

Dog Smugglers.

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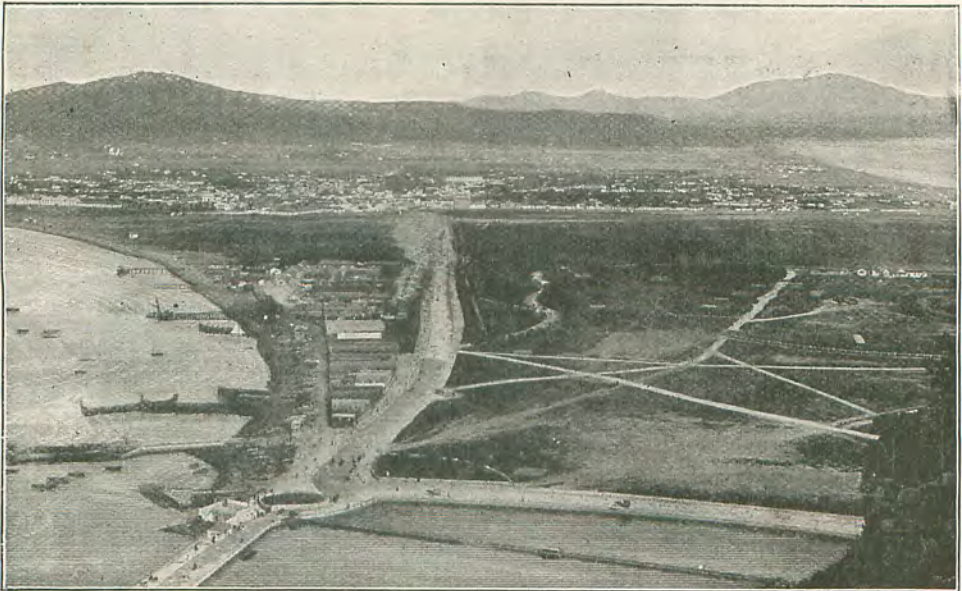
IT is no uncommon thing for visitors to Gibraltar to hear the report of a shot ring out in the stillness of the night, and echo against the vast mass of rock that goes by the name of "England's Key to the Mediterranean." They must not think, however, that this means that war has broken out between England and Spain, and that the Spaniards are attempting to regain possession of their lost stronghold; it only means that the *Carabinieri*, or Custom House authorities, are endeavouring to suppress, with a strong hand, the smuggling of tobacco. Their bullets, in this instance, are not directed against two-legged smugglers, but against those with four legs—dogs, in fact—though these are aided, of course, by their biped *confrères*.

Nearly everybody knows of the neutral territory that lies just to the north of Gibraltar; but for the sake of any who do not, it may be said that it is a strip of land about half a mile wide, running across the isthmus which connects the Rock with the

south side by the British lines, and on the north by the Spanish, or La Linea, as they are distinctively called; and at this latter place there is always a strong force of Custom House officials on the look-out for smugglers. The illustration given below will make this description clear.

It must be remembered that, although a British possession, Gibraltar is an entirely free port, with the exception of a light import duty on alcoholic liquors, which has been recently imposed. This privilege was granted to it at the beginning of last century, in the reign of Queen Anne, and for the last 200 years the Rock has been the paradise of those who prefer Free Trade to what some of our home politicians dignify with the name of Fair Trade. Spain, on the other hand, imposes heavy duties on most of her imports, so that the difference in the prices of many commodities on the opposite sides of the neutral ground is very marked.

The Spanish, perhaps more than any other, is a nation of smokers, and when one knows that, in addition to the heavy duty imposed on tobacco, its manufacture is a jealously-guarded Government monopoly.



VIEW OF THE NEUTRAL TERRITORY BETWEEN GIBRALTAR AND SPAIN—LOOKING FROM GIBRALTAR TOWARDS THE SPANISH LINES.

yielding a revenue of between three and three and a half millions sterling per annum, the inducement for a Spaniard to become a contrabandist will be seen to be very strong. Signor Espagnol strolls across into the town of Gibraltar, and while there thinks he may as well buy a pound of tobacco free of duty; this he does, and then he has a chance to exercise his ingenuity in getting back past the line of *Carabinieri*, who are waiting at the Spanish boundary to examine all persons, carts, carriages, beasts of burden, and parcels, to see if there is any tobacco concealed in or about them.

Thomas Carlyle, a great lover of the soothing weed himself, by the way, once said, with the open expression of opinion and hatred of sham that characterized him: "The Government lays a tax of some hundreds per cent. upon the poor man's pipe, while the rich man's wine pays scarcely one-tenth of this impost; but it is a comfort to think (as I have been told) the amount of tobacco smuggled is about as great as that which pays duty." Such may have been the case in this country when these words were written, but here, at any rate, they do not now hold good. At Gibraltar, however, in spite of the watchfulness spoken of above, the quantity of tobacco smuggled from the Rock into Spain is still very great, although, owing to the co-operation of the British authorities with the Spanish, it is considerably less than it was a decade ago.

