

THE SMUGGLER OF 1875.



A SCOTTISH farmer on the sea-coast, in the earlier part of this century, used to tell how he often found his servants standing asleep at midday beside their ploughs. The reason was that the ploughmen had not had a wink of sleep all night: they had been engaged on their own particular business, discharging boats laden with the contraband goods of a smuggler that had ventured in-shore as soon as the darkness concealed her from the revenue cutters that were

prowling about. In those days you could not convince the bulk of the people that smuggling was a positively wrong thing. The true remedy for it, a wise tariff, had not then been discovered. The duties were far from moderate, and the temptation to break the law was too great to be resisted. As for the maxims of political economy, they were not thought of for a moment, and the smuggler, if he was caught, excited a good deal of public sympathy.

Many things have changed since then, and smuggling may lament that it has now fallen upon evil times.

"This tempting and long-established violation of the law," say the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs, in a lately-published report, "is gradually diminishing in degree, and giving less frequent occasion for the more serious offences which used to be connected with it."

There are still, however, enough of smuggling cases to keep the Custom-house officers on the alert, and there is a strong presumption that, in spite of all their skill and vigilance, a large number pass undetected.

Smuggling is practised on a considerable scale by the crews of vessels engaged in trading between London and those Continental ports where tobacco and spirits—there is scarcely anything else worth smuggling—can be bought at very low prices. The devices for concealing the goods from the Customs officers, when they "rummage" or search the ship, are as various as they are adroit. In 1872, over a hundred pounds of tobacco was found on board a vessel, ingeniously concealed in cases made to resemble deal ends used as firewood. The favourite hiding-place is the engine-room, spaces in connection with the machinery being largely taken advantage of, because they can only be searched when they have grown cool.

The Commissioners of Customs point out that it is a common practice, when a number of men on board a ship try their hands in company at smuggling, for one of them to agree to take the whole responsibility of the venture on himself in the event of discovery. In that

case of course he must bear all the penalty. The victim, who, likely enough, looks upon himself as a self-sacrificing hero, is sometimes chosen by lot, sometimes in rotation.

By law, the vessel on board which any smuggling takes place may be seized, but it is usually released with the infliction of a fine, the amount depending on the greater or less degree of strictness with which the captain and other officers have looked after the men. It rarely, if ever, happens that they know anything about the goings on of their crew.

Sometimes a vessel is carefully searched without anything being discovered, though contraband goods are concealed on board. The first opportunity is then taken by the smugglers to transfer their property into the hands of their confederates on shore. There is considerable risk in so doing. Last year, two men were pounced down upon in the Thames, just as they were in the act of unshipping a considerable quantity of tobacco; and four were captured in Lower Thames Street when they thought they had escaped all danger, and were putting a hundred and eighty pounds of the fragrant weed into a cab. These worthies all got four months' imprisonment.

Although the seamen of the Royal Navy are as honest and high-principled a set of men as we are likely to find anywhere, yet it must be confessed they have a weakness for smuggling. This has been specially noticed at Portsmouth. Tobacco and tobacco-stalks are systematically conveyed on shore from Her Majesty's ships at Spithead, and even from the men-o'-war lying in the dockyard. In the course of last year many seizures arising out of this traffic were made. In one instance, "private information" led to official hands being laid on a box containing forty-nine pounds of tobacco-stalks—the importation of which is expressly prohibited by law—while the contraband stuff was on its way to London. Further inquiry was made, and it was discovered that half-a-ton weight of similar packages had been forwarded to the same address in the course of the preceding four months.

But this is not the truly picturesque style of smuggling—this is not the sort of thing that made a famous German critic remark that "the moment there was no contraband traffic it would be a bad day for romance." We can still, however, point to smuggling operations resembling those of a past generation, and not at all wanting in picturesque features. In 1873, for example, the Customs officers came across an interesting case, of which we may give the details.

On the top of a bank, rising directly from high-water mark in one of the creeks of Southampton Water, stood a little wooden hut. It commanded a full view of the water, and was surrounded by an ill-kept garden. No one knew for what purpose it had been built. There were some houses not far off, but the hut did not belong to them.

