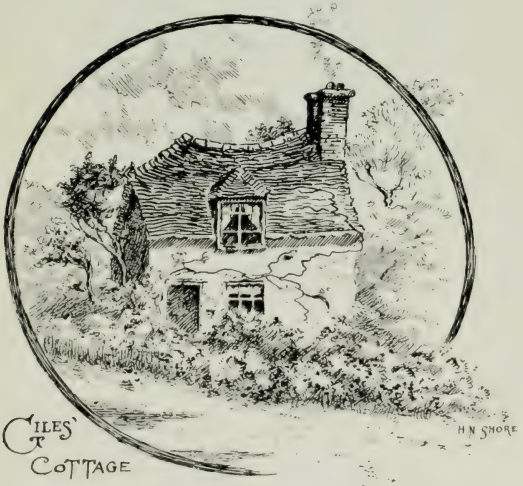
" I only went out once with his party : that was down by Lydd. We walked first to Romney Warren : that was the first spot for the boat to come in. There was a little shooting going on there, and I suppose that put the boat off : it was the coastguard making signals, I reckon. Then we went on to Littlestone : that was the second spot, but we didn't have to wait long there, for we heard firing at sea, and the head man heard enough to know that the boat wouldn't come in that night,

and he told us all to go home. Oh, they lost a 'passul' of stuff that way, with the boats being took at sea. There was a pretty big party of us—two or three hundred, maybe: there were about twenty from our place; but I didn't know many of the men out that night. None of them had fire-arms. Well, as I was saying, we didn't lay a terrible time, as we soon had orders to go home. It was winter-time: I know that, for I was working just then for a farmer at Lympne, sowing a field of turnips. My mate that night was Tom Butcher: I 'most always had a mate along with me. I said to him, 'I'll have no more of this work.' He agreed with me, and we never went out no more. We often talked of the affair afterwards. You see, if we had not given it up when they took to carrying fire-arms, we should have been drawn into it!

"Yes, you're right; it was a goodish long walk, and we didn't get back till daylight next morning; and when we got home, I had to go as far again to get to my work. No, I wasn't up to much after being out all night. What did we get for it? Only 3*s*. for a 'miss' night: 7*s*. and a pot of beer, with a biscuit and cheese, if we worked the goods. They used to make great biscuits in those days, and charge a penny each for them—it would be a pretty big biscuit if they put a penn'orth a bread onto one! We would have this at a public-house on the way home. Ransley would pay for this; and he would pay us too, for the night's work, at the public-house. Oh, he was very well about paying people: I never heard no complaints about that! His son, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, came and asked us to go out that night. That time was enough for me.

"The first time Ransley's lot went out with

JAMES QUESTED'S COTTAGE AT HAWKINGE



WHERE CHARLES GILES WAS ARRESTED: A COTTAGE NEAR BILSINGTON BRIDGE

fire-arms his son came again, to try and get me and another man to go with them. He told us we need not be afraid, as they were going to take fire-arms. I said, ' If that's it, I shan't go.' Oh, I knew well enough that was wrong. It was taking up arms against your king and country ! That wouldn't do : I knew that ! The other man said he'd do the same as I did, and so neither of us went. The youngster tried hard to persuade us ; but we wouldn't go, and it was very lucky we didn't ! "

" Were you ever interfered with by Ransley and his lot for refusing to go out with them ? "

" No, never, and I never heard of anyone else being interfered with ! "

" What did the Aldington people think about this going out with fire-arms ? "

" Oh, they all thought it a bad thing : except those who went out along with Ransley, and *they* thought it a fine thing ! I've seen five or six of them coming home next morning with their guns, after they had been out with fire-arms.

" I think I know how the carrying fire-arms began about our way. Wasn't there several of 'em hung at Herne Bay ? Seven or eight of 'em, eh ? Aye, and a pretty ' passul ' of 'em transported too, I reckon, to Botany Bay ? Well, some of 'em who ran away came to Aldington : the two Smeeds came. Yes, I believe, as you say, one of 'em was a deserter. Well, one of those Smeeds was a ringleader at the fire-arm work ! He worked at Bank farm, along o' me, and although it wasn't known that he had run away from Herne Bay, he told me after what had been going on there, and how he had been forced to get out of the way. Now, I believe that is how the Aldington chaps came to carry fire-arms.

"There was another of the Herne Bay chaps, called Wood, who was sent out to Botany Bay, but managed to escape. It was in this way. The first night after being landed they were all put into a sort of barn-place, and given some good food. Wood was a seafaring man, and looking out, he saw there was water, and asked leave to go outside for a moment. As soon as ever he got outside he set off to cross this bit of water—a river, or something—but he found it deeper than he expected and had to swim part of it. Anyway he got clear away, and after knocking about the Colony for four years, getting berths aboard vessels, he managed to get home again. After he came home, he married my wife's sister: that is how I came to know him. He had luck: for, you see, in those days the 'transports' had a sort of iron put on them, and if he'd passed that first night in the barn, next morning they'd have clapped a sort of dog-collar ring on him! After he got home, he joined a diving company, and had boats, and did well at the business. I told you he was a seafaring man, but he had nothing to do with the firing on shore at Herne Bay; but was taken in the French boat, off the coast. The firing on shore frightened the boat away, and there was so much look-out kept off the coast that they couldn't get clear: that is how he was taken."

"On the whole, it was hardish work going out with the smugglers?"

"Yes, you're right: it was pretty rough work coming over the marshes at night; but of course we always had someone along with us who knew the way, to guide us; else we should never have got back. Why, I've known some of the chaps, after

they had got a bit inland, wouldn't know where they were, one bit. The way we got over the dykes was by putting a plank across, and taking it up afterwards. Sometimes they'd moor a barge in the canal, with a plank to the bank on each side, so as the chaps shouldn't have to cross by the bridge. But I don't think Ransley troubled much about that: he generally went pretty straight."

"I suppose you often saw Ransley's party coming back from the coast?"

"Not so much of Ransley's lot, where I lived, as of the other parties I was telling you about. But then they did nothing wrong: they never carried arms: they just bought the tubs, and sold them, all fair-and-above-board. But things went wrong with them sometimes: they took to robbing each other. I remember, one time, my elder brother, who lived up at Church-town, had some tubs in the wash-house one night, and when he went in to look for them next morning, they were all gone—stolen!"

"I have heard that Ransley lived down in the marsh before he came to Aldington: is that true?"

"Yes; that is so: I knew him myself before he came to Aldington, when he was a farm servant. I can't rightly remember the name of the farm where he worked; but it was not a terrible way from Brookland. He was a werry able, strong man as a servant. The way I came to know him was because he used to come up to Aldington with his team of horses for corn. He was a waggoner; and a good servant he was too. He had a very fine team of horses, belonging to the farmer, and he kept them in nice order. I remember he had a way of stealing corn for his horses, and the farmer caught him once, by keeping watch. It was in this way. George got

the key of the barn one night, and as he was coming out, the farmer, who had been watching, caught him with a sack of beans as big as himself on his back. The farmer told him he wouldn't 'gaol' him: 'I'll let you have 'em, George,' says he, 'I won't stop you.' You see, he knew he wanted them for the horses, and that he was a good man at his work, and for seeing after the team. George Ransley had a brother a waggoner too, who had a very good character for doing his work and keeping his horses nicely. I knew the man well.

"George lived at Ruckinge for a time, before he come to Aldington. What brought him there was his marrying a woman from Aldington way. After he was married and came to live there he robbed the windmill of some corn—leastways it was always said to be him. There'd been corn stolen, so one night three men lay to watch: they had three sacks of corn ready to drop down behind the door if anyone came in. Well, somewhere about midnight, a man came and turned the key and opened the door. As soon as he was inside they dropped the sacks of corn and the man ran upstairs into the loft, and out on to a platform and slipped away. They never caught him, although there were three of them! It was so dark they couldn't see who it was, but it was always thought to have been George Ransley. I believe it was, myself, for he was rather an artful sort of man.

"In those days there were soft roads about here, and Ransley used to dig stones out of the Bank House farm to put on the roads, and that brought him in with B——. Then he built the Bourne Tap. People said he found money somewhere: anyhow, he knocked off work quite sudden-like and took to

smuggling, and never did anything else after that. He had a nice horse and cart, almost directly: it was thought that he had stolen the horse and cart, though of course it was not known. Anyway, he had a deuced nice mare. As soon as he got his horse, and took to smuggling regular, they called him 'Captain Batts': before that, he was only a waggoner. He was a stout, jolly fellow—used to wear a gaberdine mostly. He sold rum and gin at the Bourne Tap, although he had no licence: he used to get the rum down from London. I was in his house now and then: you see, B—— would be wanting to know something from Ransley, and I would be sent down to the 'Tap,' and Ransley would give me a glass of rum, maybe!"

"Did Ransley drink much, himself?"

"No, I never saw Ransley drunk. He seemed a bustling chap about his business. I've known as many as a hundred men come to the farm where I was, and put their tubs away. There were holes out in the wood, and in all sorts of places, to put tubs in: there were woods all about the 'Tap' in those days, some belonged to one person and some to another. Oh, Ransley was always on the move somewhere, after he got his horse and cart. But I never saw him the worse for liquor, though there was a lot of drinking went on at the 'Tap.' You see, Ransley would always let them have money beforehand, if they wanted any: so there was no want of it for drinking. I always understood he gave 13*s.* for a tub of spirits in France, and it was worth about £3 12*s.* when it was landed."

"How many of the gang carried fire-arms, do you suppose?"

"That I can't say; but it was only the strong

chaps carried fire-arms, and pretty big, strong chaps they were, I can tell you! No respectable people would have anything to do with Ransley's lot when they took to carrying arms: no, nor before that, either, when they took to carrying bats. At last they took to robbing: anything rather than work. You see, they could always get money with this smuggling, and so they wouldn't work. Oh, it regular ruined them, and a lot more too.

"If it was a 'miss night,' you may be sure they wouldn't come back empty-handed. They would have something before they got back, even if they took it. Now, that was about 'the cut of them.' And when they got home they would get drinking at the 'Tap': there was always a lot of them hanging about there, and if a stranger passed, he would have a rough time of it. And then, maybe, they'd fall out with each other, or if a stranger came along, they'd fall out with him. There was no magistrate nigher Aldington, in those days, than Mersham Hatch.

"B——, at the Bank farm, where I lived, was the grandest gentleman about Aldington—before he got in with the smuggling: he had a fine farm and was doing well. Then Ransley and he got very thick—regular mates. It came about in this way. Ransley, as I told you, used to be rock-digging on his farm, and B—— would get him in to have a drink, and got on, like that, to be very thick with him; and one thing linked in to another. That is how most of them got into it. B—— had to give up the farm at last, and went to another house at Bonnington, where he died: he used to drink terribly—spirits, too. B——'s father had Bilsington Priory one time, and used to keep hounds. The family were very

well off then—pretty much like gentlefolk. But they came down."

"I suppose you remember the gang being taken?"