The love of tobacco is pretty nearly universal through all grades of Spanish society, from the street urchin to the highest in the land, and it is said that even among these last there are to be found some who are not above evading the tobacco tax should opportunity offer. When one of the Governors of Algeciras, so the story goes, had come from that town, which is on the west side of the Bay of Gibraltar, to call officially on the Governor of Gibraltar, the members of his suite took advantage of the opportunity to fill their pockets with the "weed," and, of course, they were not searched when passing through La Linea, for a Spanish officer is surely above reproach!

The ways of even the most commonplace smuggler are always of interest to the more honest portion of the populace, for, as has been said time and again, the ingenuity they display in devising means to carry on their illicit calling might, if turned to a legitimate purpose, have benefited the world as greatly as the inventiveness of a Stephenson or an Edison.

Many of the methods adopted by the smugglers at Gibraltar have been discovered and suppressed, but it is not easy to put an end to the traffic altogether, even though the methods by which it is carried on are known to the authorities. One very ingenious idea was that of a Spaniard who used to smuggle from Gibraltar to San Roque by means of a freshly-baked 4lb. loaf, of the ordinary English type. To all appearance it was only a very ordinary sort of loaf, the outside being beautifully brown and crusty, but, oh! the base use to which it was put. This loaf was only a thin bark of the staff of life to hide the three pounds or so of tobacco which contributed nothing to the Spanish Exchequer.

Another gentleman adopted the device of arraying himself as a priest, and devoutly attended mass every morning in Gibraltar. Like the good man he wished to seem, he invariably carried with him his Bible, a tome of goodly size, and there is little doubt that he derived considerable benefit from it, from a worldly point of view at any rate, for on a certain day one of the Custom House officers had the impertinence to ask him to open the book, whereupon it was found to be nothing but a box, and its leaves, instead of being of paper, were discovered to consist of tobacco. Both this Bible and a specimen of the loaves mentioned above now repose among the relics at the head office of the Custom House at Madrid.

A good deal of smuggling is also done by sea, and the fishermen are in the habit of getting empty paraffin tins and filling them with tobacco. They then attach to each tin a small weight, just sufficient to sink it, and throw them overboard in shallow water when they see a storm coming on. This is always done at a particular state of the night tide, so that with the combined effect of the tide and the waves raised by the storm, the tins are washed ashore, where their owners are carefully watching for them, and when they reach the strand, they are at once conveyed to a place of safety.

Another vehicle for smuggling by sea in comparatively large quantities was only discovered a few weeks ago, although it had been in use for a considerable number of years. It took the form of a boat with a double bottom, so ingeniously constructed that it would probably never have been discovered had not some traitor given information to the *Carabinieri*. It was provided on each side, near the keel, with small doors, by means of which the space between the true

and false bottoms could easily be filled with tobacco, and the whole was so perfectly constructed that no damage could be done by the admission of sea-water. Of course, there could be no harm in this boat taking an occasional cruise from the Spanish territory to Rosia Bay, and equally of course, it was the most natural thing in the world to haul her up on the beach when she was not going to be used for a few days, in order to keep her out of reach of the storms, sudden and severe, which break at times over the Bay. But a

Gibraltar might be sure that he bought only quite young birds, and that they would be freshly killed. He was either a very unlucky or a very poor salesman, or, perhaps, the dwellers on the Rock didn't want turkeys at any price, for his flock was rarely much diminished in numbers and not at all in the size of the individuals, when he wended his way back across the neutral ground before evening gunfire, after which the gates are shut, and no one is allowed to pass through. It may have been from sympathy,



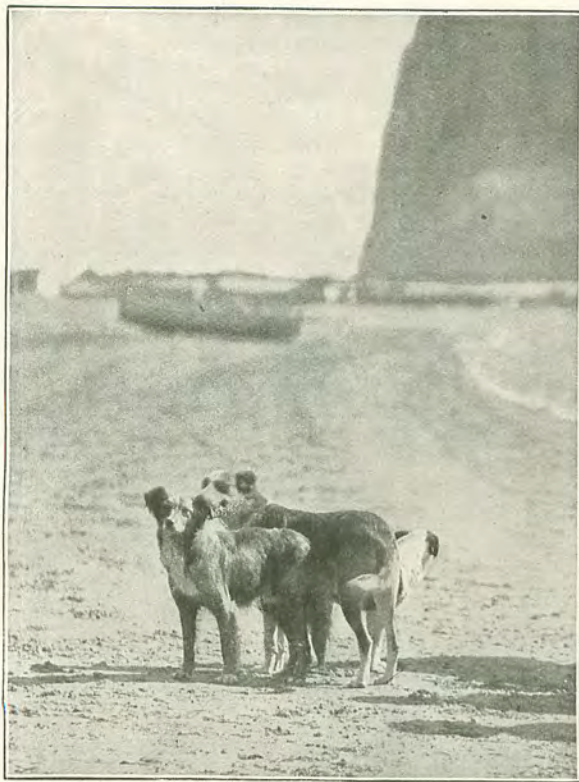
A GROUP OF DOG TRAINERS.

new light was thrown on the *raison d'être* of the boat and her crew when it was found that she was run high and dry only to give an opportunity for taking the concealed tobacco from her, and naturally, when this came to light, the officials at once confiscated and destroyed her, so promptly that not even a photograph of her was taken.

