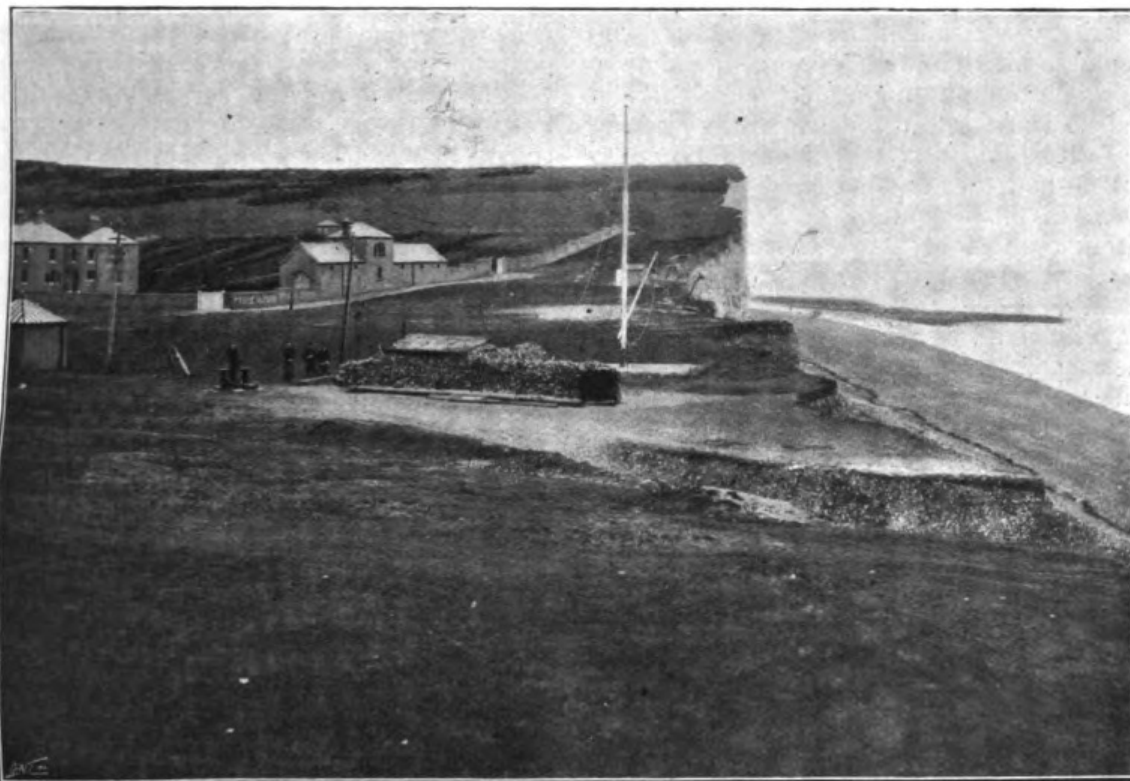


Hands Round the Coast.

BY ALFRED T. STORY.

Illustrations from Photographs by W. Gregory & Co.



A TYPICAL COASTGUARD STATION.



ANYONE who has been much about our coasts cannot but have noticed the coastguard stations dotting them here and there like sentinels. North or south, east or west, almost wherever we touch the sea, at no great distance away there will be seen a little cluster of houses, a watch-tower, maybe, or look-out, and a flagstaff denoting a station of the coastguard. Generally, too, there will be a boat-house, with a stout pinnace or yawl, ready for any work that may be necessary, whether it be rescue or salvage. In some cases, as, for instance, when the station is on the top of a high cliff, as at Fairlight, near Hastings, boats would be of no use, for the simple reason that they could not be got down to the water. However, such stations may be signalling stations only. Fairlight itself is a war signalling station, and used to belong to the War Department. Dungeness likewise is a war signalling station. Both these are provided with the semaphore telegraph for signalling vessels at sea.