"Yes, well enough. They were taken in two batches. One lot were taken on a frosty night; and as it was moonlight, and unfavourable for smuggling, nine or ten of them were taken in their own homes. The next lot were taken in their beds, on a rough, dark night: indeed, it was about the roughest night I ever remember. That was when they took Smeed and Wilson. I remember it well, for we had two loads of corn, all ready to go to Dover: we were to start that night, but it rained so heavily we had to stay. You see the sails we had for covering the corn were not so terrible good, and we didn't want to get the corn wet. We stayed up till midnight, waiting for the rain to stop, and then the master told us we had better get to bed. Well, we started as soon as ever the rain stopped: that was at daylight, and we got away before anyone was astir: that was how I never heard of the men being taken till I got nearly to Dover. Yes, it was about the worst rain I ever remember, that night: indeed, I never see'd anything like it. It regular drove the earth down where they had been ploughing. I remember some of the fields we passed, next morning, going in to Folkestone, were all levelled-like with the rain. Oh, I tell you, it was a terrible night.

"The first thing we heard of it all was when we got to the Waliant Sailor Inn, at top of Folkestone Hill, about six miles from Dover. The landlord said, 'So they've been taking some more of the smugglers, last night!' The news had reached him, I suppose. We were taking the corn into Pilcher's

steam mill at Dover. Yes, it was a pretty long carriage, certainly; but I often took stuff into Dover when I was waggoner at Bonnington.

"You were asking if I knew the 'Palm Trees': [1] it is a public-house away out on the hills, at the back of Dover, towards Ramsgate: some way from Dover. I've been there.

"The time they took the first batch, we had news pretty soon next morning. That was the time they took an old man by mistake: he kept a butcher's shop, and used to be up and about pretty early of a morning, so they came across him and took him, but soon let him go. Then they got hold of a man called W——; but he said he had nothing to do with it, and they let him go as soon as they found out they had made a mistake.

"Of course the blockade-men wouldn't have known anyone unless they'd had somebody along with them to point out the men they wanted. Spratford was along with them both times, dressed in man-of-war's clothes so that he should not be recognised. He had been aboard a man-of-war in the Indian wars—that was afore the battle of Waterloo. Before that he had been farm-servant at Court Lodge farm: he was just a labouring man. I believe he had been along with the smugglers some time back; but I don't think he was ever much with Ransley's lot: it was the Burmarsh lot—the same that I worked with."

"How was it you came to be mixed up in the trial?"

"The way I came to be 'speened' was like this. The Sunday morning after the affair out at Walmer

[1] The inn referred to is probably the "Palm Tree" at Eythorne, about seven miles north of Dover.

ALDINGTON FRITH: COTTAGE WHERE TWO INFORMERS LIVED

FARM AT ALDINGTON, WHERE WILSON, ONE OF THE GANG, WAS ARRESTED

Castle, about ten or eleven, I saw six light carts, laden with tubs, coming along, top speed, tearing past father's house in the 'Fright,' just below the Bank House farm. Another cart was standing in the road, and one of the carts with tubs pulled up on one side, and the wheel came off, and the cart upset, and all the tubs rolled out on to the road. A Dover man was in the cart: he had the job of carrying the tubs. Father's house is a wheelwright's shop now. Well, of course I ran out to lend a hand: they wanted to put the tubs in somewhere, out of sight, so I helped to pass them over the hedge into a field of master's. After a bit, Ransley came along and took them away—that was after he had unloaded his lot.

"Well, Captain Hellard[1] heard of this, and came up to Aldington to collect evidence, and he sent for me and wanted to make out the tubs had been put into a field on the other side of the road. But that was wrong, and I told him so, and said it was the other side of the road. Oh, I remember it all well enough: he had heard of me helping with the tubs the time the cart was upset: I suppose Spratford told him about it: anyhow, he came over to make inquiries, and to tell the people who were wanted as witnesses. 'I can tell you more about it than you know yourself,' he said to me. Oh, he had it all down in his book. Then he said 'Now, wasn't some of the tubs brown ones—just bare wood, and some painted?' I told him I couldn't just recollect that, but I knew some were white, and some brown, plain ones. He said, 'Well now, I can tell you something more: the first pair you took out and handed over the hedge was brown, and the next

[1] Properly "Lieutenant" Hellard.

ones white; and you handed them into Epp's field!' Well, it wasn't Epp's field; and I told him he'd made a mistake. I suppose he had put it down wrong in his book: I don't suppose Spratford had told him wrong. I believe he was right about the tubs, though I told him I couldn't call to mind rightly which pair I took up first; but I remembered there were mixed ones—some white and some brown.

"Captain Hellard was not a big man, as I recollect. He came over alone, to examine those who were wanted as witnesses for the trial at Maidstone; and gave each one a 'speeny,' and three sovereigns to start with. We were to have more if required, according to the time we were up there. Hellard told us they didn't want the tub-carriers punished, only those who carried arms, else they would have had me."

"Now tell all you can remember of the men who were arrested," reading over the names of the men; and his observations concerning each are appended.

Samuel Bailey—"lived at Bilsington."

Robert Bailey—"lived at Mersham."

Thomas Gillian—"lived in Aldington Fright."

Charles Giles—"lived at Bilsington. I remember the time he got shot; they carried him up to West Wall, beyond Ashford, where he had an aunt living. They took him there so as to be out of the way, so that people should not know anything about it. Dr. Beet of Ashford attended him. He came back when it was all healed."

Thomas Denard—"lived in Aldington Fright, where he had a little bit of land and kept two or three horses."

William Wire—"lived in Aldington: a young lad of eighteen or nineteen."

Richard Wire—" lived in Aldington. He was counted to be the man that shot Morgan,—so it was held at the trial. He said as much himself: leastways, he used to speak out and tell people how he had stopped Morgan from following him up. You see the coastguard followed them up from the beach, and Richard Wire used to say as how it was he that stopped them. He was only twenty-two, and a brave young fellow; but, like the rest, he got in along with Ransley's party and I believe got drunk, and then they egged him on to go along with them."

Thomas Wheeler—" lived at Folkestone: was a blacksmith."

Edward Horne—" lived at Ruckinge. He turned King's Evidence; but was taken up for horse-stealing before ever the others were sent abroad."

John Horne—" lived at Ruckinge. He turned King's Evidence: he had a niceish horse and cart: got it somehow: stole it, I expect, as he had no money to buy it with."

James Smeed—" lived at Aldington: was taken with James Wilson at Bank House farm, with the second batch. He came from Herne Bay the time the men were hung and transported."

Richard Higgins—" lived at Bilsington: he married one of the Baileys—Rhoda Bailey, sister to Mrs. Ransley. He was gamekeeper to a gentleman: his father had land at Bonnington."

John Bailey—" lived at Bonnington, close to Paul Pierce: both were taken the same night."

Paul Pierce—" lived in an old-fashioned house at Bonnington: he got away, the first time they came to take him, by climbing up the chimney, one of the old-fashioned wide ones: from there he got

on to the roof of the house, where he lay quiet. They took him the next time they came, along with John Bailey."

James Wilson—" lived at Aldington : was taken with Smeed at the Bank farm. They were both lying in the bin where the food was cut up for the horses : they daren't sleep at home for fear of being took. They had been hiding about and sleeping at nights out in the woods : they had slept in the bin two nights before, and were going to sleep in the same place again. My brother was a boy there at that time, and had been frightened out of his life by the blockade-men swarming over the place; so he crept out, and squeezed himself in between a straw stack and the stable wall, and stayed there all night, shaking with fright : at last he fell asleep there. Of course Spratford had been watching and told them where to find the men. Yes, there the lad lay all night : the horses were never littered, nor the stable locked up : the candle burnt itself out."

Edward Pantry—" lived at Aldington : was a nice, steady, hardworking man, who always did a thing well if he minded to do it, till he got in along with those smugglers : his father, too, was just the same sort of man. He turned King's Evidence; but he was taken up for sheep-stealing within a year of the trial. He stole two sheep from the farm I was serving at, down at Bonnington : a man came along and caught him flaying the last one : the man was a smuggler, and told him he would report it. The sheep had been stolen on a Saturday night, and on the Sunday morning the man came along and told the farmer. On Monday morning we were prepared for having him : there

were about twenty people out after him, all round about, so as to make sure of catching him. Pantry was out harvesting that day, and Stokes, the constable from the Marsh, went up to him quietly, as if he wanted to speak to him, and asked him if he would come and cut a 'can' of wheat for him down in the marsh. Well, the man suspected nothing, and then Stokes told him he must come along with him: then he 'handled' him and took him off. You see, they had searched Pantry's house first, and found the skin of a sheep. He was tried at Dymchurch—they used to do a 'passul' of business at Dymchurch in those days—and was transported."

"Now, all you can recollect of the trial."

"Well, it was a Saturday night when we got word to start for Maidstone on the Monday morning; and as Scott, the man that kept the shop, was going into Ashford on Sunday afternoon, we sent word in by him to book the places on the coach for Maidstone. The places were taken all right, and on Monday morning we walked into Ashford, got there about ten o'clock, but found both coaches packed as tight as they could hold, and six horses instead of four to each. There were two coaches ran through Ashford to London in those days, within a few minutes of each other, four horses to each: they changed horses every ten miles. Well, that day they had to put on two extra horses to each, the loads were so heavy, else they would never have got up the hill to Ashford town.

"We had orders to be at Maidstone by two o'clock, at the Star Inn, where Stringer, a lawyer from Romney, was waiting to take count of all the witnesses, and see there were none missing. Well, as soon as we saw there was no chance of getting

on by coach, we looked about to get some refreshment: went to the New Inn, and got an allowance, amongst us—gin and other things. After that we didn't know what to do: some set out to walk, and walked all the way to Maidstone—twenty miles. The rest of us went to the 'Saracen's Head,' and there a man came in and said he had a big waggon, and if he could get some horses he would take us on, only he must be sure of having fourteen people, else it would not pay him. He offered to take us for 3*s.* 6*d.* each, so we sent him away to find some horses. It was very cheap: we didn't expect to get taken to Maidstone under 5*s.* as it was twenty miles. We soon made up the number: indeed there were seventeen of us in the van altogether; and as there were several females along with us, going up as witnesses, and as I knew a 'passul' of 'em, we young men—I was twenty-two at the time—agreed to get out and walk when we came to the hills. Well, we got to Maidstone all right to time; but some men belonging to Bonnington, who set out to walk, didn't get in till nightfall. However, Stringer found them.

"Directly we got in we had to look about for lodgings; though we all lived together in the day, some seventeen of us, and had our breakfast and suppers together. Being a stranger there, of course I didn't know where to go, so the landlord of the 'Royal Oak'—Simmonds, by name, who put us all up—got me a bed. It was to be 10*s.* 6*d.* for the night, and we might lay all the week if we liked: it would be no more than just the 10*s.* 6*d.* If the money we had been paid didn't last out we were to have more. Of course, if it wasn't all spent we had to return it. They reckoned 3*s.* 6*d.* a day,

and 3*s.* 6*d.* a night, and we were paid 5*s.* for the journey from Ashford and 5*s.* back. Some got more;—like Scott, who kept the shop; they were paid a good deal more than I was, on account of their having to leave their business.

"Dr. Beet of Ashford was 'speened' for the trial: I knew him well, for, you see, he tended the daughter of the farmer I worked for: indeed he had tended me too when I was ill. When I saw him on the morning of the day of the trial he asked me how I liked it: I said I did not like it at all; I'd much sooner not be there. He replied 'It's the worst morning I ever saw!' The fact is, we had all been playmates together when we were children—played marbles, and other things; so of course I didn't like going against the chaps at the trial, after being playmates with them in my young days. But there, I couldn't help it, for I was 'speened.'

