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The Marco Polo

READ BY CAPTAIN E. A. WOODS.

Although it is generally considered that the *Marco Polo* was the first ship of the Black Ball Line, she was not included in the fleet until after her first voyage to Melbourne. The first sailing of the Liverpool Line of Australian Packets was made by the *Flora Macdonald*, which sailed on April 14th, 1852, for Portland Bay from Birkenhead.

The name was not altered to the Black Ball Line until July of the same year. In his speech on the eve of *Marco Polo*'s first sailing, Baines stated that "if the *Marco Polo* does not earn for herself such a reputation for speed that, when on her return, she takes her place as one of the Black Ball Line."

The *Marco Polo* was built in 1851 by James Smith in the Marsh Creek in Courtenay Bay, New Brunswick. Her length was 185 feet, amidships breadth 38, and her amidships depth 30 feet. She had three decks with a headroom of eight feet between each. Built with hard pine beams, her frames were of hackmatack and planking of pine and oak.

Above water she was lofty and boxlike with an underwater body of sharp entrance and a clean run. Amidships she had the bilge of a cargo carrier with the bow ports of a timber drogher. She was fastened with black iron and was uncoppered. Her upper deck was flush with small houses at each hatchway. When launched her lowermasts were stepped and her topmasts set up and stayed.

There was a creek running through the flats on which the yard was situated, and when the *Marco Polo* was launched on an ebbtide, she took charge and stuck her stern post on to the high bank at the other side of the creek and stayed there. When the tide had finished ebbing she fell over on her side. Two weeks later she was refloated, undamaged, though it was at first thought she would be hogged. She was rigged and placed in commission by her builder.

Loaded with timber she was sent to Liverpool and made the run across in 18 days. Not being immediately sold, she was sent to Mobile for a cargo of cotton, and on her arrival back in Liverpool in May was offered for sale by Messrs. Stitt Coubrough & Stitt, of 31, North John Street.

She was bought by James Baines, who held 28 shares in her, Thomas Miller Mackay holding the same amount, with Captain James Nicol Forbes holding the remaining eight.

Put into drydock, her iron fastenings were knocked out and replaced by copper, and at the same time she was sheathed with metal. She was then fitted up to carry passengers, and the *Illustrated London News* of that day gave an account of her which fully described her passenger accommodation. "The poop was used

as a ladies' cabin, and on deck, forward of the poop, was the dining saloon. The ceiling of the saloon was in maple and the pilasters were panelled with highly ornamented and silvered glass, coins of various countries being a feature of the decorations. Between each pilaster was a circular aperture, about six feet in circumference, for light and ventilation. Over each aperture was placed a sheet of plate glass with a painted picturesque view in the centre, enclosed in a framework of foliage and scroll of opaque colours and gold. The whole panels were brought out slightly by a rim of perforated zinc, so that air was freely admitted, as well as light being diffused over the whole."

"The saloon doors were panelled in stained glass, bearing figures of commerce and industry from the designs of Mr. Frank Howard. In the centre of the saloon was a table of thick plate glass, which had the advantage of giving light to the dormitories below. The upholstery was in embossed crimson velvet. The berths were ranged in the 'tween decks in separate state rooms and had circular glass ports of effective construction."

The *Marco Polo's* registered tonnage was 1,625, though she was capable of carrying over 2,000 tons of cargo. Her figurehead was a full-length figure of the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo. After purchase by the Black Ball Line her stern was decorated by carvings of an elephant's head in the centre with a reclining figure of Marco Polo on each side of it.

Contemporary writers in St. John said that she was a fortunate fluke, and though it has often been stated that she was built for the Black Ball Line, she was primarily built to carry timber and a timber ship she was, classed for six years by Lloyd's.

By no stretch of imagination could it be said that her speed was wholly due to her lines and design of build; it was rather due to the skill and daring of her commanders that she made so many extraordinary passages.

On May 20th, 1852, the following advertisement appeared in the Liverpool shipping papers:—

Under engagement to sail on 21st June,
For Melbourne and Port Philip.
The splendid new frigate built ship,

MARCO POLO,

J. N. FORBES, Commander,

is the largest vessel ever despatched from Liverpool
to Australia and is expected to sail as fast as any
ship afloat. Carries two Surgeons.

Vacancies for a few Naval cadets.

On Sunday, July 4th, she left Liverpool for Melbourne with 930 emigrants and a crew of 60. She was under charter to the Emigration Commissioners. Nearly half of her crew were only working their passage out, bound for the goldfields.

Captain Forbes had been transferred from the *Maria*, in which ship he was relieved by Captain Jackson.

With a big crew, good officers, a light ship and plenty of nerve, Forbes drove her out to Port Philip Heads in 76 days, arriving at 11 a.m. on September 18th. The Black Ball Line advertised this passage as being 68 days, no doubt taking their time from land to land.

