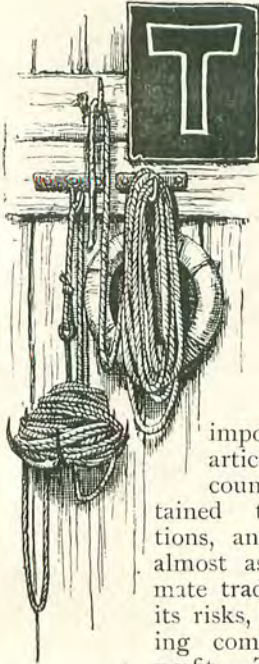


Smugglers' Devices.



THE evasion of the customs duties has, since customs duties were first collected by Government, been in this country almost a national vice—or crime, as many will consider it. Not that no smuggling goes on, or has gone on in other countries; but with the very large duties which in old times were

imposed on almost every article imported to this country the practice attained tremendous proportions, and was looked upon almost as a legitimate trade, having its risks, but bringing commensurate profit. The facts

that all contraband articles came from across the water, and that the country possessed a very long coast line difficult to watch everywhere, and providing numberless convenient landing-places, also tended to make the trade general and lucrative. The last century witnessed the most flourishing days of the industry, and indeed it was not till many years of the present century had expired that smuggling of the old-fashioned sort fell into unprofitableness and evil repute. The Sussex smugglers were at this time a most active and popular body of ruffians, whose misdeeds the whole population facilitated and screened as far as possible. Indeed, many a worthy parson thought it no shame to allow the vaults and belfry of his church to be used as warehouses for contraband merchandise, and received consideration for his assistance in many a keg of good Nantz. Dangerous ruffians, too, were the Sussex smugglers, and, indeed, those

all round the coast; and the criminal records contain many horrible stories of savagely murdered customs officers, whose lives went in the execution of their duty. Of course, often a stand-up fight took place, in which men of both sides died fighting man to man; but the tales of brutal murder of solitary and defenceless officers and suspected informers are numerous and unpleasant. The bold smuggler in actual life was not, any more than the bold highwayman, a very heroic person, although the excessive duties in his time levied on almost every article of daily use and the consequent general high prices gained him many friends and apologists. Even a great moralist like Adam Smith felt justified in describing him as "a person who, though, no doubt, highly blamable for violating the laws of his country, is frequently incapable of violating those of



"CONTRABAND MERCHANDISE."

natural justice, and would have been in every respect an excellent citizen had not the laws of his country made that a crime which nature never meant to be so."

There can be no doubt that the best measures of repression against smuggling are a simplification of the customs laws and a reduction of the duties until the profits of the fraud are too small to pay for the risk and trouble. Since the old protective days, when the smuggler of the old school, with his fast vessels, his boldness and his pistols, waxed fat and prospered, customs laws have been simplified and duties have been wonderfully reduced; consequently, smuggling is no longer a trade, and such smuggling as still goes on, the effect of the old taint in the national blood, is mean, small, and petty by comparison. Boldness has given way to peddling individual cunning, and for the cargoes of brandy and lace once "run" by popular ruffians, miserable pocketfuls of tobacco are secreted by very ordinary and unheroic persons who very probably, in many cases, would shrink from an action involving anything like intrepidity, and would resent the imputation of dishonesty with much indignation. Nevertheless quaint and curious are the devices they employ to baffle the Queen's officers, and, as often as not, extremely ingenious. Such smuggling as now goes on is almost entirely confined, as might be guessed, to tobacco, although spirits or eau de Cologne in small quantities sometimes successfully tempt.

The ingenious and horny-handed docker is responsible for more than one quaint artifice, and, as the secretion of tobacco or spirits on his part may at times involve an accusation of theft as well as of smuggling, a sharp lookout is kept for him. Let us imagine ourselves at the dock gates as a dock-labourer approaches to leave, and observe proceedings.