"Well, the trial didn't come on till the Friday. Sometimes we were called in to be asked questions: other times we went into the court to hear the other trials and pass the time away. There were some very heavy cases—wonderful assizes it was that time; and a terrible deal of talking going on about them. Several of the Grand Jury asked me questions. One gentleman, in particular, who had come up from Deal-way, to try and get Richard Higgins off, asked me a deal of questions: you see, Higgins had been keeper with him once. Of course they all knew I had come from the middle of it all; but 't wasn't much good asking me anything about the business.

"There were seventy-three witnesses altogether—people from all along the road from Sandown Castle,

—landlords and ostlers from the different public-houses on the road, who had seen the men coming home—indeed pretty near all our party came from that way. Three of the Scotts were 'speened,' from the shop at Aldington, because they had seen the carts coming home from Walmer Castle on Sunday morning.

"The night before the trial came on—that was Thursday—there was a deal of talk when we heard the smugglers were coming up to-morrow. We all said what we thought was going to be done with them: some said Ransley and Dick Wire would be hung, to a certainty. Spratford, who had come up along with us, as a witness, and was staying at the 'Royal Oak'—same house as I was in—said to me. 'Well, if they are hung, I shall stay and see them swing: shan't you?' 'No,' says I, 'I shan't stay longer than I can help: I don't want to be here at all. I certainly shan't stop to see them hung!' And what is more, I didn't; for the afternoon of the trial, I took coach back to Ashford, and got home the same day!

"That same evening—Thursday—the ostler at the 'Royal Oak' said to me, 'Do you have any suspicions of that man Spratford? I think he is a very ordinary man!' 'No,' says I. 'Well,' he said 'I have, all along! I am sure he is against the smugglers!' You see, Spratford had come up along with us, and was supposed to be called up as a witness just the same as we were: he'd been one of our party in the 'wan.' But I had my suspicions about him while we were at Maidstone: he was so terrible thick with the coastguard.

"Well, the morning of the trial, all the witnesses were brought round to the Court, and just as we

THE WALNUT-TREE INN: A FAVOURITE MEETING-PLACE OF THE ALDINGTON GANG

COTTAGE AT ALDINGTON, OCCUPIED BY ONE OF THE GANG

got to the entrance the prisoners were brought down in a big open 'wan.' That was the first time I had seen them since they had been taken: they had been kept in Maidstone jail waiting their trial. A 'passul' of us were waiting at the entrance, and we had to stand back to let them pass. They had a bit of a chain on their legs—a kind of a link to lock their legs: some of them were double-ironed with bigger links: the 'wan' had two horses: it was downhill from the jail to the court-house.

"How did the smugglers look? Oh, they all looked 'middlin'-like'—about the same as they did at home: you see, they had not been long in jail. They were all dressed in the same clothes as they wore at home. Ransley looked hearty and well: he had on just the same clothes as he generally wore at home. They didn't seem down in the mouth, at all. We weren't allowed to go very near them, and they couldn't laugh or talk with the people, as there were so many prison-guards round them. There was a 'passul' of people about, I can tell you! all watching for them to be brought in. That was the first and the last time I ever saw them, for we were kept shut up in a room, and not allowed in the court.

"There was a tidy lot of blockade-men up; but they had no arms with them: I believe they were all in the court. Did any of them speak to me? Oh, yes, a 'passul' of 'em spoke to me. I rather think one of them did say he had seen me down on the coast. That Spratford got talking with them, and told them who I was, d'ye see. Oh, yes, they got talking with us, and said as how they didn't want to shoot anyone, or be shot themselves, but they had to do their duty: several of them told me

they had been shot : yes, and a ' passul ' of 'em had wounds.

" Several of the men's wives came up to the trial : Ransley's wife was there : I saw her the night before the trial. So was Giles' wife, and Dick Higgins' : they wanted to find out what was going on. The lot of them were staying at a public-house at Maidstone.

" Then, B—— from the Bank farm was up too, to speak for the men and give them a character."

" Did you hear if the smugglers took much notice of their sentence ? "

" No, I believe they didn't take terrible much notice of the sentence ; but then, you see, we didn't hear the sentence read out. I never saw them again, after they went into court. I always understood that Ransley employed counsel to defend them all.

" I started away home next day. Spratford didn't come home along with me : he stayed till next day. Wheeler the blacksmith from Folkestone and Robert Bailey came home on the coach along with me, as far as Ashford : Wheeler went on to Folkestone. I got down at Smeeth, where they changed horses. The horses were kept at the Woolpack Inn, about half a mile off, and were always sent down to Smeeth church, where they waited for the coach to come along : it was nearly always to time, so they didn't have to wait long. Yes, Wheeler and Bailey talked a good deal about the trial, coming along. They said it was a foolish thing sending William Wire out, as he never carried firearms : he used to go out along with them, but he never carried arms : he was only about eighteen years of age ; and a small chap too—not a big man

like his brother. They said it was a foolish business altogether; and others might have got off if they hadn't pleaded guilty. But there, you see, counsel persuaded them to do this, so as not to get Ransley and the others hung. Oh, there is no doubt if they hadn't done so, Dick Wire and Ransley would have swung for it. I heard quite enough, while I was up there, waiting the trial, to know that.

"It was just as well the Wires did get sent out, for they never did no good after the old man was killed: that was their father, who was struck by lightening, harvest time, when he had a fork in his hand. Several of them sent home word afterwards, how they were doing in Wan Diemen's Land. There was James Smeed, now, he sent home word that he had a brewer's dray to go with. Then, John Bailey got a farm out there—a fine place, it was, I've been told. Collins, who was transported afterwards, went to see him, and said he had four teams of horses to look after: they called four horses a team at Aldington, but I don't know how many went to a team out there."

"I suppose the place has altered a good bit since those times?"

"Aye, that it has. Why, it was all open common, down by Captain Batts' place, in those days. Old Mr. Deedes, the Lord of the Manor, of Sandling Park, by Hythe, took it in and enclosed it—that is, the 'Fright'—though certainly he gave everyone a bit of land when he enclosed it. Oh, it was a fine place for turning animals out on to when it was a common: we all turned out our geese and horses and sheep, and all sorts of things: there'd be as many as ten donkeys on it. There were several waste places in Aldington parish which were taken in by the Lord

of the Manor; but certainly everyone had some land given to them who had any rights to it.

"We are a long-lived family. My father lived to ninety-five: did a little smuggling when he was young, for his wife's father, old Mr. Butcher; he used to ride down to the coast for him when he got too old himself. But he soon knocked that off after he got married. There were ten of us altogether. I have a sister four years older than myself, and a brother two years older: another is eighty-three. My sister's husband lived to ninety-three.

"Well," said the old man, when the time came to part, "I believe I am the last one living who was at the trial: they're all gone but me, and I shan't last much longer;" adding, after a pause, "I hope you'll put *that* in your book—or whatever it is, that I am the *last of 'em left who was at the trial.*"

The kindly old man vegetated for a few weeks longer; and when, on January 3rd, 1895, a note was sent to inquire after him, the reply came: "The old man died yesterday, the 3rd inst." And thus was the last link with the Aldington smugglers snapped asunder.

He was laid to rest in Aldington churchyard, surrounded by his former associates, and was honoured with biographical notices in several papers; thus receiving more notice in death than in life.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHISKY SMUGGLERS

A MODERN form of smuggling little suspected by the average Englishman is found in the illicit whisky-distilling yet carried on in the Highlands of Scotland and the wilds of Ireland, as the records of Inland Revenue prosecutions still annually prove. The sportsman, or the more adventurous among those tourists who roam far from the beaten track, are still likely to discover in rugged and remote situations the ruins of rough stone and turf huts of no antiquity, situated in lonely rifts in the mountain-sides, always with a stream running by. If the stranger is at all inquisitive on the subject of these solitary ruins, he will easily discover that not only are they not old, but that they have, in many cases, only recently been vacated. They are, in fact, the temporary bothies built from the abundant materials of those wild spots by the ingenious crofters and other peasantry, for the purpose of distilling whisky that shall not, between its manufacture and its almost immediate consumption, pay duty to the revenue authorities.

This illegal production of what is now thought to be the " national drink " of Scotland and Ireland is not of any considerable antiquity, for whisky itself did not grow popular until comparatively recent times. Robert Burns, who may not unfairly be considered the poet-laureate of whisky, and styles it

" whisky, drink divine," would have had neither the possibility of that inspiration, nor have filled the official post of exciseman, had he flourished but a few generations earlier; but he was born in that era when whisky-smuggling and dram-drinking were at their height, and he took an active part in both the drinking of whisky and the hunting down of smugglers of it.

One of the most stirring incidents of his career was that which occurred in 1792, when, foremost of a little band of revenue officers, aided by dragoons, he waded into the waters of Solway, reckless of the quicksands of that treacherous estuary, and, sword in hand, was the first to board a smuggling brig, placing the crew under arrest and conveying the vessel to Dumfries, where it was sold. It was this incident that inspired him with the poem, if indeed, we may at all fitly claim inspiration for such an inferior Burns product :

THE DE'IL'S AWA' WI' THE EXCISEMAN

The De'il cam' fiddling thro' the town,
And danc'd awa' wi' the exciseman;
And ilka wife cry'd, " Auld Mahoun,
I wish you luck o' your prize, man."

We'll mak' our maut and brew our drink,
We'll dance, and sing, and rejoice, man;
And monie thanks to the muckle black De'il,
That danced awa' wi' the exciseman.

There's threesome reels, and foursome reels,
There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man;
But the ae best dance e'er cam' to our lan',
Was—the De'il's awa' wi' the exciseman.

Whisky, i. e. *usquebaugh*, signifying in Gaelic " water of life," originated, we are told, in the

monasteries, where so many other comforting cordials were discovered, somewhere about the eleventh or twelfth century. It was for a very long period regarded only as a medicine, and its composition remained unknown to the generality of people; and thus we find among the earliest accounts of whisky, outside monastic walls, an item in the household expenses of James the Fourth of Scotland, at the close of the fifteenth century. There it is styled "aqua vitæ."

A sample of this then new drink was apparently introduced to the notice of the King or his Court, and seems to have been so greatly appreciated that eight bolls of malt figure among the household items as delivered to "Friar James Cor," for the purpose of manufacturing more, as per sample.

But for generations to come the nobles and gentry of Scotland continued to drink wine, and the peasantry to drink ale, and it was only with the closing years of another century that whisky became at all commonly manufactured. We read that in 1579 distillers were for the first time taxed in Scotland, and private stills forbidden; and the rural population did not altogether forsake their beer for the spirit until about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Parliament, however, soon discovered a tempting source of revenue in it, and imposed constantly increasing taxation. In 1736 the distillers' tax was raised to 20*s*. a gallon, and there were, in addition, imposts upon the retailers.

It might have been foreseen that the very natural result of these extortionate taxes would be to elevate illegal distilling, formerly practised here and there, into an enormously increased industry, flourishing in every glen. Only a very small proportion of

the output paid the duties imposed. Every clachan had its still, or stills.

This state of things was met by another Act which prohibited the making of whisky from stills of a smaller capacity than five hundred gallons; but this enactment merely brought about the removal of the more or less openly defiant stills from the villages to the solitary places in the hills and mountains, and necessitated a large increase in the number of excisemen.

Seven years of these extravagant super-taxes sufficed to convince the Government of the folly of so overweighting an article with taxation that successful smuggling of it would easily bring fortunes to bold and energetic men. To do so was thus abundantly proved to be a direct provocation to men of enterprise; and the net result the Government found to be a vastly increased and highly expensive excise establishment, whose cost was by no means met by the revenue derived from the heavy duties. Failure thus becoming evident, the taxes were heavily reduced, until they totalled but ten shillings and sixpence a gallon.