A coastguard station is usually composed

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of from six to eight men, although smaller or sub-stations may number but three; while there are stations counting a dozen or more men. The new station which is being built on the famous Pett Level, near Winchelsea, will have to accommodate seventeen men, all told. The sub-stations are generally attached to the larger ones, and are in charge of the officer who has command of that post.

Stations are grouped into divisions, which are under the charge of inspecting officers, generally commanders or lieutenants, who visit them periodically to see that everything is in order and that discipline is duly attended to. For at these stations drill and other duties have to be carried on as regularly as on board ship. To each coastguard division a cruiser is attached. It is usually cruising with only half its full complement of men; the other half are distributed amongst the stations comprised in the division, and if the need should arise for extra men they are at once drafted from the stations.

The coastguard is, of course, recruited exclusively from the Navy and the Naval Reserve, and every man connected with the

force is liable to be called up at any moment.

During these critical times each member of the coastguard has his ship and his place on that ship, and at a word from the Admiralty—it might be “mobilize”—up would go his kit on to his shoulder, and away he would tramp to the nearest railway station and so *en route* to the *dépôt* where his ship lay. It is said that every man in the coastguard—and they number between 4,000 and 5,000 in all—could be on board his ship within twenty-four hours, though his station were at John o’ Groat’s, while the majority could be at their posts within half that time.

Said one of these men recently: “I not only know my ship, but I know my post in the ship, the number of my mess, and everything; and if the word were to come for me to start *now*, I could be in my place within six hours.”

A coastguardsman is liable to be called upon for sea service at any time, and if of good character, and he has done nine years’ service, he is always eligible for the coastguard when not on active duty on board ship. When a vessel is paid off all those who are willing to join the coastguard

are asked to set down their names. These are sent up to the proper quarters, and in the course of a month or two, possibly in as many weeks, he receives an appointment, it may be to a station a few miles away, it may be to one “at the top o’ the map,” as one man put it, meaning some place Orkney or Shetland way.

“But of all places under the sun,” said this individual, “save me from a station on the Thames. I spent two years at one not far from Gravesend, and the Lord preserve me from the like again. I’d rather be on a

torpedo-boat destroyer. Half the year you can’t lie still in your bed for the fog-horns. You perhaps just get your head on the pillow, when away one goes and you have to jump up and rush to the rescue. It’s two iron colliers, or maybe a collier and a barge, in collision, not unlikely something worse; and possibly before you can get on to the spot one of the two, if not both, has gone into the cellar. The cellar’s where you get your big drink—maybe your last one,” explained the man with an odd attempt at pathos. “I’ve known nights when I’ve had to turn out of

bed three times for one of them collisions. At other places,” he added, “you can’t get a collision for love or money.”

The business of the coastguard is, of course, the protection of our shores; but in these “piping times” for the Navy it resolves itself into the protection of life and property. Formerly the coastguard was called upon to do a good deal by way of preventing smuggling; but there is now little of that, and that little, on the whole, of small consequence, although occasionally one hears of an individual more daring than the rest, or it may be a knot of individuals, being dropped upon when



A COASTGUARDSMAN ON DUTY.

they thought they were doing a fairly safe business.