To ordinary observation he is a plain and innocent docker, with the customary amount of hard wear in his clothes and the customary amount of dirt upon his face. But, as he approaches the gates there becomes apparent upon that same face an unusual expression of blank blamelessness which at once attracts attention. He looks much too innocent altogether, and has, besides, a slight limp; so the constable stops him. Now we should never notice, unless our attention were first directed to it, that the docker wears very large boots. The constable has observed it, however, and makes a pointed allusion to the fact. The blameless docker murmurs something indefinite about corns, and, being at once offered a seat, is, much against his will, induced to ease his feet by taking the large boots off.

Dear, dear!—no wonder the poor fellow was limping. The fact is, he has been



"NO WONDER THE POOR FELLOW WAS LIMPING."

making anti-damp socks, like cork soles, for himself, but has made them much too thick. Besides, they are made of tobacco cake, which is no doubt a capital thing for the purpose, but looks very suspicious. So the gentle docker is kept for awhile to explain, and he probably finds the explanation a difficult one.

The tobacco sole dodge is a very common one, and quite "blown upon"; but as it is impossible to examine everybody's boots, no doubt some such things get through still, from time to time. Sailors and others employ it, as well as dockers.

Here comes another blameless docker. He looks neither to the right nor the left, but gazes straight ahead through the gates with an expression which may mean thoughts of his happy boyhood, or bloater for tea, or indeed anything but smuggled smokes and drinks. Still he is stopped, and the constable's hand falls upon his arm. Something about the arm takes the constable's fancy, so he slips his hand under the sleeve, and draws forth an odd article—an article at which the docker gazes with intense astonishment, as though he couldn't think how it came there. And, indeed, how could it have come there? For it is a piece of bamboo, nearly a foot long, with one end open, and a piece of small rubber or leather tubing attached to the other end. Now there is nothing contraband in a piece of bamboo, with an indiarubber tube attached, but somehow about half a pint of rum has contrived to get into this particular piece of bamboo, and docker No. 2 goes to join his persecuted colleague.

Now this docker was a man of sagacity. When he took that bit of bamboo and dropped it, open end downward, into a barrel of rum, it immediately filled up with the spirit, because the air escaped through the india-rubber tube. Then this scientific person pinched the sides of the tube close together, near the bamboo, so that no air could re-enter to allow the rum to fall out, and carefully lifted the machine out of the bung-hole. Having turned it open-end up, and dexterously manipulated the rubber tube so that no rum might escape thereby, nothing remained but to slip the whole instrument up his sleeve, march to the dock gates and—be caught.

The bamboo dipper is not an uncommon dodge, and its success varies. It is a much more artistic trick than the generality of those adopted by men employed about the docks, whose genius does not often rise

above tobacco in a coat-lining, or "sucking the monkey." But honest Jack Tar is perhaps a greater smuggler than the docker—honest Jack Tar nowadays being often a Lascar. 'Baccy is Jack's chief weakness, of course. Dive down into the lowermost internals of some sailing vessel in the London Dock—down where the smell of pitch hangs solid in the air, and where the dirty lantern rarely saves the explorer's head and shins from grievous bangs. Here are coils of rope, not by ones, or tens, but by hundreds, all tarry, all smelly, all in confusion alike. There is no difference, one might say, between any of them, excepting, perhaps, in size. But if somebody connected with the ship were confiding enough, and foolish enough, to come and pick out for us the right coil of rope, and hold it close against our noses, we might, even in that pitch-laden atmosphere, just detect the familiar smell of—twist. There it is, one fraudulent coil among a hundred innocent ones, simply several pounds of twist tobacco. The Custom-house officers know this dodge, but it is not surprising that it has at times eluded them after they did know it.

If the vessel is a Dutch-trading one, or one trading to other ports where the 'baccy temptation is especially great, we may perhaps discover something else—a trick which, we believe, is not very generally known among the customs men, and which we hereby reveal for their information. Lying about the deck will be a number of "fenders"—shapeless conglomerations of fibrous rope, which are hung over the side coming into dock to ease the scraping of the ship's side against the quay or against other ships' sides. Now an honourable fender is filled up inside with scraps of oakum, old rope, waste yarn, and things of that sort; but, sad to say, all fenders are not honourable. Tobacco makes a good stuffing, and doesn't smoke much the worse for having been squeezed a bit against a ship's timbers.