But the spice of adventure introduced by illegal distilling under the old heavy taxation had aroused a reckless frame of mind among the Highlanders, who, once become used to defy the authorities, were not readily persuaded to give up their illegal practices. The glens continued to be filled with private stills. Glenlivet was, in especial, famed for its whisky-smugglers; and the peat-reek arose in every surrounding fold in the hills from hundreds of "sma' stills." Many of these private undertakings did business in a large way, and openly sold their products to customers in the south,

sending their tubs of spirits under strong escort, for great distances. They had customers in England also, and exciting incidents arose at the Border, for not only the question of excise then arose, but that of customs duty as well; for the customs rates on spirits were then higher in England than in Scotland. The border counties of Northumberland and Cumberland, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Dumfriesshire were infested with smugglers of this double-dyed type, to whom must be added the foreign contrabandists, such as the Dutchman, Yawkins, who haunted the coasts of Dumfriesshire and Galloway with his smuggling lugger, the *Black Prince*, and is supposed to be the original of Dirk Hatteraick, in Scott's romance, *Guy Mannering*.

The very name of this bold fellow was a terror to those whose duty it was to uphold law and order in those parts; and it was, naturally, to his interest to maintain that feeling of dread, by every means in his power. Scott tells us how, on one particular night, happening to be ashore with a considerable quantity of goods in his sole custody, a strong party of excisemen came down upon him. Far from shunning the attack, Yawkins sprang forward, shouting, "Come on, my lads, Yawkins is before you."

The revenue officers were intimidated, and relinquished their prize, though defended only by the courage and address of one man. On his proper element, Yawkins was equally successful. On one occasion he was landing his cargo at the Manxman's Lake, near Kirkcudbright, when two revenue cutters, the *Pigmy* and the *Dwarf*, hove in sight at once, on different tacks, the one coming round by the Isles of Fleet, the other between the point of Rueberry and the Muckle Ron. The dauntless free-trader

instantly weighed anchor and bore down right between the luggers, so close that he tossed his hat on the deck of the one and his wig on that of the other, hoisted a cask to his maintop, to show his occupation, and bore away under an extraordinary pressure of canvas, without receiving injury.

So, at any rate, the fantastic legends tell us, although it is but fair to remark, in this place, that no practical yachtsman, or indeed any other navigator, would for a moment believe in the possibility of such a feat.

To account for these and other hairbreadth escapes, popular superstition freely alleged that Yawkins insured his celebrated lugger by compounding with the devil for one-tenth of his crew every voyage. How they arranged the separation of the stock and tithes is left to our conjecture. The lugger was perhaps called the *Black Prince* in honour of the formidable insurer. Her owner's favourite landing-places were at the entrance to the Dee and the Cree, near the old castle of Rueberry, about six miles below Kirkcudbright. There is a cave of large dimensions in the vicinity of Rueberry, which, from its being frequently used by Yawkins and his supposed connection with the smugglers on the shore, is now called " Dirk Hatteraick's Cave." Strangers who visit this place, the scenery of which is highly romantic, are also shown, under the name of the " Gauger's Leap," a tremendous precipice.

" In those halcyon days of the free trade," says Scott, " the fixed price for carrying a box of tea or bale of tobacco from the coast of Galloway to Edinburgh was fifteen shillings, and a man with two horses carried four such packages."

This condition of affairs prevailed until peace had come, after the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. The Government then, as always, sadly in need of new sources of revenue, was impressed with the idea that a fine sum might annually be obtained by placing these shy Highland distillers under contribution. But there were great difficulties in the way. The existing laws were a mere dead letter in those regions, and it was scarce likely that any new measures, unless backed up by a display of military force, would secure obedience. The Duke of Gordon, at that period a personage of exceptionally commanding influence with the clansmen, was appealed to by the Government to use his authority for the purpose of discouraging these practices; but he declared, from his place in the House of Lords, that the Highlanders were hereditary distillers of whisky: it had from time immemorial been their drink, and they would, in spite of every discouragement, continue to make it and to consume it. They would sell it, too, he said, when given the opportunity of doing so by the extravagantly high duty on spirits. The only way out of the difficulty with which the Government was confronted was, he pointed out, the passing of an Act permitting the distilling of whisky on reasonable terms.

The result of this straightforward speech was the passing of an Act in 1823 which placed the moderate excise duty of 2*s.* 3*d.* a gallon on the production of spirits, with a £10 annual licence for every still of a capacity of forty gallons, smaller stills being altogether illegal.

These provisions were reasonable enough, but failed to satisfy the peasantry, and the people were altogether so opposed to the regulation of distilling

that they destroyed the licensed distilleries. It was scarce worth the while of retailers, under those circumstances, to take out licences, and so it presently came to pass that for every one duly licensed dealer there would be, according to the district, from fifty to one hundred unlicensed.

And so things remained until by degrees the gradually perfected system of excise patrols wore down this resistance.

In the meanwhile the licensed distillers had a sorry time of it.

Archibald Forbes, many years ago, in the course of some observations upon whisky-smugglers, gave reminiscences of George Smith, who, from having in his early days been himself a smuggler, became manager of the Glenlivet Distillery. This famous manufactory of whisky, in these days producing about two thousand gallons a week, had an output in 1824 of but one hundred gallons in the same time; and its very existence was for years threatened by the revengeful peasantry and proprietors of the "sma' stills." Smith was a man of fine physical proportions and great courage and tenacity of purpose, or he could never have withstood the persecutions and dangers he had long to face. "The outlook," he said, "was an ugly one. I was warned, before I began, by my neighbours that they meant to burn the new distillery to the ground, and me in the heart of it. The Laird of Aberlour presented me with a pair of hair-trigger pistols, and they were never out of my belt for years. I got together three or four stout fellows for servants, armed them with pistols, and let it be known everywhere that I would fight for my place till the last shot. I had a pretty good character as a man of

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my word, and through watching, by turns, every night for years, we contrived to save the distillery from the fate so freely predicted for it. But I often, both at kirk and market, had rough times of it among the glen people, and if it had not been for the Laird of Aberlour's pistols I don't think I should have been telling you this story now."

In '25 and '26 three more small distilleries were started in the glen; but the smugglers succeeded very soon in frightening away their occupants, none of whom ventured to hang on a second year in the face of the threats uttered against them. Threats were not the only weapons used. In 1825 a distillery which had just been started at the head of Aberdeenshire, near the banks o' Dee, was burnt to the ground with all its outbuildings and appliances, and the distiller had a very narrow escape of being roasted in his own kiln. The country was in a desperately lawless state at this time. The riding-officers of the Revenue were the mere sport of the smugglers, and nothing was more common than for them to be shown a still at work, and then coolly defied to make a seizure.

Prominent among these active and resourceful men was one Shaw, proprietor of a shebeen on the Shea Water, in the wilds of Mar. Smugglers were free of his shy tavern, which, as a general rule, the gaugers little cared to visit singly. Shaw was alike a man of gigantic size, great strength, and of unscrupulous character, and stuck at little in the furtherance of his illegal projects. But if Shaw was a terror to the average exciseman, George Smith, for his part, was above the average, and feared no man; and so, when overtaken by a storm on one occasion, had little hesitation in seeking the shelter

of this ill-omened house. Shaw happened to be away from home at the time, and Smith was received by the hostess, who, some years earlier, before she had married her husband, had been a sweetheart of the man who now sought shelter. The accommodation afforded by the house was scanty, but a bedroom was found for the unexpected guest, and he in due course retired to it. Mrs. Shaw had promised that his natural enemies, the smugglers, should not disturb him, if they returned in the night; but when they did return, later on, Shaw determined that he would at least give the distillery man a fright. Most of them were drunk, and ready for any mischief, and would probably have been prepared even to murder him. Shaw was, however, with all his faults, no little of a humorist, and only wanted his joke at the enemy's expense.

The band marched upstairs solemnly, in spite of some little hiccoughing, and swung into the bedroom, a torch carried by the foremost man throwing a fitful glare around. The door was locked when they had entered, and all gathered in silence round the bed. Shaw then, drawing a great butcher's knife from the recesses of his clothes, brandished it over the affrighted occupant of the bed. "This gully, mon, iss for your powels," said he.

But Smith had not entered this House of Dread without being properly armed, and he had, moreover, taken his pistols to bed with him, and was at that moment holding one in either hand, under the clothes. As Shaw flourished his knife and uttered his alarming threats, he whipped out the one and presented it at Shaw's head, promising him he would shoot him if the whole party did not immediately quit the room; while with the other (the bed

lying beside the fireplace) he fired slyly up the chimney, creating a thunderous report and a choking downfall of soot, in midst of which all the smugglers fled except Shaw, who remained, laughing.

Shaw had many smart encounters with the excise, in which he generally managed to get the best of it. The most dramatic of these was probably the exploit that befell when he was captaining a party of smugglers conveying two hundred kegs of whisky from the mountains down to Perth. The time was winter, and snow lay thick on field and fell; but the journey was made in daytime, for they were a numerous band and well armed, and feared no one. But the local Supervisor of Excise had by some means obtained early news of this expedition, and had secured the aid of a detachment of six troopers of the Scots Greys at Coupar-Angus, part of a squadron stationed at Perth. At the head of this little force rode the supervisor. They came in touch with the smugglers at Cairnwell, in the Spittal of Glenshee.

"Gang aff awa' wi' ye, quietly back up the Spittal," exclaimed the supervisor, "and leave the seizure to us."

"Na, faith," replied Shaw; "ye'll get jist what we care to gie!"

"Say ye so?" returned the excise officer hotly. "I'll hae the whole or nane!"

The blood rose in Shaw's head, and swelled out the veins of his temples. "By God," he swore, "I'll shoot every gauger here before ye'll get a drap!"

The supervisor was a small man with a bold spirit. He turned to his cavalry escort with the order "Fire!" and at the same time reached for Shaw's

collar, with the exclamation. "Ye've given me the slip often enough, Shaw! Yield now, I've a pistol in each pocket of my breeches."

"Have ye so?" coolly returned the immense and statuesque Shaw, "it's no' lang they'll be there, then!" and with that he laid violent hands upon each pocket and so picked the exciseman bodily out of his saddle, tore out both pistols and pockets, and then pitched him, as easily as an ordinary man could have done a baby, head over heels into a snow-drift.

Meanwhile, the soldiers had not fired; rightly considering that, as they were so greatly outnumbered, to do so would be only the signal for an affray in which they would surely be worsted. A wordy wrangle then followed, in which the exciseman and the soldiers pointed out that they could not possibly go back empty-handed; and in the end Shaw and his brother smugglers went their way, leaving four kegs behind, "just out o' ceeveelity," and as some sort of salve for the wounded honour of the law and its armed coadjutors.

Not many gaugers were so lion-hearted as this; but one, at least, was even more so. This rash hero one day met two smugglers in a solitary situation. They had a cart loaded up with whisky-kegs, and when the official, unaided, and with no human help near, proposed single-handed to seize their consignment and to arrest them, they must have been as genuinely astonished as ever men have been. The daring man stood there, purposeful of doing his duty, and really in grave danger of his life; but these two smugglers, relishing the humour of the thing, merely descended from their cart, and, seizing him and binding him hand and foot, sat him down in the

middle of the road with wrists tied over his knees and stick through the crook of his legs, in the "trussed fowl" fashion. There, in the middle of the highway, they proposed to leave him; but when he pitifully entreated not to be left there, as he might be run over and killed in the dark, they considerately carried him to the roadside; with saturnine humour remarking that he would probably be starved there instead, before he would be noticed.