The services of other than human bipeds have also been put under contribution by the smugglers, and a ruse which succeeded for a long time was that of a Spaniard who kept a turkey farm. Englishmen are notoriously fond of turkeys, so our farmer would drive such of his birds as were plump and ready for consumption across from Spanish to English territory, so that the purchaser in

or it may have been from suspicion, but one evening a *Carabiniere* took it into his head to try and examine one of the birds, and he noticed, as the gobbler opened its wings in running away, that there was a fair-sized package under each of them. Naturally a general scrutiny ensued, with the result that each member of the flock was found to have a parcel of tobacco, weighing about half a pound, tied under each wing. Needless to say that since that time the import of live Spanish turkeys in Gibraltar is considerably reduced.

One of the earlier four-legged smugglers was a fine large donkey, which used to pass to and from Gibraltar daily, under the care of an innocent-looking rustic. After the



DOG SMUGGLERS IN TRAINING.

lapse of some time it was found out that this animal had been completely covered over with the skin of a dead donkey—that rarity of rarities—which was so well cut and so beautifully padded that it fitted to perfection. A further examination revealed the fact that the padding was composed entirely of the forbidden leaf, and as a result, the false skin has joined the Bible and the loaf in the Museum at Madrid, and the rustic and his donkey no longer travel between Spain and Gibraltar.

In both the cases of animal

smugglers mentioned above it was necessary that a man should be in charge of them, and this, of course, was a considerable drawback. To obviate this disadvantage some genius conceived the idea of training dogs in the wary and cautious habits necessary for successfully carrying on the contraband business, and one man had a dog who, like the donkey, had a double skin, with a quantity of tobacco placed between the false outer skin and the true inner one. This intelligent animal had been trained to play with other dogs, and so to get through the lines from the Rock, after which he went straight to his master's house to be unloaded, and sent off for a fresh consignment. In this manner he used to make several trips a day; but, alas! he, too, was eventually caught. It is probable that this dog was only one of many which were used for the same purpose, so at least the Spanish Tobacco Company seem to have thought, for they have had a high fence of wire netting raised right across the isthmus from sea to sea, a distance of about a mile and a quarter, and thus the land smuggling dogs have

been rendered useless.

Of late years, owing both to this wire netting and to the assistance given by the authorities in Gibraltar to the Spanish



A DOG SMUGGLER PACKED WITH TOBACCO.

officials in suppressing the illicit trading on the neutral ground, the smuggling by dogs is carried on from a number of hulks, which are anchored in the Bay, opposite the English territory. On these hulks a number of men are occupied all day long in making up tobacco in small, convenient packages, tied up in waterproof paper. Towards sundown, men may be seen coming from La Linea in the direction of Gibraltar, accompanied by a suspicious number of dogs. Men and dogs all embark in a boat, and row, or are rowed, out to the hulks at anchor, and, once on board, the packages of tobacco are carefully fastened around the bodies of the dogs and covered with sacking—as depicted in the illustration on the previous page—care being taken not to overload the animals.

As soon as night falls the dogs are again placed in the boats, and are quietly rowed towards the Spanish shore, and when a short distance from it, they are gently placed in the water at short intervals and left to swim ashore. The spot where this takes place is to be seen at the left of the illustration on the first page of this article, and the dogs land beyond the wire-netting which runs across the isthmus in front of the Spanish lines.

Before being actually started on their smuggling career, the dogs undergo a course of training, each being taken out for a walk in the country by his master; and a friend of the latter, dressed in an old *Carabiniere's* uniform, and armed with a bludgeon, hides

himself somewhere on the route the dog and his owner intend to pursue. The dog is encouraged to go forward, and immediately he comes within reach of the hidden counterfeit officer, the latter catches hold of the animal, and gives him a sound drubbing with his weapon. After a few lessons of this kind the dog's intelligence teaches him to carefully avoid anybody dressed in the hated uniform, as he has souvenirs of wearers of it on every part of his body.

But to return to the dogs we have left swimming in the surf: they nearly always reach the shore safely, and then they display almost more than human intelligence and cunning in avoiding the approach of the *Carabinieri*, hiding until the coast is clear, and then making a bolt for home as fast as their legs will carry them. The *Carabinieri*, however, are in watch and wait, and in spite of the cleverness of the dogs, the snap of a rifle and a short "yap," showing that the bullet has gone home, often shows that the life of the smuggler dog has been cut short in his attempt to evade the law.

While, as I have said, the trade is greatly decreased, so long as there is any duty on tobacco in Spain, just so long will there be found men ready to evade it, and the only thing that will effectually stop it will be an export tax from Gibraltar, which will double the difficulty of evading the Custom House, and make the game not worth the candle.



THE DOG SMUGGLER'S ENEMY.