Logs and billets of wood lie about promiscuously on deck and below. It is not a difficult thing for a handy man to hollow out a billet of wood and provide it with so neatly fitting a lid or end that it looks as solid a log as ever was chopped. But then its lightness and hollow sound would betray its ingenuity of construction, so that it becomes necessary to fill it with something to make it feel and sound solid. Again tobacco is found to be a most valuable material for the purpose, and stuffed full it accordingly is. Melancholy to relate,

this artifice no longer deceives the officers, who have discovered it again and again, so that it is really safer to leave the log solid and uninteresting.

A variation on the log trick was invented by a stoker, who hollowed out a long cavity from the end of a beam and slid into it a tin drawer, the end of which was faced with wood corresponding in grain to the beam. Unavailing all, however, for the stoker and his tin box and his "hard cake" made a simultaneous appearance at the police-court.

Jack has always been a musical person, and among the many instruments which he affects the concertina and the accordion occupy honoured places. There are many persons whose ears are not attuned to appreciate any superiority of either of these instruments over the other, and, indeed, whose sole preference would be for the abolition of both. Jack, however, usually prefers the accordion—because it holds more cigars. It is not long since a guileless son of Neptune had to bid a long farewell to his accordion—an unusually large one—in consequence of its being found to enclose 300 and odd cigars and two pounds of cake tobacco. These things did not improve the tone, but they made the instrument much more valuable.

There has been a sad falling off in the consumption of snuff of late years, and the article is really scarcely worth smuggling. Still a seizure is made now and again, but never a very large one. When the sale was larger, conscientious merchants were wont to import snuff compressed to the shape and general appearance of oil-cakes, such as are used to feed cattle. These cakes of snuff were mixed with genuine oil-cakes, and the only way in which to distinguish them was by smell. A Custom-house officer's nose is a most useful professional implement.

Not unlike the hollow log device in idea, but perhaps superior as an artistic conception, was the coal stratagem. A large lump of coal would be chosen—a lump with a smooth, straight grain which splits easily. A nice flat slice would be chopped off this, and then, on the surface thus exposed, the persevering mineralogist would make laborious excavations till the lump of coal became a hollow shell; and, as it would have been rather a pity to have this careful piece of work crushed in by accident from the outside, the interior was suitably supported by a tight and hard packing of the proper kind of tobacco, or sometimes even with snuff. Then, when the slice first removed had been carefully replaced over the hole and neatly fastened down with pitch, that piece of coal became an object of loving solicitude to its proprietor. And very proper, too; for, just as the Venus of Milo is not a mere



"A CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICER'S NOSE."



"THE ACCORDION."

lump of stone, so this was no longer a mere dull piece of coal—it had been invested with artistic merit, and some pounds of superior plug. We regret to say that this triumph of art met with early destruction at the hands of a clumsy Philistine with a crow-bar—a customs man. Wherefore the coal-box strata-

gem has fallen into disfavour, and is fast becoming a lost art.

Did the gentle reader never inspect a pigeon-box? A pigeon-box is a tall, oblong affair, in several storeys, each divided by a diagonal partition. In each of the compartments thus provided a pigeon is placed, the broad end of the triangle accommodating the bird's head and shoulders, and the tapering tail just fitting in the sharper apex. Now, if a searcher omit to lift out the upper storeys, it is plain he will not see any pigeons in the storeys below—nor, indeed, any tobacco or brandy. At some far-off, guileless, Arcadian time, it would seem that the searchers did not look into the lower storeys, and the result of this carelessness may be imagined. Once, however, somebody *did* look, and saw something that certainly wasn't pigeons. After this other expedients had to be adopted. The bottoms of the boxes were made double, and tobacco and cigars found their way into these happy realms between these double bottoms. Then this little game was spoiled by a meddling person who measured the depth of the whole concern inside and compared it with the height outside; and then arose the final triumph of smuggling art as applied to pigeon-boxes. The boxes became stout and clumsy; the walls were thick, the bottoms were thick—they were thick altogether. No sliding bot-