The flood-tide of Government prosecutions of the "sma' stills" was reached in 1823–5, when an average of one thousand four hundred cases annually was reached. These were variously for actual distilling, or for the illegal possession of malt, for which offence very heavy penalties were exacted.

Preventive men were stationed thickly over the face of the Highlands, the system then employed being the establishment of "Preventive Stations" in important districts, and "Preventive Rides" in less important neighbourhoods. The stations consisted of an officer and one or two men, who were expected by the regulations not to sleep at the station more than six nights in the fortnight. During the other eight days and nights they were to be on outside duty. A ride was a solitary affair, of one exciseman. Placed in authority over the stations were "supervisors," who had each five stations under his charge, which he was bound to visit once a week.

George Smith, of Glenlivet, already quoted, early found his position desperate. He was a legalised distiller, and paid his covenanted duty to Government, and he rightly considered himself entitled, in return for the tribute he rendered, to some measure of protection. He therefore petitioned the Lords of

the Treasury to that effect; and my lords duly replied, after the manner of such, that the Government would prosecute any who dared molest him. This, however, was not altogether satisfactory from Smith's point of view. He desired rather to be protected from molestation than to be left open to attack, and the aggressors to be punished. A dead man derives no satisfaction from the execution of his assassin. Moreover, even the prosecution was uncertain. In Smith's own words, "I cannot say the assurance gave me much ease, for I could see no one in Glenlivet who dared institute such proceedings."

It was necessary for a revenue officer to be almost killed in the execution of his duty before the Government resorted to the force requisite for the support of the civil power. A revenue cutter was stationed in the Moray Firth, with a crew of fifty men, designed to be under the orders of the excise officers in cases of emergency.

But the smugglers were not greatly impressed with this display, and when the excisemen, accompanied with perhaps five-and-twenty sailors, made raids up-country, frequently met them in great gangs of perhaps a hundred and fifty, and recaptured any seizures they had made and adopted so threatening an attitude that the sailors were not infrequently compelled to beat a hasty and undignified retreat. One of these expeditions was into Glenlivet itself, where the smugglers were all Roman Catholics. The excisemen, with this in mind, considered that the best time for a raid would be Monday morning, after the debauch of the Sunday afternoon and night in which the Roman Catholics were wont to indulge; and accordingly, marching out of Elgin town on the Sunday, arrived at Glenlivet at daybreak. At the

time of their arrival the glen was, to all appearance, deserted, and their coming unnoticed, and the sight of the peat-reek rising in the still air from some forty or fifty "sma' stills" rejoiced their hearts.

But they presently discovered that their arrival had not only been observed but foreseen, for the whole country-side was up, and several hundred men, women, and children were assembled on the hill-sides to bid active defiance to them. The excisemen keenly desired to bring the affair to a decisive issue, but the thirty seamen who accompanied them had a due amount of discretion, and refused to match their pistols and cutlasses against the muskets that the smugglers ostentatiously displayed. The party accordingly marched ingloriously back, except indeed those sailors who, having responded too freely to the smugglers' invitation to partake of a "wee drappie," returned gloriously drunk. The excisemen, so unexpectedly baulked of what they had thought their certain prey, ungraciously refused a taste.

This formed the limit of the sorely tried Government's patience, and in 1829 a detachment of regulars was ordered up to Braemar, with the result that smuggling was gradually reduced to less formidable proportions.

The Celtic nature perceives no reason why Governments should confer upon themselves the rights of taxing and inspecting the manufacture of spirits, any more than any other commodity. The matter appears to resolve itself merely into expediency: and the doctrine of expediency we all know to be immoral. The situation was—and is, whether you apply it to spirits or to other articles in general demand—the Government wants revenue, and,

seeking it, naturally taxes the most popular articles of public consumption. The producers and the consumers of the articles selected for these imposts just as naturally seek to evade the taxes. This, to the Celtic mind, impatient of control, is the simplest of equations.

About 1886 was the dullest time in the illicit whisky-distilling industry of Scotland, and prosecutions fell to an average of about twenty a year. Since then there has been, as official reports tell us, in the language of officialdom, a "marked recrudescence" of the practice. As Mr. Micawber might explain, in plainer English, "there is—ah—in fact, more whisky made now." Several contributory causes are responsible for this state of things. First, an economical Government reduced the excise establishment; then the price of barley, the raw material, fell; and the veiled rebellion of the crofters in the north induced a more daring and lawless spirit than had been known for generations past. Also, restrictions upon the making of malt—another of the essential constituents from which the spirit is distilled—were at this time removed, and any one who cared might make it freely and without licence.

Your true Highlander will not relinquish his "mountain-dew" without a struggle. His forefathers made as much of it as they liked, out of inexpensive materials, and drank it fresh and raw. No one bought whisky; and a whole clachan would be roaring drunk for a week without a coin having changed hands. Naturally, the descendants of these men—"it wass the fine time they had, whateffer"—dislike the notion of buying their whisky from the grocer and drinking stuff made in up-to-date dis-

tilleries. They prefer the heady stuff of the old brae-side pot-still, with a rasp on it like sulphuric acid and a consequent feeling as though one had swallowed lighted petroleum : stuff with a headache for the Southerner in every drop, not like the tamed and subdued creature that whisky-merchants assure their customers has not got a headache in a hogshead.

The time-honoured brae-side manner of brewing whisky is not very abstruse. First find your lonely situation, the lonelier and the more difficult of access, obviously the better. If it is at once lonely and difficult of approach, and at the same time commands good views of such approaches as there are, by so much it is the better. But one very cardinal fact must not be forgotten : the site of the proposed still and its sheltering shieling, or bothy, must have a water-supply, either from a mountain-stream naturally passing, or by an artfully constructed rude system of pipes.

A copper still, just large enough to be carried on a man's back, and a small assortment of mash-tubs, and some pitchers and pannikins, fully furnish such a rustic undertaking.

The first step is to convert your barley into malt; but this is to-day a needless delay and trouble, now that malt can be made entirely without let or hindrance. This was done by steeping the sacks of barley in running water for some forty-eight hours, and then storing the grain underground for a period, until it germinated. The malt thus made was then dried over a rude kiln fired with peats, whose smoke gave the characteristic smoky taste possessed by all this bothy-made stuff.

It was not necessary for the malt to be made on the site of the still, and it was, and is, generally

carried to the spot ready-made for the mash-tubs. The removal of the duty upon malt by Mr. Gladstone, in 1880, was one of that grossly overrated and really amateur statesman's many errors. His career was full of false steps and incompetent bunglings, and the removal of the Malt Tax was but a small example among many Imperial tragedies on a grand scale of disaster. It put new and vigorous life into whisky-smuggling, as any expert could have foretold; for it was precisely the long operation of converting the barley into malt that formed the illegal distiller's chief difficulty. The time taken, and the process of crushing or bruising the grains, offered some obstacles not easily overcome. The crushing, in particular, was a dangerous process when the possession of unlicensed malt was an offence; for that operation resulted in a very strong and unmistakable odour being given forth, so that no one who happened to be in the neighbourhood when the process was going on could be ignorant of it while he retained his sense of smell.

Brought ready-made from the clachan to the bothy, the malt was emptied into the mash-tubs to ferment; the tubs placed in charge of a boy or girl, who stirs up the mess with a willow-wand or birch-twig; while the men themselves are out and about at work on their usual avocations.

Having sufficiently fermented, the next process is to place the malt in the still, over a brisk heat. From the still a crooked spout descends into a tub. This spout has to be constantly cooled by running water, to produce condensation of the vaporised alcohol. Thus we have a second, and even more important, necessity for a neighbouring stream, which often, in conjunction with the indispensable

fire, serves the excisemen to locate these stills. If a bothy is so artifully concealed by rocks and turves that it escapes notice, even by the most vigilant eye, amid the rugged hill-sides, the smoke arising from the peat-fire will almost certainly betray it.

The crude spirit thus distilled into the tub is then emptied again into the still, which has been in the meanwhile cleared of the exhausted malt and cleansed, and subjected to a second distilling, over a milder fire, and with a small piece of soap dropped into the liquor to clarify it.

The question of maturing the whisky never enters into the minds of these rustic distillers, who drink it, generally, as soon as made. Very little is now made for sale; but when sold the profit is very large, a capital of twenty-three shillings bringing a return of nine or ten pounds.

But the typical secret whisky-distiller has no commercial instincts. It cannot fairly be said that he has a soul above them, for he is just a shiftless fellow, whose soul is not very apparent in manner or conversation, and whose only ambition is to procure a sufficiency of "whusky" for self and friends; and a "sufficiency" in his case means a great deal. He has not enough money to buy taxed whisky; and if he had, he would prefer to make his own, for he loves the peat-reek in it, and he thinks "jist naething at a'" of the "puir stuff" that comes from the great distilleries.

He is generally ostensibly by trade a hanger-on to the agricultural or sheep-farming industries, but between his spells of five days at the bothy (for it takes five days to the making of whisky) he is usually to be seen loafing about, aimlessly. Experienced folk can generally tell where such an

one has been, and what he has been doing, after his periodical absences, for his eyelids are red with the peat-smoke and his clothes reek with it.

Perhaps the busiest centre of Highland illicit whisky-distilling is now to be located in the Gairloch, but anything in the shape of exact information on so shy a subject is necessarily not obtainable. Between this district and the Outer Hebrides, islands where no stills are to be found, a large secret trade is still believed to exist. Seizures are occasionally made; but the policy of the Inland Revenue authorities is now a broad one, in which the existence of small stills in inconsiderable numbers, although actually known, is officially ignored: the argument being that undue official activity, with the resultant publicity, would defeat itself by advertising the fact of it being so easy to manufacture whisky, leading eventually to the establishment of more stills.

The illegal production of spirits does, in fact, proceed all over Great Britain and Ireland to a far greater extent than generally suspected; and such remote places as the Highlands are nowadays by no means the most favourable situations for the manufacture. Indeed, crowded towns form in these times the most ideal situations. No one in the great cities is in the least interested in what his neighbour is doing, unless what he does constitutes a nuisance; and it is the secret distiller's last thought to obtrude his personality or his doings upon the notice of the neighbours. Secrecy, personal comfort, and conveniences of every kind are better obtained in towns than on inclement brae-sides; and the manufacture and repair of the utensils necessary to the business are effected more quickly, less expensively, and without the prying curiosity of a Highland clachan.

It follows from this long-continued course of illegal distilling that the Highlands are full of tales of how the gaugers were outwitted, and of hair-breadth escapes and curious incidents. Among these is the story of the revengeful postmaster of Kingussie, who, on his return from a journey to Aberlour on a dark and stormy night, called at Dalnashaugh inn, where he proposed to stay an hour or two. The pretty maid of the inn attended diligently to him for awhile, until a posse of some half-dozen gaugers entered, to rest there on their way to Badenoch, where they were due, to make a raid on a number of illicit stills. The sun of the postmaster suddenly set with the arrival of these strangers. They were given the parlour, and treated with the best hospitality the house could afford, while he was banished to the kitchen. He was wrathful, for was he not a Government official, equally with these upstarts? But he dissembled his anger, and, as the evening wore on and the maid grew tired, he suggested she had better go to bed, and he would be off by time the moon rose. No sooner had she retired than he took the excisemen's boots, lying in the ingle nook to dry, and pitched them into a great pot of water, boiling over the blaze.

