

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### SMUGGLING IN A MAN-OF-WAR.

It is in a good degree owing to the idleness just described, that, while lying in harbour, the man-of-war's-man is exposed to the most temptations and gets into his saddest scrapes. For though his vessel be anchored a mile from the shore, and her sides are patrolled by sentries night and day, yet these things cannot entirely prevent the seductions of the land from reaching him. The prime agent in working his calamities in port is his old arch-enemy, the ever-devilish god of grog.

Immured as the man-of-war's-man is, serving out his weary three years in a sort of sea-Newgate, from which he cannot escape, either by the roof or burrowing underground, he too often flies to the bottle to seek relief from the intolerable ennui of nothing to do, and nowhere to go. His ordinary government allowance of spirits, one gill per diem, is not enough to give a sufficient to his listless senses; he pronounces his grog basely watered; he scouts at it as thinner than muslin; he craves a more vigorous nip at the cable, a more sturdy swig at the halyards; and if opium were to be had, many would steep themselves a thousand fathoms down in the densest fumes of that oblivious drug. Tell him that the delirium tremens and the mania-a-potu lie in ambush for drunkards, he will say to you, "Let them bear down upon me, then, before the wind; anything that smacks of life is better than to feel

Davy Jones's chest-lid on your nose." He is reckless as an avalanche; and though his fall destroy himself and others, yet a ruinous commotion is better than being frozen fast in unendurable solitudes. No wonder, then, that he goes all lengths to procure the thing he craves; no wonder that he pays the most exorbitant prices, breaks through all law, and braves the ignominious lash itself, rather than be deprived of his stimulus.

Now, concerning no one thing in a man-of-war, are the regulations more severe than respecting the smuggling of grog, and being found intoxicated. For either offence there is but one penalty, invariably enforced; and that is the degradation of the gangway.

All conceivable precautions are taken by most frigate-executives to guard against the secret admission of spirits into the vessel. In the first place, no shore-boat whatever is allowed to approach a man-of-war in a foreign harbour without permission from the officer of the deck. Even the bum-boats, the small craft licensed by the officers to bring off fruit for the sailors, to be bought out of their own money--these are invariably inspected before permitted to hold intercourse with the ship's company. And not only this, but every one of the numerous ship's boats--kept almost continually plying to and from the shore--are similarly inspected, sometimes each boat twenty times in the day.

This inspection is thus performed: The boat being descried by the

quarter-master from the poop, she is reported to the deck officer, who thereupon summons the master-at-arms, the ship's chief of police. This functionary now stations himself at the gangway, and as the boat's crew, one by one, come up the side, he personally overhauls them, making them take off their hats, and then, placing both hands upon their heads, draws his palms slowly down to their feet, carefully feeling all unusual protuberances. If nothing suspicious is felt, the man is let pass; and so on, till the whole boat's crew, averaging about sixteen men, are examined. The chief of police then descends into the boat, and walks from stem to stern, eyeing it all over, and poking his long rattan into every nook and cranny. This operation concluded, and nothing found, he mounts the ladder, touches his hat to the deck-officer, and reports the boat clean; whereupon she is hauled out to the booms.

Thus it will be seen that not a man of the ship's company ever enters the vessel from shore without it being rendered next to impossible, apparently, that he should have succeeded in smuggling anything. Those individuals who are permitted to board the ship without undergoing this ordeal, are only persons whom it would be preposterous to search--such as the Commodore himself, the Captain, Lieutenants, etc., and gentlemen and ladies coming as visitors.

For anything to be clandestinely thrust through the lower port-holes at night, is rendered very difficult, from the watchfulness of the quarter-master in hailing all boats that approach, long before they

draw alongside, and the vigilance of the sentries, posted on platforms overhanging the water, whose orders are to fire into a strange boat which, after being warned to withdraw, should still persist in drawing nigh. Moreover, thirty-two-pound shots are slung to ropes, and suspended over the bows, to drop a hole into and sink any small craft, which, spite of all precautions, by strategy should succeed in getting under the bows with liquor by night. Indeed, the whole power of martial law is enlisted in this matter; and every one of the numerous officers of the ship, besides his general zeal in enforcing the regulations, adds to that a personal feeling, since the sobriety of the men abridges his own cares and anxieties.

How then, it will be asked, in the face of an argus-eyed police, and in defiance even of bayonets and bullets, do men-of-war's-men contrive to smuggle their spirits? Not to enlarge upon minor stratagems--every few days detected, and rendered naught (such as rolling up, in a handkerchief, a long, slender "skin" of grog, like a sausage, and in that manner ascending to the deck out of a boat just from shore; or openly bringing on board cocoa-nuts and melons, procured from a knavish bum-boat filled with spirits, instead of milk or water)--we will only mention here two or three other modes, coming under my own observation.