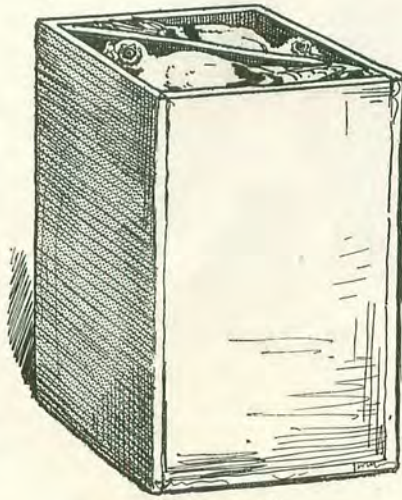
toms here, no storeys full of "jack," all solid, sound, and thick—until you whittled some of the wood away with a knife. Then it became evident that all this stout, clumsy wood was hollow, built of fine match-boarding, and—so full is the heart of man with deceit and desperately wicked—very fully and completely packed with tobacco. After this discovery pigeon-boxes from Antwerp were abandoned as vehicles of the surreptitious weed. It was felt that ingenuity could go no further than hollow planks, and attention was turned to other gear. Still false backs and bottoms to boxes and drawers continue in favour, from the many opportunities for their use which a ship's furniture gives. It

is not long since a monkey of much activity and intelligence was brought ashore in a sort of exaggerated parrot cage. Something led to an examination of the tin bottom of this cage, when it was found to be as hollow as the woodpecker's beech-tree—a tin canister, in fact, full of canaster.

Hollowness is a great characteristic of things manipulated to carry contraband goods; indeed, to a fairly successful Custom-house officer the world must appear a very hollow thing altogether. It is a fairly good number of years ago now, as a man's life lasts, since what had probably been a most successful hollow fraud was discovered at the Custom-house. Broomsticks were imported into this country in very large numbers, and one importer was very regular with his consignments.

One fine day, however, the consignment arrived, but nobody appeared to claim it. Several fine days passed—several weeks and months, fine and otherwise, but still nobody came. The broomsticks were put away in an odd corner in a spare room of the Custom-house, and became dusty. The winter arrived, and upon a cold morning two Custom-house clerks found they had nothing to do. This is not an alarming state of affairs for two Government clerks—it has occurred at other times. But the morning was really too cold to permit of much comfort being extracted from gentle exercise with *The*

Times newspaper, and the eyes of the two clerks fell upon the heap of broomsticks. Single-stick was obviously the pursuit most suited to the occasion, and here were the sticks to hand—rather long, of course, but that was a detail. So single-stick they began, with energy. At the first sharp cut and guard off snapped eighteen inches from the end of one broomstick, followed by a flying tail of cigars. The combat ceased on the spot, and an examination of the sticks revealed the fact that they were simply wooden tubes, neatly stopped with wooden plugs at the ends, and filled up as to the remainder of their length with cigars and hard