When the moon had risen, he duly mounted his pony and set out for Badenoch, where he gave out the news that the gaugers were coming.

The excisemen could not stir from the inn for a considerable time, for their boiled boots refused to be drawn on; and by the time they had been enabled to stretch them and to set out once more on their way, the Badenoch smugglers had made off with all their gear, leaving nothing but empty bothies for inspection. The local historian is silent

as to what happened afterwards to the postmaster, the only possible author of this outrage.

A smuggler of Strathdearn was unfortunate in having the excise pouncing suddenly upon him in his bothy, and taking away his only cask of whisky. The hated myrmidons of a Sassenach Government went off with the cask, and were so jealous of their prize that they took it with them to the inn where they were to pass the night. All that evening they sang songs and were merry with a numerous company in an upper room; but even at their merriest they did not forget their captive, and one of their number sat upon it all the time.

It chanced, however, that among these merry fellows were some of the smuggler's friends, who were careful to note exactly the position of the cask. They procured an auger and bored a hole from the room below, through the flooring and into the cask, draining all the whisky away. When the excisemen had come to the end of their jollification, they had only the empty cask for their trouble.

One of the brae-side distillers of Fortingal brought a cart laden with kegs of whisky into Perth, by arrangement with an innkeeper of that town; but the innkeeper refused to pay a fair price.

"Wha will her sell it till, then?" asked the would-be vendor.

The innkeeper, a person of a saturnine humour, mentioned a name and a house, and the man went thither with his cart.

"What is it, my man?" asked the occupier, coming to the door.

"Well, yer honour, 'tis some o' the finest whusky that iver was made up yon, and niver paid the bawbee's worth o' duty."

"D'ye know who I am?" returned the householder. "I'm an officer of excise, and I demand to know who sent you to me."

The smuggler told him.

"Now," said the exciseman, "go back to him and sell him your whisky at his own price, and then begone."

The man did as he was bidden; sold his consignment, and left the town. It was but a few hours afterwards that the innkeeper's premises were raided by the excise, who seized the whisky and procured a conviction at the next Assizes, where he was heavily fined.

One of the last incidents along the Border, in connection with whisky-smuggling between Scotland and England, occurred after the duty had been considerably lowered. This was a desperate affray which took place on the night of Sunday, January 16th, 1825, at Rockcliffe Cross, five miles from Carlisle on the Wigton road. One Edward Forster, officer of excise, was on duty when he observed a man, whose name, it afterwards appeared, was Charles Gillespie, a labourer, carrying a suspicious object, and challenged him. This resulted in an encounter in which the excise officer's head was badly cut open. Calling aid of another labourer, who afterwards gave evidence, he remarked that he thought the smuggler had almost done for him, but pursued the man and fired upon him in the dark, with so good an aim that he was mortally wounded, and presently died. It was a dangerous thing in those times for an excise officer to do his duty, and at the inquest held the coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Murder"; the men who formed the jury being doubtless drawn from a class entirely in sympathy with smuggling,

and possibly engaged in it themselves. Forster, evidently expectant of that verdict, did not present himself, and was probably transferred by his superiors to some post far distant. There the affair ends.

About the same time, on the Carlisle and Wigton road, two Preventive men at three o'clock in the morning met a man carrying a load, which, when examined, proved to be a keg of spirits. Two other men then came up and bludgeoned the officers, one of whom dropped his cutlass; whereupon a smuggler picked it up, and, attacking him vigorously, cut him over the head. The smugglers then all escaped, leaving behind them two bladders containing eight gallons of whisky.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME SMUGGLERS' TRICKS AND EVASIONS—MODERN TOBACCO-SMUGGLING—SILKS AND LACE—A DOG DETECTIVE—LEGHORN HATS—FOREIGN WATCHES—PROHIBITION AND SMUGGLING IN THE UNITED STATES—NEW WAYS WITH THE OLD COASTGUARD

THE tricks practised by smugglers other than those daring and resourceful fellows who risked life, limb, and liberty in conflict with the elements and the Preventive service, may form, in the narration, an amusing chapter. Smugglers of this kind may be divided, roughly, into three classes. First, we have the ingeniously evasive trade importer in bulk, who resorts to false declarations and deceptive packing and labelling, for the purpose of entering his merchandise duty-free. Secondly, we have the sailors, the firemen of ocean-going steamers, and other persons of like classes, who smuggle tobacco and spirits, not necessarily to a commercial end, in considerable quantities; and thirdly, there are those enterprising holiday-makers and travellers for pleasure who cannot resist the sport.

We read in *The Times* of 1816 that, among the many expedients at that time practised for smuggling goods into France, the following scheme of introducing merchandise into Dieppe had some dexterity. Large stone bottles were procured, and, the bottoms being knocked off, they were then filled with cotton stockings and thread lace. A false bottom was fixed,

and, to avoid suspicion, the mouth of each bottle was left open. Any inquiries were met with the statement that the bottles were going to the spirit merchant, to be refilled.

This evasion was successfully carried on until a young man from Brighton ventured on too heavy a speculation. He filled his bottle with ten dozen stockings, which so weighted it that the bottom came off, disclosing the contents.

Ingenuity worthy of a better cause is the characteristic of modern types of smugglers. A constant battle of wits between them and the custom-house officers is in progress at all ports of entry; and the fortunes of either side may be followed with much interest.

One of the most ingenious of such tricks was that of the trader who was importing French kid gloves. He caused them to be despatched in two cases; one, containing only right-hand gloves, to Folkestone, the other, left-hand only, to London. Being at the time dutiable articles, and the consignee refusing to pay the duty, the two cases were confiscated and their contents in due course sold at auction. No one has a use for odd gloves, and these oddments accordingly in each case realised the merest trifle; but the purchaser—who was of course the consignee himself—netted a very considerable profit over the transaction. The abolition of duty on such articles has, however, rendered a modern repetition of the trick unnecessary. Nor is it any longer likely that foreign watches find their way to these shores in the old time-honoured style—*i. e.* hung in leather bags round the persons of unassuming travellers.

Such an one, smuggling an unusual number across from Holland, calculated upon the average passage of twenty-four hours, and reckoned he

could, for once in a way, endure that spell of waiting and walking about deck without lying down. He could not, as a matter of fact, on account of the watches, afford to lie down. To his dismay, the vessel, midway of the passage, encountered a dense fog, and had occasionally to stop or slow down; and, in the end, it was a forty-eight hours' passage. The unfortunate smuggler could not endure so much, and was obliged to disclose his treasure. So the Revenue scored heavily on that occasion.

Quaint and curious cases of smuggling every now and again are reported in the newspapers; as, for example, that of a man and woman who in August, 1923, were found to have on them, on their return from a holiday on the Continent, a large number of binocular glasses, dutiable goods, hung about their persons. Some absurd excuse was offered for this concealment. Triple duty on the glasses was the result.

Tobacco is still largely smuggled, and is, in fact, the foremost article so treated to-day; the very heavy duty, not less than five times its value, forming a great, and readily understood, temptation. Perhaps the most notable attempt in modern times to smuggle tobacco in bulk was that discovered in 1881.

The custom-house staff in London had for some time before that date become familiar with warning letters sent anonymously, hinting that great quantities of tobacco were continually being conveyed into England from Rotterdam without paying duty, but for a while little notice was taken of these communications; until at length they grew so definite that the officials had no choice but to inquire. Detective officers were accordingly despatched to Rotterdam,

to watch the proceedings there, and duly observed the packing of two large marine boilers with tobacco, by hydraulic pressure. They were then shipped aboard a steamer and taken to London, whence they were placed upon the railway at King's Cross for delivery in the north. A great deal of secret manœuvring by the custom-house officials and the police resulted in both boilers being seized in London and those responsible for them being secured. It was then discovered that they were only dummy boilers, made expressly for smuggling traffic; and it was further thought that this was by no means the first journey they had made. The parties to this transaction were fined close upon five thousand pounds, and the consignment was confiscated.

To conceal tobacco in hollow loaves of bread, especially made and baked for this purpose, was a common practice, and one not altogether unknown nowadays; while the coal-bunkers, the engine-rooms, and the hundred and one odd corners among the iron plates and girders of modern steamships afford hiding-places not seldom resorted to. The customs officers, who board every vessel entering port, of course discover many of these caches, but it is not to be supposed that more than a percentage of them are found.

Smuggled cigars are to-day a mere commonplace of the ordinary custom-house officer's experience with private travellers, and no doubt a great quantity find a secret passage through, in the trading way. For some years there was a considerable import of broomsticks into England from the Continent, and little or no comment was made upon the curious fact of it being worth while to import so inexpensive an article, which could equally well be

made here. But the mystery was suddenly dispelled one day when two clerks in a customs warehouse, wearied of a dull afternoon, set to the amusement of playing singlestick with two of these imported broomsticks. No sooner did one broomstick smite upon another in this friendly encounter than they both broke in half, liberating a plentiful shower of very excellent cigars, which had been secreted in the hollowed staves.

Silks formed an important item in the smugglers' trade, and even the gentlemen of that day unconsciously contributed to it, by the use of bandana handkerchiefs, greatly affected by that snuff-taking generation. Huskisson, a thorough-going advocate of Free Trade, was addressing the House of Commons on one occasion and declaring that the only possible way to stop smuggling was to abolish, or at any rate to greatly reduce, the duties; when he dramatically instanced the evasions and floutings of the laws. "Honourable members of this House are well aware that bandana handkerchiefs are prohibited by law, and yet," he continued, drawing one from his pocket, while the House laughed loud with delight, "I have no doubt there is hardly a gentleman here who has not got a bandana handkerchief."

Lace-smuggling, of course, exercised great fascination for the ladies, who—women being generally lacking in the moral sense, or possessing it only in the partial and perverted manner in which it is owned by infants—very rarely could resist the temptation to secrete some on their way home from foreign parts. The story is told how a lady who had a smuggled lace veil of great value in her possession grew very nervous of being able to carry it through, and imparted her anxiety to a gentleman at the

hotel dinner. He offered to take charge of it, as, being a bachelor, no one was in the least likely to suspect him of secreting such an article. But, in the very act of accepting his offer, she chanced to observe a saturnine smile spreading over the countenance of the waiter at her elbow. She instantly suspected a spy, and secretly altered her plans, causing the veil to be sewn up in the back of her husband's waistcoat.

The precaution proved to be a necessary one, for the luggage of the unfortunate bachelor was mercilessly overhauled at every customs station on the remainder of the journey.

Among the many ruses practised upon the Preventive men, who, as the butts of innumerable evasive false pretences, must have been experts in the ways of practical jokes, was that of the pretended drunken smuggler. To divert attention from any pursuit of the main body of the tub-carrying gang, one of their number would be detailed to stagger along, as though under the influence of drink, in a different direction, with a couple of tubs slung over his shoulders. It was a very excellently effective trick, but had the obvious disadvantage of working only once at any one given station. It was the fashion to describe the Preventive men as fools, but they were not such crass fools as all that, to be taken in twice by the same simple dodge.

The solitary and apparently intoxicated tub-carrier would lead the pursuers a little way and would then allow himself easily to be caught, but would then make a desperate and prolonged resistance in defence of his tubs. At last, overpowered and the tubs taken from him, and himself escorted to the nearest blockade-station, the tubs themselves would

be examined—and would generally be found to contain only sea-water !