One day a revenue officer traced an old smuggler,

on whom he had been keeping his eye, to this hut. His suspicions were aroused, and the place was watched with great precautions for nearly two months.

At midnight on the 28th of May, two men, who were on the look-out, saw by the light of the moon that a boat was approaching the shore from a smack which lay some little distance off. There were four men in the boat. They rowed into the creek, and one man landed with some bags at the foot of the bank. The other three took the boat about two hundred yards off, and cautiously hauled her up. All four then ascended, carrying the bags, to the hut.

One of the watchers hurried off for assistance, the other remained at his post. Three policemen were roused out of their beds, and the watchers and the policemen marched to the hut to secure their prey. They found two men on guard outside, and four asleep within. The six were promptly secured and lodged in the police-station. Evidently they had intended, when the four had slept off their fatigue, to carry the goods inland, for a horse and cart were found in waiting, the cart having a false bottom.

A boat was next procured, and the vessel whence the men had come was boarded. It was found to be laden with tobacco and spirits. The result was that the vessel was seized, together with eighty-five bales of leaf tobacco, six boxes of cavendish, and some cigars and spirits. Four of the persons concerned in the transaction were convicted of the offence, one of them being a notorious smuggler.

Last year another case of wholesale smuggling occurred. A policeman on duty near Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight, at half-past one o'clock one morning, lighted upon five men carrying kegs. Without thinking of their superior strength, he pounced upon the goods. He pulled the kegs from two of the men, who took to their heels. Two others threw down their

kegs and also fled. The fifth was more courageous: he threw down his keg and attacked the constable. The latter might have got the worst of it, had not the sergeant, who was luckily not far distant, come to his assistance. Between them they overpowered the smuggler, and carried him off to durance vile.

The coast-guard were communicated with. They made search, and found twelve other kegs—tubs, as they are called—hidden in ditches in the neighbourhood. Along with them was the warp, or sinking-rope, from the "stops" on which it is supposed that about fifteen tubs more were smuggled at the same time. These fifteen tubs were never heard or seen anything of. The spirit in the kegs was brandy, sixty per cent. over-proof. A small vessel had brought the venture over from France, but legal proof against her was wanting, and she escaped seizure.

From these examples we see that the exciting trade of smuggling still flourishes to a certain extent among us. We might add many other instances, for the total number of smugglers convicted last year was close upon eleven hundred. The seizures included 10,738 pounds of tobacco and cigars, and 266 gallons of spirits.

It is a matter of congratulation, however, that smuggling, as we have already stated, is steadily on the decrease. Those engaged in contraband traffic have not now, as of old, the sympathy of the community. Those days are past when the author of the "Wealth of Nations" could write without fear of contradiction that "to pretend to have any scruple about buying smuggled goods would in most countries be regarded as one of those pedantic pieces of hypocrisy which, instead of gaining credit with anybody, serve only to expose the person who pretends to practise them to the suspicion of being a greater knave than the rest of his neighbours."

ARDEN FOREST.*



ARDEN FOREST! Arden Forest! 'neath thy
spreading oaks I lie,
And their immemorial branches shut me from
the summer sky.

Truest lessons from the woodland you have ever power
to teach,
As a rosier hue of sunset flushes on the shining beech.

Is it that thy glades are haunted, and the words come
on the wind,
Spoken in the days departed by the dainty Rosalind?

Does the wand of the enchanter wave above thy wood-
land still,
While the glamour of his genius sways the wand'rer at
his will?

When a breeze of summer stirs each leaflet, by another
kist,
Comes some echo of the fancies of the mighty dramatist.

Arden Forest! thou art vocal with the speech of days
of yore,
Since remembrance of their music must be with us
evermore.

Still I hear the eager questions Rosalind was fain to say;
Celia's laughing answer greets me 'mid the ancient
oaks to-day.

Touchstone's humour comes to win me back into the
olden time;
Every wind that stirs the fern-leaf whispers of
Orlando's rhyme.

Certes is the place enchanted, for the vision's come again
That, immortal for all ages, flashed to life in Shake-
speare's brain.

Now a fond farewell to Arden! for the magic echoes die,
And the harbinger of starlight trembles in the western
sky.

H. SAVILE CLARKE.

* See the FRONTISPIECE.