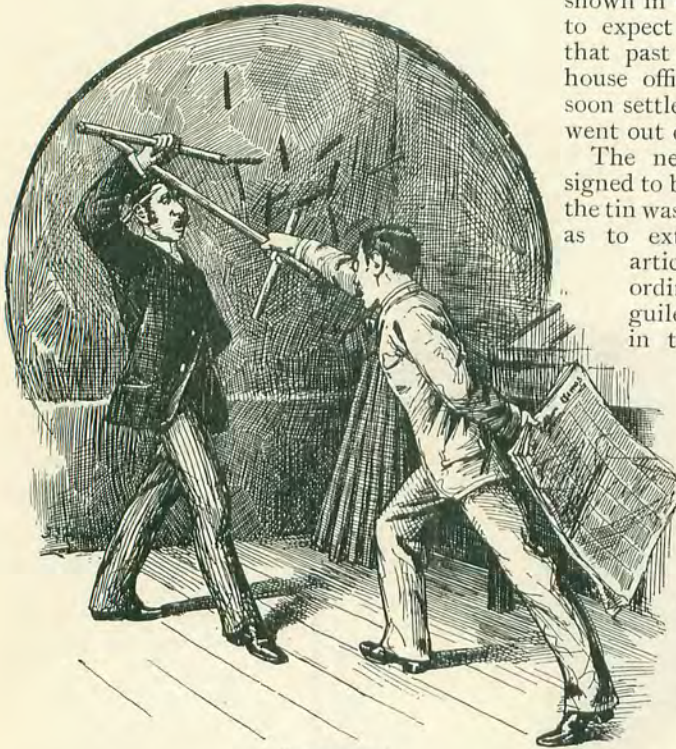
"A PIGEON BOX."

tobacco. The man never came for his broomsticks, so that the story is deprived of what might have been an interesting sequel. An adaptation of the broomstick machination has also been employed with lead pencils containing bank-notes of doubtful manufacture, rolled up small. A man with a pocket-knife took it into his

sticks, and soon the fond illusion burst, and so did a good many of the bladders.

The bladders having been placed beyond the region of practical politics, refuge was taken in the time-honoured dodge of the double bottom. Very probably this served for a time until the smugglers' greediness exceeded reasonable bounds, and the grog-chamber became of the proportions shown in the diagram. It was not wise to expect to get many such things as that past a moderately smart Custom-house officer, and a dip with a stick soon settled matters. The pattern early went out of fashion.

The next attack was especially designed to baffle the poking stick. Again the tin was perfectly innocent and normal as to external appearances—all such articles are so, of course. An ordinary oil tin, from the outside, guile and cunning lurked within in the shape of a perpendicular oil chamber, of parallel diameter down to an inch or two from the mouth of the vessel, and thence gradually enlarging, cone fashion, to a base of eight inches. Now, this bottom diameter of eight inches was so carefully proportioned to the width and length of the parallel entrance above that the exploratory stick might, while reaching the very bottom, twist and wag about in any direction without touching a side of the chamber, and, of course, always dived into



“SINGLESTICK.”

nothing but oil. In the extensive region round about this cone, however, and occupying much the greater part of the whole interior, the liquid was not oil, but brandy. This was pretty ingenious, and perhaps for a time fairly successful, but the customs men were equal to the occasion, and the cone chamber is no longer an effective dodge.

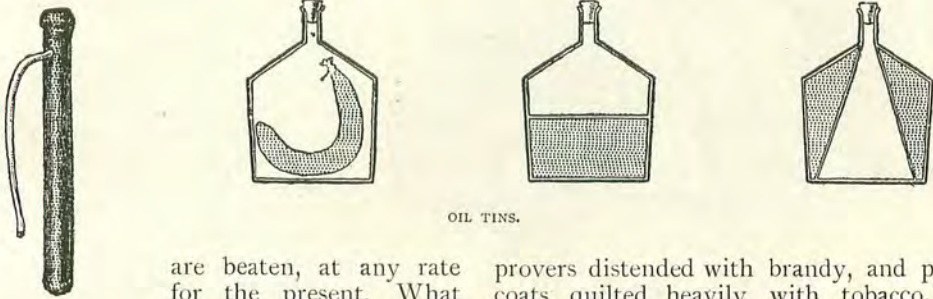
head to sharpen one of these, and so this well laid scheme went agley. In the matter of the smuggling of spirits in fairly large quantities, a continual war of wits has been waged between the smugglers and the customs authorities—a war in which a chief feature has been the battle of the oil-drums. So far the authorities have won pretty handsomely. To begin with, the ordinary oil-drum of commerce was put into requisition. This carried just so much oil that when a long bladder full of spirits was introduced through the bung-hole, or before the drum was headed, it would quite fill up; then the official inquisitors might smell the oil or pour a little out, and be none the wiser. But the inquisitors developed an awkward habit of poking about down into the oil-can with