Her best day's run outward was 364 miles, and running her Easting down in South latitudes she averaged 336 miles a day for four consecutive days.

There is a story told that Forbes, on arrival, immediately trumped up a charge of insubordination against his crew and had them all put in jail, so that they could not desert for the gold diggings.

It would be interesting to know how he managed to persuade the authorities into believing this charge, especially as half his crew were only signed on for the run out.

On October 11th she sailed again for Liverpool by way of Cape Horn, and, after a record passage of 76 days, arrived in the Mersey, only taking 5 months and 21 days for the round voyage.

No wonder the shipping world was astounded, and thousands of people made their way to Salhouse Dock to view the "Fastest ship in the world."

On Sunday, March 13th, 1853, the *Marco Polo* sailed on her second voyage to Melbourne in ballast, with 648 passengers, arriving out on May 29th, after a passage of 75 days. On this outward passage she lost 53 passengers by death.

Leaving Melbourne on June 10th with 40 passengers and £280,000 of gold dust on board, she arrived in Liverpool on September 13th, after a passage of 95 days. This was not a very fine homeward passage, having been five days jammed in the ice in 60 South and then becalmed 15 days on the Line, but she had again made the round voyage in less than six months.

Captain Forbes was now relieved by his chief officer, Charles McDonnell, and under her new commander she made the outward passage in 74 days 12 hours. Entering Port Philip Heads she grounded, owing to the inefficiency of the pilot, and remained there for some time. In January, 1854, she was refloated by Captain Charles Ferguson, the Harbourmaster of Melbourne. Found to have not sustained any damage, on her discharge was reloaded for home, and arrived in Liverpool after a passage of 78 days.

In July of that year a service of plate, breakfast and tea, valued at 200 guineas, was presented to Captain Ferguson by the Black

Ball Line for his service in rescuing their favourite and far-famed ship.

On her arrival home Captain McDonnell was transferred to the *Lightning* and was relieved by Captain Wild. Her fourth voyage out was made in 95 days, and she sailed for Melbourne at 7 a.m. on December 4th, 1854, with 208 passengers and the following cargo: 1,374 bales of wool; 159 casks of tallow; 8,128 hides; 18,002 horns, and 4,280 shinbones. In her strong room was 56,895 ozs. of gold and 4,280 sovereigns. There was also £40,000 worth of gold in the possession of her passengers.

She arrived in the Mersey at 4 p.m. on February 28th, 1855, after a passage of 85 days. Captain Clarke was now appointed to the ship and she sailed on her fifth voyage on April 5th.

Some changes were by now appearing on board. She had a well-ventilated hospital erected on board and an improved cooking range. An instrumental band was also provided for the amusement of the passengers, as well as a printing machine for the ship's paper, and a photographic apparatus, which was placed in charge of the doctor. She also had a cow, 30 sheep, 30 pigs, and 30 dozen fowls and rabbits, hares, etc., for the table. Her passages this voyage were 81 days out and 85 days home.

On October 24th Captain Clarke was summoned before the magistrates by Captain Schomberg, R.N., acting on behalf of several third class passengers. The complaints were that during the voyage the flour served out was occasionally sour, that provisions had not been served out to the extent and of the nature specified in the dietary scale, and that the captain had on one occasion suspended the issue of a certain portion of the provisions, because several of the third class passengers refused to sign receipts for the provisions as they had formerly done.

Mr. James Aikin, the magistrate, said that some complaints about the provisions appeared to be very unfounded as, according to the passengers themselves, she was exceedingly well supplied, with one or two trifling exceptions. The only error on the part of the captain was his suspension of the issue of provisions, by which the magistrate felt he had incurred a penalty, but he would only inflict the smallest the law allowed, namely, £10.

She sailed on her sixth voyage on December 7th, and arrived out on February 26th, in 83 days. On her following voyage she took 89 days outward.

Homeward bound in 1861 she collided with an iceberg in Southern latitudes and was badly damaged forward. Leaking badly she made for Valparaiso. She had £260,000 worth of gold on board, with 800 passengers and crew. She left Valparaiso on May 21st for Liverpool, and arrived in the Mersey 183 days from Melbourne.

In 1858 Captain Clarke left her for the *Lightning* and had been relieved by Captain D. H. Johnstone. In 1865 her master was Lieut. R. Arnold, R.N.R., but he died the following year, and Baines gave her original master his old ship again.

Forbes retained command of her until she was sold in 1871 to J. Wilson and Co., of South Shields. She was sent by them tramping to the Mediterranean and she left the Australian trade for good.

In 1874 she was cutdown to barque rig and sailed for Rio loaded with coke and coal. After discharging this she took on board 1,100 tons of stone ballast, and sailed for Callao to load guano. There she laid for 96 days before receiving orders to load guano at Huanillos. She took 15 months and 17 days to load a full cargo and finally sailed for Falmouth for orders. After a passage of 97 days she proceeded to Antwerp to discharge.