While in Rio, a fore-top-man, belonging to the second cutter, paid down the money, and made an arrangement with a person encountered at the Palace-landing ashore, to the following effect. Of a certain moonless night, he was to bring off three gallons of spirits, in skins, and

moor them to the frigate's anchor-buoy--some distance from the vessel--attaching something heavy, to sink them out of sight. In the middle watch of the night, the fore-top-man slips out of his hammock, and by creeping along in the shadows, eludes the vigilance of the master-at-arms and his mates, gains a port-hole, and softly lowers himself into the water, almost without creating a ripple--the sentries marching to and fro on their overhanging platform above him. He is an expert swimmer, and paddles along under the surface, every now and then rising a little, and lying motionless on his back to breathe--little but his nose exposed. The buoy gained, he cuts the skins adrift, ties them round his body, and in the same adroit manner makes good his return.

This feat is very seldom attempted, for it needs the utmost caution, address, and dexterity; and no one but a super-expert burglar, and faultless Leander of a swimmer, could achieve it.

From the greater privileges which they enjoy, the "forward officers," that is, the Gunner, Boatswain, etc., have much greater opportunities for successful smuggling than the common seamen. Coming alongside one night in a cutter, Yarn, our boatswain, in some inexplicable way, contrived to slip several skins of brandy through the air-port of his own state-room. The feat, however, must have been perceived by one of the boat's crew, who immediately, on gaining the deck, sprung down the ladders, stole into the boatswain's room, and made away with the prize, not three minutes before the rightful owner entered to claim it.

Though, from certain circumstances, the thief was known to the aggrieved party, yet the latter could say nothing, since he himself had infringed the law. But the next day, in the capacity of captain of the ship's executioners, Yarn had the satisfaction (it was so to him) of standing over the robber at the gangway; for, being found intoxicated with the very liquor the boatswain himself had smuggled, the man had been condemned to a flogging.

This recalls another instance, still more illustrative of the knotted, trebly intertwined villainy, accumulating at a sort of compound interest in a man-of-war. The cockswain of the Commodore's barge takes his crew apart, one by one, and cautiously sounds them as to their fidelity--not to the United States of America, but to himself. Three individuals, whom he deems doubtful--that is, faithful to the United States of America--he procures to be discharged from the barge, and men of his own selection are substituted; for he is always an influential character, this cockswain of the Commodore's barge. Previous to this, however, he has seen to it well, that no Temperance men--that is, sailors who do not draw their government ration of grog, but take the money for it--he has seen to it, that none of these balkers are numbered among his crew. Having now proved his men, he divulges his plan to the assembled body; a solemn oath of secrecy is obtained, and he waits the first fit opportunity to carry into execution his nefarious designs.

At last it comes. One afternoon the barge carries the Commodore across

the Bay to a fine water-side settlement of noblemen's seats, called Praya Grande. The Commodore is visiting a Portuguese marquis, and the pair linger long over their dinner in an arbour in the garden.

Meanwhile, the cockswain has liberty to roam about where he pleases. He searches out a place where some choice red-eye (brandy) is to be had, purchases six large bottles, and conceals them among the trees. Under the pretence of filling the boat-keg with water, which is always kept in the barge to refresh the crew, he now carries it off into the grove, knocks out the head, puts the bottles inside, reheads the keg, fills it with water, carries it down to the boat, and audaciously restores it to its conspicuous position in the middle, with its bung-hole up. When the Commodore comes down to the beach, and they pull off for the ship, the cockswain, in a loud voice, commands the nearest man to take that bung out of the keg--that precious water will spoil. Arrived alongside the frigate, the boat's crew are overhauled, as usual, at the gangway; and nothing being found on them, are passed. The master-at-arms now descending into the barge, and finding nothing suspicious, reports it clean, having put his finger into the open bung of the keg and tasted that the water was pure. The barge is ordered out to the booms, and deep night is waited for, ere the cockswain essays to snatch the bottles from the keg.

But, unfortunately for the success of this masterly smuggler, one of his crew is a weak-pated fellow, who, having drank somewhat freely ashore, goes about the gun-deck throwing out profound, tipsy hints concerning some unutterable proceeding on the ship's anvil. A knowing

old sheet-anchor-man, an unprincipled fellow, putting this, that, and the other together, ferrets out the mystery; and straightway resolves to reap the goodly harvest which the cockswain has sowed. He seeks him out, takes him to one side, and addresses him thus:

"Cockswain, you have been smuggling off some red-eye, which at this moment is in your barge at the booms. Now, cockswain, I have stationed two of my mess-mates at the port-holes, on that side of the ship; and if they report to me that you, or any of your bargemen, offer to enter that barge before morning, I will immediately report you as a smuggler to the officer of the deck."

The cockswain is astounded; for, to be reported to the deck-officer as a smuggler, would inevitably procure him a sound flogging, and be the disgraceful breaking of him as a petty officer, receiving four dollars a month beyond his pay as an able seaman. He attempts to bribe the other to secrecy, by promising half the profits of the enterprise; but the sheet-anchor-man's integrity is like a rock; he is no mercenary, to be bought up for a song. The cockswain, therefore, is forced to swear that neither himself, nor any of his crew, shall enter the barge before morning. This done, the sheet-anchor-man goes to his confidants, and arranges his plans. In a word, he succeeds in introducing the six brandy bottles into the ship; five of which he sells at eight dollars a bottle; and then, with the sixth, between two guns, he secretly regales himself and confederates; while the helpless cockswain, stifling his rage, bitterly eyes them from afar.



Thus, though they say that there is honour among thieves, there is little among man-of-war smugglers.