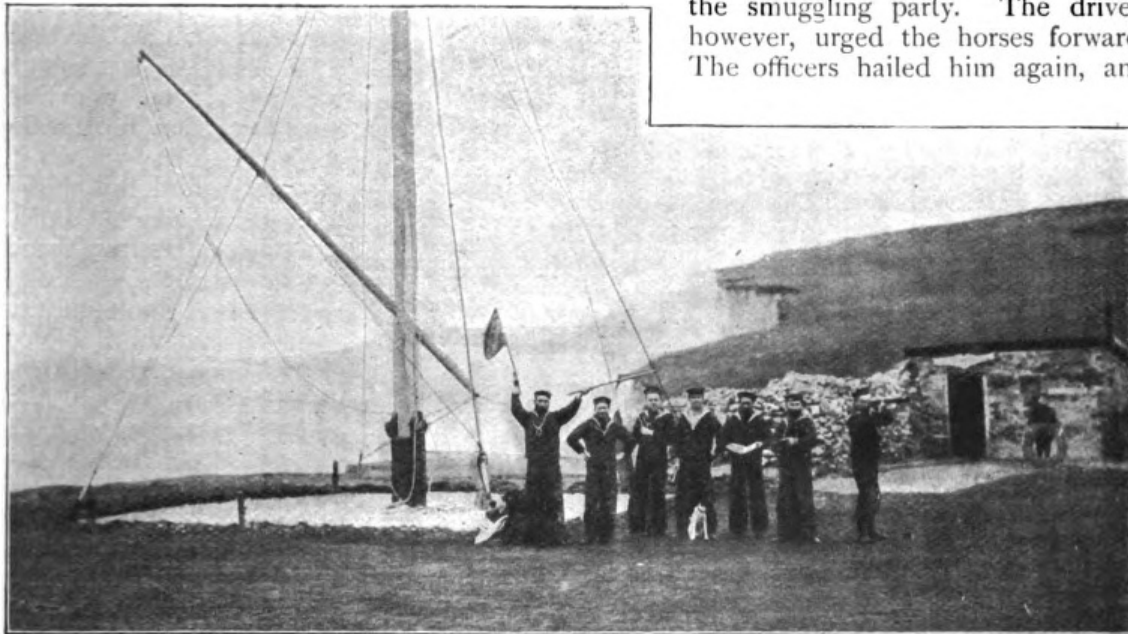
Not long since a shrewd coastguardsman stationed on the Thames overhauled the stewardess of a steamboat making trips to a Continental port, and found that her petticoats were lined with packets—known as blue-books—of tobacco. It was discovered that she had been engaged in this trade for years, and that her rendezvous in London was in a house in which, strangely enough, the captain of a revenue cutter lodged when in town.

That, however, was a very tame affair in comparison with a capture which took place on the Clyde some few years ago, and that caused not a little talk at the time, it read so much like a page from the exploits of Dirk Hatteraick.

The coastguard stationed at Gourrock on the Clyde had for some time suspected that extensive tobacco smuggling operations were being carried on in the neighbourhood. It was believed that the tobacco, after being manufactured abroad into "sticks," was carefully packed into tin cases which, when filled, weighed from 20lb. to 80lb. each. These cases were hermetically sealed and placed on board a steamer bound for the Clyde. Attached to each case was a lengthened cord, and at the farther end was affixed a small cork float. On the steamer's arrival in

coastguard's duty to watch all steamers, and see who comes and goes; and on this eventful night it was known that some suspected persons had arrived by an incoming steamer. Accordingly, an extra close watch was kept on the coast. Very late a boat was seen to put off to the "fishing-ground" near Cloch, when a patrol party was at once mustered and set to observe their movements. A little before midnight the boat's crew was noticed rowing cautiously towards the shore, where a cab was seen to be in waiting, and, as there was no sign of any coastguard officer being about, the cases were speedily transferred from the boat to the cab.

Two of the men got inside the vehicle, and a start was made to drive towards Greenock. Suddenly the coastguard officers came upon the scene and, in the Queen's name, demanded the surrender of the smuggling party. The driver, however, urged the horses forward. The officers hailed him again, and



SIGNALLING TO PASSING SHIPS.

the Clyde, between Inverkip and Gourrock, the cases were thrown into the sea, the cork float denoting to the parties ashore who were in the secret where the "treasure" would be found. Towards nightfall boats would leave the beach, and those on board, after reaching the locality where the cases were supposed to be, would make believe to commence fishing with deep-sea lines. On the cases being brought to the surface they would, of course, be promptly got on board, and in the darkness the boat would be run ashore on a lonely part of the coast, where the cases could be silently beached.

Thus went the proceedings on the occasion in question. But it is part of the

said if he did not stop they would fire. This threat he paid no heed to, and so a blank cartridge was fired. Still the driver kept on, and, as he was speedily outdistancing his pursuers, it was necessary to act with decision. The commander of the party accordingly fired another shot, this time not blank. It was aimed at the horses, but took effect on the cab, and that so near the driver that he at once pulled up.