The customs men, however, were not without their own bright ideas. The service would scarcely have been barren of imagination unless it were recruited from a specially selected levy of dunderheads. But it was an exceptionally brilliant officer who hit upon the notion of training a puppy for discovering those places where the smugglers had, as a temporary expedient, hidden their spirit-tubs. It would often happen that a successful run ended at the beach, and that opportunities for conveying the cargo inland had to be waited upon. It would therefore be buried in the shingle, or in holes dug in the sands at low water, until a safe opportunity occurred. The customs staff knew this perfectly well, but they necessarily lacked the knowledge of the exact spots where these stores had been made.

The exceptionally imaginative customs officer in question trained a terrier pup to the business of scenting them by the cunning method of bringing the creature up with an acquired taste for alcohol. This he did by mixing the pup's food with spirits, and allowing it to take no food that was not so flavoured. Two things resulted from this novel treatment : the dog's growth was stunted, and it grew up with such a liking for spirits that it would take nothing not freely laced with whisky, rum, gin, or brandy.

The plan of operations with a dog educated into these vicious tastes was simple. When his master found a favourable opportunity for strolling along the shore, in search of buried kegs, the dog, having been deprived of his food the day before, was taken. When poor hungry Tray came to one of these spots,

the animal's keen and trained scent instantly detected it, and he would at once begin scratching and barking like mad.

The smugglers were not long in solving the mystery of their secret hoards being all at once so successfully located; and, all too soon for the revenue, a well-aimed shot from the cliffs presently cut the dog's career short.

"Perhaps the oddest form of the smuggling carried on in later times," says a writer in an old magazine, "was a curious practice in vogue between Calais and Dover about 1819–20. This, however, was rather an open and well-known technical evasion of the customs dues than actual smuggling. The fashion at that time came in of ladies wearing Leghorn hats and bonnets of enormous dimensions. They were huge, strong plaits, nearly circular, and commonly about a yard in diameter; and they sold in England at from two to three guineas, and sometimes even more, apiece. A heavy duty was laid upon them, amounting to nearly half their value.

It is a well-known concession, made by the custom-houses of various countries, that wearing apparel in use is not liable to duty, and herein lay the opportunity of those who were financially interested in the import of Leghorn plaits. A dealer in them hired, at a low figure, a numerous company of women and girls of the poorest class to voyage daily from Dover to Calais and back, and entered into a favourable contract with the owners of one of the steamers for season-tickets for the whole band of them at low rates. The sight of these women leaving the town in the morning with the most deplorable headgear and returning in the evening gloriously arrayed, so far as their heads were concerned, was for

some few years a familiar and amusing one to the people of Dover.

Another ingenious evasion was that long practised by the Swiss importers of watches at the time when watches also were subject to duty. An *ad valorem* duty was placed upon them, which was arrived at by the importers making a declaration of their value. In order to prevent the value being fixed too low, and the Revenue being consequently defrauded, the Government had the right of buying any goods they chose, at the prices declared. This was by no means a disregarded right, for the authorities did frequently, in suspicious cases, exercise it, and bought considerable consignments of goods, which were afterwards disposed of by auction at well-known custom-house sales.

The Swiss makers and importers of watches managed to do a pretty good deal of business with the customs as an unwilling partner, and they did it in a perfectly legitimate way; although a way not altogether without suspicion of sharp practice. They would follow consignments of goods declared at ordinary prices with others of exactly similar quality, entered at the very lowest possible price consistent with the making of a trading profit; and the customs officials, noting the glaring discrepancy, would exercise their rights and buy the cheaper lots, thinking to cause the importers a severe loss and thus give them a greatly needed lesson. The watch-manufacturers really desired nothing better, and were cheerfully prepared to learn many such lessons; for they thus secured an immediate purchaser for cash, and so greatly increased their turnover. Other folks incidentally benefited, for goods sold at customs auctions rarely ever fetched their real value; there

were too many keenly interested middlemen about for that to be permitted. Thus, an excellent watch only, as a rule, to be bought for from £14 to £15, could on these occasions often be purchased for £10. Naturally enough, the proprietors of watch and jewellery businesses were the chief bidders at these auctions; and, equally naturally, they usually found means to keep down the prices to themselves, while carefully ensuring that private bidders should be artfully run up.

CHAPTER XV

COAST BLOCKADE—THE PREVENTIVE WATER-GUARD AND THE COASTGUARD—OFFICIAL RETURN OF SEIZURES—ESTIMATED LOSS TO THE REVENUE IN 1831—THE SHAM SMUGGLER OF THE SEA-SIDE—THE MODERN COASTGUARD

THE early coastguardsmen had a great deal of popular feeling to contend with. When the coast-blockade was broken up in 1831, and the "Preventive Water-Guard," as this new body was styled, was formed, officers and men alike found the greatest difficulty in obtaining lodgings. No one would let houses or rooms to the men whose business it was to prevent smuggling, and thus incidentally to take away the excellent livelihood the fisherfolk and long-shoremen were earning. Thus, the earliest stations of the coastguard were formed chiefly out of old hulks and other vessels condemned for sea-going purposes, but quite sound, and indeed, often peculiarly comfortable as residences, moored permanently in sheltered creeks, or hauled up, high and dry, on beaches that afforded the best of outlooks upon the sea.

Very few of these primitive coastguard stations are now left. Their place has been pretty generally taken by the neat, if severely unornamental, stations, generally whitewashed, and enclosed within a compound-wall, with which summer visitors to our coasts are familiar. And the old-time prejudice

against the men has had plenty of time to die away during the eighty years or so in which the coastguard service had existed. There are still, however, some eleven or twelve old hulks in use as coastguard stations; principally in the estuaries of the Thames and Medway.

The Preventive Water-Guard, from which the former coastguard service was developed, was not only the old coast-blockade reorganised, but was an extension of it from the shores of Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, and Essex, to the entire coast-line of the United Kingdom. It was manned by sailors from the Royal Navy, and the stations were commanded by naval lieutenants. Many of the martello towers that had been built at regular intervals along the shores of Kent and Sussex, and some few in Suffolk, in or about 1805, when the terror of foreign invasion was acute, were used for these early coastguard purposes.

That the Preventive service did not prevent, and did not at first even seriously interfere with, smuggling, was the contention of many well-informed people, with whom the Press generally sided. The coast-blockade, too, was—perhaps unjustly—said to be altogether inefficient; and was further said, truly enough, to be ruinously costly. Controversy was bitter on these matters. In January, 1825, *The Times* recorded the entry of the revenue cutter, *Hawke*, into Portsmouth, after a cruise in which she had chased and failed to capture, owing to heavy weather, a smuggling lugger which successfully ran seven hundred kegs of spirits. To this item of news Lieutenant J. F. Tompson, of H.M.S. *Ramillies*, commanding the coast-blockade at Lancing, took exception, and wrote to *The Times* a violent

letter, complaining of the statements, and saying that they were absolutely untrue. To this *The Times* replied, with considerable acerbity, on February 3rd, that the statement was true and the lieutenant's assertions unwarranted. The newspaper then proceeded to " rub it in " vigorously : " There is nothing more ridiculous, in the eyes of those who live upon our sea-coasts, than to witness the tender sensibilities of officers employed upon the coast-blockade whenever a statement is made that a smuggler has succeeded in landing his cargo; as though they formed a part of the most perfect system that can be established for the suppression of smuggling. Now be it known to all England that this is a gross attempt at humbug. Notwithstanding all the unceasing vigilance of the officers and men employed, smuggling is carried on all along the coast, from Deal to Cornwall, to as great a degree as the public require. Any attempt to smuggle *this* FACT may answer the purpose of a party, or a particular system, but it will never obtain belief.

" It was only a few days since that a party of coast-blockade men (we believe belonging to the Tower, No. 61) made common cause with the smugglers, and they walked off all together ! "

Exactly ! The sheer madness of the Government in maintaining the extraordinary high duties, and of adding always another force to existing services, designed to suppress the smugglers' trade, was sufficiently evident to all who would not refuse to see. When commodities in great demand with all classes were weighted with duties so heavy that few persons could afford to purchase those that had passed through His Majesty's custom-houses, two things might have been foreseen : that the regular-

ised imports would, under the most favourable circumstances, inevitably decrease; and that the smuggling which had already been notoriously increasing by leaps and bounds for a century past would be still further encouraged to supply those articles at a cheap rate, which the Government's policy had rendered unattainable by the majority of people.

An account printed by order of the House of Commons in the beginning of 1825 gave details of all customable commodities seized during the last three years by the various establishments formed for the prevention of smuggling: the Coastguard, or Preventive Water-Guard; the riding-officers; and the revenue cruisers and ships of war.

In that period the following articles were seized and dealt with:

Tobacco	902,684¼	lb.
Snuff	3,000	,,
Brandy	135,000	gallons.
Rum...	253	,,
Gin...	227,000	,,
Whisky	10,500	,,
Tea...	19,000	lb.
Silk...	42,000	yards.
India handkerchiefs	2,100	pieces.
Leghorn hats	23	
Cards	3,600	packs.
Timber	10,000	pieces.
Stills	75	

The cost of making these seizures, and dealing with them, was put as follows:

	£	s.	d.
Law expenses	29,816	19	4¾
Storage, rent of warehouses, etc.	18,875	14	10½
Salaries, cooperage, casks, repairs, etc.	1,533,708	4	10
Rewards to officers, etc.... ...	488,127	2	11½
	£2,070,528	2	0¾

The produce of all these articles sold was £282,541 8s. 5¾d.; showing a loss to the nation, in attempting during that period to suppress smuggling, of considerably over one million and three-quarters sterling.

This return of seizures provides an imposing array of figures, but, amazing as those figures are by themselves, they would be still more so if it were possible to place beside them an exact return of the goods successfully run, in spite of blockades and Preventive services. Then we should see these figures fade into insignificance beside the enormous bulk of goods that came into the country and paid no dues.

Some very startling figures are available by which the enormous amount of smuggling effected for generations may be guessed. It would be possible to prepare a tabulated form from the various reports of the Board of Customs, setting forth the relation between duty-paid goods and the estimated value of smuggled commodities during a term of years, but as this work is scarce designed to fill the place of a statistical abstract, we will forbear. A few illuminating items, it may be, will suffice.

Thus in 1743 it was calculated that the annual average import of tea through the legitimate channels was 650,000 lb.; but that the total consumption was three times this amount. One Dutch house alone was known to illegally import an annual weight of 500,000 lb.

An even greater amount of spirit-smuggling may legitimately be deduced from the perusal of the foregoing pages, and, although in course of time considerably abated, as the coastguard and other organisations settled down to their work of preven-

tion and detection, it remained to a late date of very large proportions. Thus the official customs report for 1831 placed the loss to the revenue on smuggled goods at £800,000 annually. To this amount the item of French brandy contributed £500,000. The annual cost of protecting the revenue (excise, customs, and Preventive service) was at the same time between £700,000 and £800,000.

An interesting detailed statement of the contraband trade in spirits from Roscoff, one of the Brittany ports, shows that, two years later than the above, from March 15th to 17th, 1833, there were shipped to England, per smuggling craft, 850 tubs of brandy; and between April 13th and 20th in the same year 750 tubs; that is to say, 6,400 gallons in little more than one month. And although Roscoff was a prominent port in this trade, it was but one of several.