It would seem difficult to devise an improvement on it, but still it was done. The can was made with just the same guiltless exterior, though still with the unholy conical oil chamber inside. But its honest and straightforward character was still further testified by a small spout in the top of the vessel, near the very edge, right away from any possible central chamber, and out of which the contents, or a little of them,

might conveniently be poured. What could possibly be more above-board and open than that? You might put your stick down from the top to the bottom, and waggle it in all directions; you might pour out of the top a little of the contents—oil; you might pour more out of the more convenient side spout—the same oil; you might even poke a stick or wire as far as you pleased down the little spout, and still it was all oil. But the smuggler's ways are dark. There was a tube leading from the little spout to the conical oil chamber in the middle—just as the diagram shows—and all round about was just about the same quantity of just about the same brandy! Truly, it would seem impossible to detect fraud in this. But the fraud was detected, and every customs officer knows of it. The smugglers

brandy—something more than the smell of a mere flask—and a small liquid trail which marked the wobbling lady's path. Somebody went after that hapless lady, and she was, with a great deal of difficulty, prevailed upon—the trickling stream expatiating into a goodly puddle the while—to submit herself to the investigations of a female searcher. Then the cause of the seclusion, the haste, the wobble, the smell, and the puddle became obvious. Somewhere about twenty long bladders full of strong Cognac had been used to trim one of the unfortunate lady's petticoats, and one of these bladders had sprung a leak.

Women have often found their skirts and bodices useful aids to smuggling, and the reign of crinoline or dress improver is their opportunity. Indiarubber dress im-



OIL TINS.

are beaten, at any rate for the present. What more, though, can they possibly do with the oil tin?

Brandy has been smuggled in bladders, otherwise than in oil tins. More than once these bladders have been found among a woman's under-clothing. Many of the hauls have been made at

Dover, the smugglers landing from the Calais packet. The bladders are, as a rule, pretty trustworthy, though they have been known to leak with disastrous results. This was what brought a very elaborately dressed lady to grief a little time ago at Dover. She had kept very much to herself on the run over, and was thought to be rather unwell. Her only luggage, a small bag, was examined and passed, and she started off—rather hurriedly. This was nothing extraordinary, perhaps, in itself, but her gait was an odd one—she wobbled. Now many people wobble when they leave the Calais boat, and even this might have passed unheeded were it not for a very strong smell of

provers distended with brandy, and petticoats quilted heavily with tobacco, are well-known plans for defeating the revenue officers. Again and again smugglers, male and female, are betrayed by attempting too much; and many a skirt full of cigars has been detected through the obvious weight of the burden, the different "set" it gave to the clothes, and the check it constituted to an easy gait.

The story of the Calais-Dover baby is pretty well known. It was always so unwell, poor little dear! and its face had to be kept heavily veiled from the cold wind. Notwithstanding this, it was always being carried back and forth between England and France by the interesting young mother: never cried, and never, somehow, grew out of long clothes. The Custom-house officers—married men themselves—didn't understand it. So that, next time, the most married man among them ventured to insist on being introduced to the interesting little creature. He had a difficulty in convincing the lady of his amiable intentions, and, indeed, had to use a little force before discovering that the baby was an entirely artificial sort of infant, chiefly tobacco, but largely lace. This sort of baby



"THE CALAIS-DOVER BABY."

was much quieter and less troublesome than the ordinary kind, and worth more money—lace being dutiable at that time, as well as tobacco. Still there is reason to believe that the lady afterwards gave up that class of baby.

Clocks and watches are not dutiable under English customs laws, but they are so in France. This is what led to the sad disaster to a French lady who had bought a charming drawing-room clock in Switzerland, and essayed to cross the frontier with her bargain worn as a dress-improver. It was a capital idea, and would have succeeded admirably were it not that, while the lady was assuring the *douanier* that there was nothing dutiable about her, the virtuous clock solemnly struck twelve.