Immediately the cab stopped the two men inside jumped out and made off, and, as the coastguard were unable to pursue them and at the same time guard the booty, the smugglers escaped.

Meanwhile the driver, to save his skin,

gave the officers information which led them to pay a visit to the residence of a private gentleman not far away, whose coachman was the receiver of a great part of the smugglers' contraband goods. To the delight of the coastguard, 300lb. of foreign tobacco was discovered concealed in the coach-house,

a very short time. A gunboat may run near enough to shore to call the attention of a coastguard station, and so signal a telegram for transmission. Or it may ask them to send a boat off to receive some message or attend to other duty. One evening a small Channel Station was thus signalled.



RECEIVING A MESSAGE FROM A SHIP.

A boat put off; but as a dense fog came on its occupants rowed about for several hours trying in vain to find the cruiser. In the morning the latter again ran in-shore, signalled, and asked why a boat was not sent off as requested. Of course the answer was that such had been done, and that the men not only could not find the ship, but had great difficulty in getting back to shore.

Sometimes such method of communication is used for very odd purposes. On one occasion it is said

and another 450lb. in a dunghill. This "find," together with what was in the cab, proved the largest haul that had been made for many years, and the incriminated coachman was thereafter to be found at the one address for a long time to come.

This illustrates the work of the coastguard for one of its masters—the Customs. But the coastguard has to serve three masters, and to be equally attentive to each: the Customs, the Board of Trade, and the Admiralty. It is, as already noted, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Admiralty, and as a guard to the coast is a part of the naval service of the country. Many of the more important stations, especially those on the south coast, are connected with each other by telephone, as well as with the Admiralty offices at Whitehall by telegraph, so that a man-of-war, coming within sight of one of them, can signal a message through the coastguard station to head-quarters, and, of course, get a reply by the same means in

—and the reader must take the yarn for what it is worth—a vessel called *The Parrot* signalled the message for transmission to Whitehall: "Chief boat *Parrot* lost—please send another." Either by mistake or in jest the word "boat" was left out, and so the message ran that the chief parrot was lost, and that another was required in its place. The story goes that after the message had been lying at the Admiralty for several months someone got hold of it and ordered a parrot from Jamrach's, and had it sent on to the *Parrot* gunboat, or whatever she was. Polly arrived on board all right, greatly, of course, to the surprise of the crew and command; but their surprise was much heightened when the bird eyed the lot of them standing round her cage, and with a good imitation of a laugh exclaimed, "My Gawd, what a one-eyed, rating!"

As servants of the Customs Department the coastguard have to see that Her Majesty's

revenues are not defrauded, and as servants of the Board of Trade they are called upon to protect life and property. The latter is, perhaps, the department of their duties that is the most arduous. All who are in the habit of reading the newspapers know what danger is run by ships and men when storms and fogs arise. Then it is that the coast-guard have to be actively in evidence, helping to save life and to protect property. If a ship becomes a wreck she at once falls under their charge; or, more properly speaking, she comes under their charge directly the captain and crew leave her. Then they are responsible to the owners and to the Board of Trade for every spar and every pound of cargo that is salvable, or rather to the "Wreck" department of that Board.