So late as 1840, forty-eight per cent. of the French silks brought into this country were said to have paid no duty; and for years afterwards silk-smugglers swathed apoplectically in contraband of this description formed the early steamship companies' most regular patrons.

The seaside holiday-maker of that age was an easy prey of pretended smugglers, cunning rascals who traded upon that most widespread of human failings, the love of a bargain, no matter how illegitimately it may be procured. The lounger on the seaside parades of that time was certain, sooner or later, to be approached by a mysterious figure with an indefinable air of mystery and a semi-nautical rig, who, with many careful glances to right and left, and in a hoarse whisper behind a secretive hand, told a tale of smuggled brandy or cigars,

watches or silks. "Not 'arf the price you'd pay for 'em in the shops, guv'nor," the shameless impostor would say, producing a bundle of cigars, "but the real thing; better than them wot most of the shops keep. I see you're a gent as knows a good smoke. You shall 'ave 'em"—at some preposterously low price. And generally the greenhorn did have them; finding, when he came to smoke the genuine Flor de Cabbage he had bought, that they would have been dear at any price. To that complexion of mean fraud did the old smuggling traditions of courage, adventure, and derring-do come at last!

There was a decided increase of smuggling in 1868, compared with the year before, the number of seizures being 979, an increase of 52. Two hundred and twenty-two convictions were obtained for the heavier offences, and 807 summary convictions, where the quantity seized was small. Attempts were made by a large number of smugglers to land 72 small casks containing 205 gallons of brandy, at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. The casks were secured; but, it being a very dark December night, the offenders escaped.

It was noted then, as it has often been since, and will be again, that the disposition to smuggle is not confined to the merchant service; and that it is often enough found on Service ships. A seizure of 97 lb. of tobacco was made in January, 1868, aboard H.M.S. *Speedy*, at Jersey, stationed there for the protection of the oyster-fishery.

There was a considerable increase in the year 1872 in the number of seizures of tobacco, cigars and spirits in the port of London, the number of cases of smuggling detected rising from 188 in 1871 to 293 in 1872. The total quantity of tobacco and

cigars seized in London was 2,369 lb., an increase of 947 lb., but the quantity of spirits seized was only 93 gallons, a decrease of 66 gallons. At the outports the seizures of tobacco and cigars exceeding 10 lb. and of spirits exceeding two gallons showed a slight decrease from 134 to 130, and the tobacco and cigars a large decrease in quantity from 31,430 lb. in 1871 to 3,649 lb. in 1872; but the quantity of spirits seized showed an increase from 390 gallons to 1,332 gallons. The smaller seizures showed an increase from 817 to 888; and petty smuggling seemed to have increased. Some of the great offenders escaped with the loss of their prey. The coastguard seized, near Cowes, 69 casks, containing 286 gallons of brandy concealed in a cliff, but the guilty parties escaped. In another seizure near Cowes of 77 tubs of spirits a notorious smuggler was also captured.

In the year 1874 there were 1,157 seizures made of smuggled goods in the United Kingdom; 53 less than in the preceding year. One thousand and ninety-four persons were convicted of smuggling, being 80 less than in the preceding year. The quantity of tobacco and cigars seized in 1874 was 10,738 lb. and of spirits 266 gallons, both being materially less than in the preceding year. The Commissioners of Customs stated that from the reports made to them and from their own inquiries and observations, they had no reason to doubt that smuggling was gradually diminishing. Most of the cases were for tobacco. A few instances still occurred of smuggling such as was common in the earlier part of the century by running cargoes of spirits in small kegs or tubs which had been previously sunk at a convenient distance from the

shore. In one case near Freshwater, Isle of Wight, some of a gang of men were seized in the night, carrying nine kegs of smuggled brandy which had been brought over in a small vessel from France, and twelve more kegs were found in ditches in the neighbourhood. Three men were convicted in £100 penalty, or six months' imprisonment. One of these, a small farmer, paid the penalty and was released. The kegs had been brought ashore by fishermen.

We read in reports of 1879 that " of late, smuggling has not been uncommon at the Orkney Islands. H.M. Cutter *Eagle* has been stationed at Kirkwall for the purpose of cruising about the islands, and the gunboat *Firm* has arrived from Queensferry, and landed a number of coastguardsmen, who are to be distributed over the islands. Depôts are to be fixed at Westray, Sanday, and Kirkwall, and a small steamboat is to be employed for the purpose of boarding the vessels—principally French—which visit these islands in great numbers at the herring-fishing season, and also the fishing-smacks coming home from the Faroe and Iceland fisheries."

To-day the petty smugglers still carry on; and it is no unusual thing to read in the daily papers some little unobtrusive paragraph relating to such things. The evening newspapers of October 31st, 1922, contained such an item in which three German seamen figured. They were members of the crew of the steamship *Ilmar*, and were fined £54 15*s*. 0*d*. at the Tower Bridge police court, for harbouring brandy. A week later, at West Hartlepool, an American sailor, one of the crew of the steamship *City of Alton*, was fined £38 for attempting to smuggle thirty-five bottles of whisky, which had been discovered by the rummaging officers of the

Customs under a floor, covered with oil. The man said he did not declare the whisky, as the captain would then have known of it and destroyed it. He and his mates wished to drink it on the way back to the States, where they would not be able to obtain any more, under the Prohibition conditions now in force in that country. This was, as most people would think, reasonable enough; but, as stated, a heavy fine was imposed; even though the captain's evidence did not tell against the defendant. He said the bottles smelt strongly of crude oil and paraffin; and though they might be sold in America, could not be disposed of in England. This is an eloquent testimony as to the conditions whisky drinkers are now reduced to in what is stated in the *Star-Spangled Banner*, the national anthem of the United States, to be " The Home of the Brave and the Land of the Free." It is time, perhaps, that line was amended.

The Preventive officer, called after the captain's evidence had been heard, said the whisky had been tested and was found to be the finest Scotch. Our sympathies and regrets are therefore all the more profound that the deprived occupants of the forecastle should have been, after all, obliged to cross the Atlantic without it.

Smuggling of cocaine and other drugs nowadays takes up so much of the Customs officer's attention that there is some suspicion it is diverted from the question of brandy smuggling in particular and of other dutiable goods in general. Of course the fantastically high duties on foreign spirits have now again made any successful evasion of the Customs highly remunerative. The public and the Revenue authorities deceive themselves if they think there is

not now a considerable contraband trade, lately sprung up. If that were not so, how could it be possible to obtain in places not far remote from the South Coast excellent French brandy at eightpence the half-quartern and Havana cigars at sixpence each, while remarkably good French wines may be had, by those who know how to go about it, at prices which would be impossibly low in London?

Of course, in the prevalent conditions in the United States, smuggling to-day has become a great interest. The Prohibition law has created it, and more and greater fortunes are being made there under " dry " conditions than ever were amassed under " wet." The risks are great and the smuggling organisation is elaborate and complete. The consumer still obtains his stuff, but he has to pay far more heavily for it: that is all—with, equally, of course, the certainty that what he now pays for at more than double rates is probably not nearly so good as it was before the notorious law came into operation.

In short, import smuggling into the United States and " bootlegging " proceed constantly, and have assumed such dimensions that the law is regularly brought into contempt; while the administration of it has created a horde of official and other spies. The actual costs of administration do not appear to be available, but they are very high, and likely to go higher, if the projected " Prohibition Navy " is to take the seas. Great indignation, real or feigned, has been expressed by the American authorities that spirits are shipped from this country (as alleged) and smuggled into theirs; and it has been suggested by the U.S. Government that vessels of each country should be searched out-

side the usual territorial waters, up to an extended limit of twelve miles from either shore.

The real business of the shippers is to lie off at sea and there to await the actual smugglers, who come out in fast motor-boats and tranship cargo. So much stuff is thus got ashore on the lonely stretches of coast in the Southern States, and then distributed along the roads, that it has now become difficult to command the price of five dollars for a bottle of whisky, the figure which ruled some time ago.

These times will become for the United States as historic in the smuggling way as our old eighteenth century days. A literature will inevitably spring up about them; with tales of derring-do; of stratagems and alarms; together with all the appurtenances of smugglers' hiding-holes and caves, such as we have, authentic or merely imaginative. As regards our own old landmarks of smugglers, they are always being found; sometimes by unsuspecting folk falling into them; as, for example, happened in April, 1914, at Ferryside, Carmarthen:

"While attending to a flower-bed in his garden, Mr. Woodliffe, of the Cliff, Ferryside, disappeared owing to a sudden subsidence of the ground. Fortunately friends were at hand, and he was quickly extricated. Digging disclosed a cave some fifteen yards long and about sixteen feet deep, terminating in a recess nine feet square cut in the solid earth, without any support whatever. An old house called the 'Smugglers' Cottage' was demolished here in 1898."

To-day we are faced with that singular development, the abolition of a body of public servants who have for close upon a hundred years been familiar all along our shores. It does not seem to be actually the

most propitious time to have done that, now high duties act most provocatively to renew the free-traders' old calling: but there it is! Proposals have for some time been afoot to abolish, or at any rate radically to change, the Coastguard.

The Revenue Coastguard, dating from 1831, was transferred from the control of the Board of Customs to the Admiralty in 1856; and as a naval force it continued until recent times, and was, in fact, known officially as the "First Naval Reserve." Its personnel was not to exceed 10,000; and it has, in fact, rarely numbered more than 4,200 men. Although living in those shore barracks with which every frequenter of our coasts is familiar, they are accounted as part of the crew of definite ships of the Navy, and are officered by Captains, Commanders, and Lieutenants. The cost of the establishment was until recent years round about £460,000 annually, but this included cost of ships and other craft. A Coastguardsman is thus really in every sense a naval man ashore; and, as such, is liable at any moment to be called upon to rejoin afloat, and to proceed on active service.

The duties of the Coastguard were many. Although not under control of Customs or Excise, they were there partly to discourage smuggling; while for the Board of Trade the Coastguard assisted, and gave notice of, ships in distress; acted for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution; kept a look-out upon the landings of boats and on the movements of boats. The lives of many rash and inexperienced holiday-folk have been saved in this way. The Department of Fisheries, the Post Office, the Trinity House, and Lloyd's Marine Insurance all used the Coastguard.

The Admiralty for a long time past had objected to the annual cost of the Coastguard service being accounted for in the estimates as a purely Naval charge, and it proposed several units: among them a "Naval Signalling Section"; while others would become a "Coast Watching Force for the Board of Trade," and a "Coast Preventive Force" for the Board of Customs. On the outbreak of war, all these would coalesce under control of the Admiralty.

Thus has disappeared, split up into almost unrecognisable details, a body of public servants whose history, if and when told, will afford stirring incidents little suspected.

The justice of the remarks made in these concluding pages on the recent very great increase in smuggling into this country is proved by the items of information that increasingly occupy the pages of the newspapers, together with the alarms and rumours that inevitably accompany them. It must ever be a matter of extraordinary difficulty to trace the illicit introduction of cocaine, and of saccharine, which are potent even in the smallest quantities; and the profits of any successful smuggling of them are tremendous incentives. While saccharine is subject to a duty of six and tenpence an ounce there obviously will be numbers of people who will risk the penalties for smuggling it. As to spirits, so long as the inordinate duty of sixty-seven shillings and sixpence a gallon is laid upon them, there will be that running of goods across Channel by fast motor-boats into the remote shores and creeks of the South and East Coasts which is now very freely commented upon.

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(Individual smugglers indexed only when mentioned at length)

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