In 1882 she was sold to Bell & Lawes, of South Shields, who resold her the following year to M. I. Wilson, of Liverpool. Resold again to the Norwegians, she loaded a cargo of pine deals at Montmorency, Quebec, in July, 1883.

On the afternoon of July 22nd she piled herself up at Cape Cavendish, Prince Edward Island. Leaking badly, and with her pumps broken down, she was beached by her master to save her from foundering. The wreck and cargo were sold at auction, and the deals were discharged into schooners. During one night a gale sprang up and the ship broke in two and soon went to pieces.

Her steering gear and stove were installed in the new barque *Charles E. Lefurgey*, of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. A dinner bell is said to be still in the possession of a Prince Edward Island family and the stern carving is now in a St. John Museum, after being nailed up on a farmer's barn for years.

Liverpool Tugs and their Owners

READ BY J. S. REES.

It might be recalled that the first British steamboat, the *Comet* (built 1812), was constructed for towing purposes, and when steamers were introduced into the Mersey Ferries in 1816, they also, on occasions, were employed towing sailing vessels to and from sea.

In reverse, a number of the early Ferry Boats were built as tugs, and converted into Ferry steamers. In later years some of the craft designed for the Ferries were purchased by the tug owners.

One can imagine the cheering spectacle it must have been, to the crew of a ship, returning from a long voyage, with thoughts of home uppermost in their minds, to discern a tugboat making for them, to tow them into port, the bearers of the long-awaited-for "News," and may be, of fresh provisions.

It has been found rather difficult to trace some of the Tugs belonging to the earlier Companies, owing to the fact that they do not appear in "Lloyds," nor are they entered in the Registers at the Liverpool Custom House.

In a port like Liverpool there were many tugs owned by different individuals, but the following are the outstanding concerns:

We begin with the LIVERPOOL STEAM TUG COMPANY, formed in 1836.

To commence operations they bought three wooden paddle tugs, *Druid*, *Ormrod* and *Hero*, and at their own shipbuilding yard at Birkenhead they built the wooden paddle tugs *Queen* and *Victoria* in 1837, *President* in 1839, and *Albert* in 1840, and others, all about 200 tons gross, and 120 h.p.; later they constructed iron paddlers.

In 1840, the Company's Directors were S. Johnson (Merchant), G. Kendal, J. Tyrer, J. Aitken and J. J. Worrall (Shipowners).

In 1841 they bought the *Mona* from the Isle of Man Company. She was a wooden paddle vessel of 140 tons, built on the Clyde ten years earlier.

In 1846 they possessed a fleet of six paddle tugs; additions were made, including the *Blazer*, a large paddle tug of 383 tons and 180 h.p., built for the Company at Glasgow in 1856, and by 1865 they could boast of twelve vessels.

It appears that at one period this Company undertook salvage operations, and to mention but one instance, when the iron ship *Flying Venus*, of 1,660 tons, capsized in the Wapping Dock, Liverpool, in August, 1869, and filled with water, they refloated her.

Many salvage services and successful tows have been performed by Liverpool tugs, bringing home dismasted ships and disabled steamers, but time only permits of a few instances being mentioned.

The Lamport and Holt steamer *Biela*, of 2,182 tons, from Pernambuco, with a broken shaft and lost propeller, reached St. Vincent in December, 1870. The *Cruiser*, of 364 tons, belonging to the Liverpool Steam Tug Company, towed the vessel to the Mersey in 32 days, including stoppages for coal, arriving in the River on the 7th February, 1871.

In 1882 the Company purchased from the Clyde the tug *Pilot Fish*, of 305 tons and 180 h.p., and renamed her the *Pathfinder*, and she became celebrated for her long towage services.

In 1887 they made another purchase, this time it was the Woodside Ferries iron p.s. *Cheshire*, of 532 tons, built in 1863; they renamed her *America*, and used her as a passenger tender.

When on a voyage from New York to Liverpool, the new twin screw Inman Line steamer *City of Paris*, of 10,499 tons, met with an accident to her machinery, on the 25th March, 1890, her starboard engine being smashed and water entered her port engine room, completely disabling the vessel. The steamer *Aldersgate*, of 2,291 tons, bound from Galveston to London, hove in sight, and towed her to the entrance to Queenstown, arriving on the 31st March, where she was met by the *Pathfinder*, which, with the assistance of three other tugs, manœuvred her into the harbour.

The leaks having been located and stopped, she was pumped dry, and with only her port engine working, the *City of Paris* was towed to Liverpool by the *Pathfinder*, arriving in the Mersey on the 2nd April.