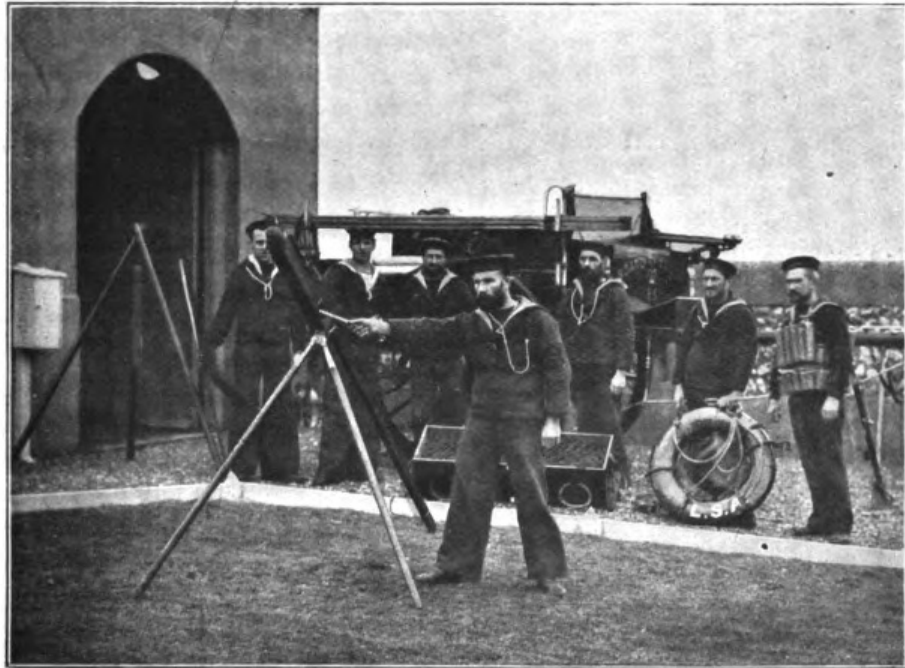
When once anything of the nature of wreckage has been reported to the Commission of Wrecks—it may be a boat with the name and address of the owner on it, a barrel of oil, or a fishing net from the next parish—it cannot be delivered to the owner or owners until the matter has gone through the required routine and the necessary number of clerks' hands.

Of course, when a large vessel is wrecked the salvaging of her cargo is no light matter, as anyone well knows who has been present when one has come ashore and there has been anything of a portable nature that could be got hold of. At such times it not infrequently happens that, if there hasn't been a soul in sight before, the spot soon swarms with people, "all intent on plunder," as a coastguard once put it. "They would eat you and the ship, too, if they could," he continued, "and you have to be nothing but eyes, or the whole ship and cargo would be carried off under your very nose. I have known men, when they have been helping to salve a cargo, pass tins of preserved meat from the vessel to their friends who were on

the watch in sacks of coal. And, in fact, they are up to all sorts of dodges."

It is not many months since a woman was caught carrying off a bundle of valuable lace done up in the form of a baby, which she was hugging and talking to very fondly, when a coastguard, suspecting some ruse, asked to "have a look at the kid"; and when he found that it was no human bundle he out with some rich bluejacket slang about trying to "kid" the "pore sailor-man," adding, "but the pore sailor-man ain't agoing to stand your kid."

The coastguard's most dangerous and, perhaps, most important service is rendered in connection with the rescue of shipwrecked mariners. To enable them to give efficient aid in this respect they are provided with rocket apparatus by the Board of Trade; and one need only be acquainted with our coasts, especially the south coast, to be aware with what astonishing success the apparatus is often brought into requisition. It is not, of course, an easy matter in a heavy gale to send a line by means



FIRING A ROCKET.

of a rocket over a distressed or sinking ship in such a way that it can be used to drag a hawser on board. Sometimes attempt after attempt is made in vain. But, the rope once secured, it is a comparatively easy matter with the aid of a basket or a trousers-buoy to bring passengers and crew to land, although the process is rather a slow one. Not long ago a splendid rescue was thus

effected at Bopeep, St. Leonards, the first persons to be brought ashore being a woman and a baby, the latter apparently none the worse for its early morning sea-bath. The rescue took place between seven and eight o'clock, and the spray every now and again broke completely over the basket bringing the mother and child to land.