Watches were once dutiable in England, however, and a very highly approved way of smuggling them was in a book. The book was opened, and a good bunch of the middle pages punched through with circular

holes, just large enough to admit the watches. Then, the punctured leaves having been glued together and the watches inserted in the holes, two or three whole leaves on either side next the glued ones were pasted down to conceal the contraband articles, and the leaves still remaining loose at either end of the book were still available for mental improvement. He must have been a very rude Custom-house officer who first insisted on taking away a lady's or gentleman's book in the middle of her or his perusal, and finding watches in it. But he did it, nevertheless, and, doubtless, never felt the least sorrow for his want of courtesy.

The bread manœuvre is worth mentioning. You make up your 'baccy or cigars into a firm paper parcel, and, having plastered it round with dough in the correct shape of a half-quartern loaf, you bake it, and there you are. When the revenue men can penetrate even this disguise—and they have done it—what hope is there for a poor smuggler? The French understand this plan, and if any English boy at a French school has cakes sent from home, they always arrive cut into wedges by the *douanier*, and sad are the misgivings in that school that the *douanier* may have poached a wedge for himself.

Sixty years ago or more, when the country was ravaged by small-pox, many



"WATCHES."

nailed-down coffins arrived in London with the words "small-pox" painted thereon in red letters. It may be readily understood that nobody was anxious to interfere with the contents, which proved very profitable, being principally brandy, and, now and again, rum. The "stuff" had been landed on the Sussex coast, and a coffin was found to be a handy thing in which to send it to market.

Attempts are, of course, still sometimes made to smuggle on a large scale, and perhaps a case, ostensibly of cottons or other Manchester goods, will be found to contain something dutiable. The biggest attempt of recent times, and an attempt that had no doubt been many times successful before its final detection, came to light a few years ago. An immense boiler was sent over from the Continent, and travelled to and fro more than once—for repairs. Somebody who had some special information about this boiler imparted it to a cus-



and found to be packed full from end to end with tobacco. This was an immense haul, and no doubt marked the stoppage of a leak in the customs defences which had existed for some time. Those who may feel at any time disposed to assist other persons in matters of smuggling, may be interested to learn that the whole turn-out—lorry, horses, harness, and all—was confiscated, as the law provides, although the carman knew nothing of the hidden tobacco.



A very simple smuggling device, and a well-known one, is to pack whatever articles it is desired to conceal in tin cases and sink them in the water, with small cork or wood floats to denote their whereabouts, till the ship has been searched. Life-buoys and belts, too, are not always made of cork. Tobacco has been found good for the purpose, and, before the duty was abolished, silk. There is an ingenious gentleman in Jersey who has a powerful little hydraulic press with which it is possible to compress a pound or so of tobacco to the size of a couple

of ounces. Now the Customs people are not vexatiously strict, and will not stop a man for carrying a few cigars or a little tobacco for his personal use, although they would be quite within their rights in doing so. So when the passenger from Jersey freely shows an ordinary two-ounce packet it is allowed to pass, although the actual quantity may be something above a pound. Let the customs men, therefore, judge weight by the hand and not by the eye.

As long as human nature is what it is, and as long as customs duties exist, smuggling of some small sort will go on. The abolition of a duty of course stops smuggling altogether, and its reduction to low figures renders the smuggling petty and insignificant. Double-lined clothes to carry tea and lace are now useless, but for bringing in tobacco, spirits, and perfumery there still exist the devices we have described, and possibly others.

*My dear mother
The box is come I want
to know about the ~~Ac~~ cake
was it like this  or
like that  I
think the beggars have
cut it ~~up~~ ~~and~~ ~~not~~
a big lump out of the
middle. dear father
please write ~~it~~ ~~to~~
wright to the times*

"THE ENGLISH BOY AT A FRENCH SCHOOL."

toms man. Consequently, as that immense boiler was slowly proceeding along an East-end street on a lorry drawn by half a dozen horses, it was stopped,