During the terrific storm that occurred towards the end of September, 1896, a still more exciting scene was witnessed at Folkestone. One morning about six o'clock, the wind blowing a hurricane at the time, a coastguardman who was on duty there saw in the grey haze a barque rapidly drifting ashore. As nothing short of a miracle could save her from going on the rocks, he at once communicated with the officer in command at Sandgate, and in a few minutes the rocket apparatus was horsed and on its way to the scene of the wreck. For by this time the vessel—which proved to be the *Agdar*, of Frederikstadt, timber-laden—had gone broadside on the rocks, between the promenade pier and the harbour, and was being swept every minute by drenching seas. Her crew were, of course, quite helpless, and could be seen in the dim, uncertain light, huddled together, expecting every moment to be washed overboard. The coastguard fired two rockets from the pier, but the wind was so terrific, and the rain so heavy, that they both missed the ship.

By this time the Folkestone lifeboat had been launched and was making for the wreck; and as in the meantime another barque, the *Baron Holberg*, was seen to be drifting to destruction at the same place as the *Agdar*, the coastguard moved the rocket apparatus down to the beach to render assistance to the new-comer, which in a very few minutes was crashing upon the rocks, dragging with her the wreckage of her main-mast, which had gone by the board a little while before she struck.

After several unsuccessful attempts communication was established with the *Baron Holberg*; a hawser was hauled on board and fastened to the vessel's windmill pump. One of the crew started to go ashore hand over fist; but when almost on land the rope broke, and he, of course, found himself struggling in the boiling waves. He was, however, speedily rescued by men joining hands and going to his aid. Another hawser was quickly made fast, and two more men were brought ashore. Then a heavier sea than usual carried away the windmill pump. Again the

hawser was secured, this time to the mizzen-mast, and the remainder of the crew were got safely to land.

Several of the crew of the *Agdar* were taken off the vessel by the lifeboat, but the remainder were hauled through the surf by means of a line cleverly heaved on board by a coastguardman. Altogether it was a smart piece of work, and did credit to the coastguard, but for whose promptitude and wealth of resource many of the men would doubtless have been lost.

Sometimes, unfortunately, the coastguard are obliged to witness the utter futility of their efforts through no fault of their own. This was strikingly the case when, a couple of years ago, the steam trawler *Nellie* was driven ashore in a tempest at Rattray Head, ten miles north of Peterhead. Immediately after the vessel struck three men were washed overboard by the heavy seas dashing over the doomed craft. The remainder of the crew took refuge in the rigging, where the waves continually went over them. The coastguardsmen successfully fired two rockets with lines right over the ship; but the castaways made no effort to haul the hawser on board, being evidently benumbed with the cold and exposure, and one by one they were licked off their perch in the tops and carried away by the breakers.

Many are the sights of the kind which the coastguard are compelled from time to time to witness, though never without doing their utmost to help. They are thus compelled because they are always on the look-out, day and night; and there is practically no part of the coast which is not patrolled by them. Every night a man on patrol duty at one station has to touch hands, so to speak, with the patrol of the next station on either side. One ought perhaps to add "weather permitting," although it has to be very exceptional weather for the duty to be omitted.

Sometimes this duty, light as it may seem, proves one of no small danger. To walk miles in a heavy downpour of rain, in dense fog, or in a high wind, is not a light matter at the best of times; but when the walk has to be done along the edge of a beetling cliff it often becomes extremely perilous. An instance of the kind occurred not long ago. A coastguardman was on his way back after meeting the man from the next station, when he suddenly came upon a soldier and a sailor, who asked to be shown the way to the station he had left. He turned to show them, and in so doing he so completely lost his direction in the dense fog which was

prevailing that, though he made several attempts to recover the path, he on each occasion presently found himself on the verge of a precipitous cliff 200ft. above the sea. Not caring to run the risk of such a fall he made his way inland and returned by the high road.

If a river or arm of the sea intervenes the patrol is done by boat. In some cases the mouths of rivers, as at Burnham on the Crouch, are protected by a floating coastguard station.

Besides the night patrols there is a day patrol also, and many are the rescues from positions of imminent peril that have been effected by coastguardsmen thus on the look-out. Some years ago the writer witnessed a splendid piece of work of the kind from the cliffs south of Whitby. Two lovers had sauntered down on to the rocks and were there amusing themselves as lovers will, utterly oblivious of danger, when they suddenly became aware of the fact that the rising tide had cut off their retreat. It was an exceedingly lonely part, and though they cried their loudest and waved their handkerchiefs no one seemed to see them, and they had almost given themselves up to despair when a coastguardsman, coming that way, heard their cries and, procuring speedy assistance, succeeded by means of ropes in hauling them up the cliff.

A similar rescue was effected not long ago on the North Kent coast near to Reculvers. A little girl whose home was close to the shore had been to take her father's breakfast, and returning by a path along the edge of the cliff inadvertently stepped upon a piece of loose earth, which at once slid from under her feet, precipitating her half-way down to the beach, where fortunately she lodged on a projecting portion of the cliff. It was impossible for her either to climb up or to

get down the cliff, and so she was kept a prisoner for hours. Sought everywhere in vain by the agonized mother, it was reserved for a coastguard officer to descry her asleep on her perilous perch, and to descend by means of a rope to her assistance, which he cleverly managed before she was aware of what was going on. Had her rescue been delayed much longer she must have been



TO THE RESCUE.

caught and drowned by the rising tide.

Whenever anything out of the ordinary takes place within sight of their look-outs the coastguard have to be on the alert to render help if it should be required. Such was the case when, early one morning in June, 1897, the men of the coastguard station at Walmer saw smoke proceeding from the forepart of a large, full-rigged ship, which was being towed up the Channel by a foreign-looking tug. As it was thought something must be wrong a boat was put off to see if any assistance was required. When the coastguardsmen came alongside they found that it had just been discovered on board that the ship was on fire, and, indeed, in a very short time it was only too patent what was the matter, the hull of the ship at the bow-end having become red-hot.

The vessel turned out to be the *Micronesia*, of Liverpool, bound from Iquique to Ostend with a cargo of nitrate, which is at all times liable to fire from overheating. She was

being towed to her destination by an Ostend tug when, just before the coastguard came off to warn them, some of the crew had perceived smoke coming up from the fore-hold. The fire had evidently got such a secure grip that it was deemed useless to battle with it, and therefore, with the aid of the coastguard, most of the crew were transferred to the tug. Later in the day another tug ran up from Dover to assist, and the burning ship, enveloped in smoke and with fore-mast toppled over the port side, was run aground near Sandown Castle.

A curious incident happened in connection with this disaster. A gentleman belonging to Liverpool named Croft had a son on board the *Micronesia*, and wishing to see him after his voyage he went over to Ostend to meet him on his arrival. As the vessel, however, was considerably behind her time he could not wait any longer, and was crossing to Dover in the Ostend boat when, as they passed the Goodwin Sands, all on board were greatly excited to see a ship on fire. When they came near to the burning vessel glasses were naturally directed to her stern to see the name she bore and her port of origin. Imagine, then, the surprise of the father, and his dismay likewise, when he learned that she was the one for whose arrival he had been so patiently waiting at Ostend. However, he was not long at Dover before intelligence came from the coastguard that the ship's company were all in safety.

Nothing could better show the pluck and energy with which the coastguard go about their work than the rescue of four men which a party of them effected from the wreck of the German brigantine *Ernst* a year or two ago. During a November night the *Ernst* was driven on a shingle bank, Isle of Wight, and became a total wreck. The captain, the mate, and a seaman were rescued by the Totland lifeboat, the secretary of which had been apprised of the wreck by the station-officer of the Totland coastguard, who had received the information by telephone.

This took place between nine and ten in the morning. Somewhat later the officer of the coastguard at Stanpit was informed that four men of the *Ernst* were drifting towards Christchurch Head on a raft. Coastguardsmen were accordingly sent to the beach at Mudford with cork jackets and surf-lines. After a time wreckage was seen in the distance, and the raft was sighted two miles off the shore drifting towards Warren Head. Three coastguardsmen, named respectively Brice, Rolls, and Saunders, acting under

orders from Chief-boatman Exeter, proceeded to a point where it was deemed probable that the raft would come ashore. Upon the raft—which consisted of the cook-house roof—nearing the breakers it was feared that the poor fellows would be washed off and drowned. A man named Isaac Coakes made a gallant attempt to reach them, but, not wearing a cork jacket, he had no sooner gone into the water than he was hurled back on land. Coastguardsman William Henry Rolls thereupon stripped and, putting on a cork jacket, plunged into the surf and, being a fine swimmer, succeeded in reaching the raft. This was a distance of 200 yards away, and he did not reach it a moment too soon. For just as he came up to it two of the men were washed off and must inevitably have perished but for his holding them up until his mate Saunders, who attended him with a surf-line, could relieve him of one of them. The other two men, despite their exhausted state, managed to keep afloat after being thrown off the raft until Isaac Coakes and his brother and W. Price brought them safely to land. Rolls and his charge also landed safely.

The men thus rescued had been without food for nearly two days, besides suffering many hours' exposure on a frail raft in a rough sea. They were taken to the coastguard station, and there received every possible kindness and attention.

The above incidents exemplify the various duties and dangers which the coastguard are called upon to perform. But there is still another way in which their services may be required, and that is when illicit trade is being carried on within the three-mile limit, over which British jurisdiction extends. An instance in point occurred a little while ago, when a Belgian steamer, illegally engaged in "coopering," as it is called—that is, selling spirits or tobacco to the English fishing fleet—was boarded by a body of coastguardsmen, and after a smart struggle was captured and carried into Yarmouth.

This kind of thing is not of infrequent occurrence, and not long ago a "cooper," as if conscious of her own illegal doings, went ashore on the Sussex coast, close to the Haddich coastguard station, and became a total wreck.

Not infrequently an amusing incident will occur in connection with these "coopers." They come alike from French, Belgian, and Dutch ports; but they are so closely watched that it is seldom they get away without their sailing being reported to the coastguard, who,

of course, are then all on the alert for their arrival. Information of two such was sent not long since to the coastguard on the west coast of Ireland. The report was that they were making for the Irish fishing fleet. Naturally a very active look-out was kept. Finally a message came by wire to one station from its nearest neighbour, "Look out for 'cooper,' coming your way. Send out boats to intercept her."

A boat was at once manned and put off to meet her. In due course the signalled vessel came in sight. There could be no mistake, the description was so exact. She was accordingly hailed and ordered to lay to. That she did without demur, and the captain called out, "I know what you have come for. You take us for a 'cooper,' and we have, in fact, a thousand pounds of tobacco on board; you can come and see it if you like. But we are no 'cooper.' We are a mission-ship, bound for the Irish fishing fleet. Come on board and have a bit of something to eat and a pray, and you can see for yourselves." Which they did, and were satisfied.

The real "cooper" never turned up. The telegraph and the telephone disconcert these gentry very much. They also make naval operations difficult — as exemplified

in the naval manœuvres. Here is an instance. When the opposing fleets were off the west coast of Ireland a coastguard on the look-out at a station some forty miles to the N.W. of Cork spied the enemy about twenty-eight miles away,

north, proceeding in a southerly direction. He immediately notified Queenstown, where the opposing fleet was lying. The Admiral at once sailed out, and before the enemy had reached the coastguard station he was on her track, so that her contemplated operation was completely foiled.

On another occasion the enemy's fleet signalled the same station, asking for information. Before enlightening them in any way the coastguard asked for the countersign. This, of course, they could not give, and so they were parleyed with and held in hand until the

station had communicated with the fleet at Queenstown, which was again out and upon them before they knew what they were about.

Every year the coastguard have to go up either for a fortnight's drill or to join the autumn manœuvres. This, because it brings them in contact with old comrades and with life, they account a holiday and enjoy accordingly.



NIGHT DUTY—ANSWERING DISTRESS SIGNALS BY BURNING A LIGHT.