The Cunard liner *Etruria*, of 8,120 tons, homeward bound from New York, broke her shaft, in February, 1902, and was brought to the Azores by the Liverpool steamer *William Cliff*, of 3,287 tons, belonging to the West India and Pacific Company.

She left Fayal on the 16th March, assisted by three tugs, the celebrated *Pathfinder* and the *Black Cock* (Cock Tugs, Liverpool), which were towing, and the Portuguese Salvage tug *Atlas*, astern.

Another Mersey tug, the *British King* (Ward's), joined the others off the Tuskar Lighthouse, and the *Etruria*, with her escort, arrived safely in the Mersey, on the 3rd April, the voyage (1,407 miles) having taken 17 days.

This Company was, in its later years, generally referred to as the "Old Company."

In 1910 they went out of business, after functioning for 74 years.

In the aggregate they had owned at least 37 tugs.

THE MERSEY TOWING COMPANY was in existence in 1848, but it is not clear as to who were the proprietors. In 1850 it was called the Mersey Tug Company, and the owners then were Cross, Taylor and Brown.

In 1856 John Prendiville first appears as manager, and shortly afterwards the title was again changed, to the *Mersey Original Steam*

Tug Company, owing to another concern calling themselves the Mersey Steam Tug Company.

Details of the early tugs have disappeared, but in 1861 the iron paddle tug *Speedwell*, of 132 tons and 64 h.p., was built for them at Liverpool, and then they bought the *Royal Arch*, constructed at Newcastle in 1862, which was slightly larger. Some years later their names were changed to *Knight of Malta* and *Knight of the Cross* respectively, while other Knights came into the service.

In 1864-65 three fine new twin screw tugs came into commission, namely: *Knight of St. John*, 275 tons; *Knight of St. Patrick*, 274 tons; and *Knight of St. George*, 129 tons.

It is interesting to note that each of their vessels was registered as a separate Company.

In 1921 Prendiville formed the West Coast Towage and Salvage Company, Limited, and bought a number of vessels. The business was terminated in 1924, after an existence of 73 years.

THE NEW STEAM TUG COMPANY was operating in 1849, managed by McKean, McLarty and Company, with three tugs, the *Defiance*, *Countess* and *Champion*, but their existence was of short duration. Another company with the same identical name came into being a few years afterwards, as will be seen later.

We now come to a tug company which, of the earliest established, is one of the best known to most of us. It is JOLIFFES!

William Joliffe, originally a master mariner, was a Steam Packet Proprietor in 1852; two years later the firm WILLIAM AND THOMAS JOLIFFE emerged. One of their earliest tugs was the iron paddle steamer *Lioness*, of 95 tons, built by Lairds at Birkenhead in 1854.

By 1860, when the new tug *Emperor*, of about 120 tons, came into service, they called themselves the Universal Steam Tug Company. Five years later they had a fleet of eleven tugs.

Up to 1879 the names of their tugs were an odd assortment; however, from that year they were identified by family names, commencing with the screw steamer *Thomas Joliffe*, of 467 tons and 70 h.p., built at Paisley, followed by the *William Joliffe*, of 332 tons, in 1885.

A number of Joliffe's tugs in the early days were registered at other ports, such as Cardiff, Dublin, Maryport, Leith and London, which possibly indicated that they were operating them from such places.

The *William Joliffe* had a stroke of luck in February, 1894, when the steamer *Loch Maree*, of 2,698 tons, of Dundee, on a voyage from Galveston to Bremen, with a cargo of cotton, was abandoned by her own crew owing to lack of fuel.

This tug (Captain James Clare) was despatched in search, and found the *Loch Maree* near the Irish Coast, with the steamer *Maryland*, 2,773 tons (Atlantic Transport Line), endeavouring to

pull the abandoned vessel off the land. The tug boat took the *Loch Maree* in tow, and brought her safely into Belfast. The *Maryland* for her assistance received £1,500, while the *William Joliffe* was awarded the substantial sum of £7,500 for her services.

In 1908 the business and six tugs (*Sarah*, *Andrew*, *Vivian*, *Hannah*, *Jane* and *T. A. Joliffe*) were taken over by the Alexandra Towing Company, but continued to run under the old Joliffe name until 1924, when their last tug, the *Sarah Joliffe*, was sold, and the name of Joliffe disappears, after an existence of 72 years, during which period they were the owners of some 38 vessels.

THE HERCULES STEAM TUG COMPANY were operating tugs in 1852, their owners being Cruse and Downham (Henry Cruse previously was described as a Boatowner, and William Downham as an Engineer).

Their earliest tugs were *Invincible*, iron p.s. of 111 tons and 70 h.p., built at Warrington in 1852, and the iron p.s. *Constitution*, of 263 tons and 120 h.p., constructed at Newcastle the next year, but in 1861 Lairds of Birkenhead launched the *Hercules*, an iron p.s. of 153 tons, for them, and the same builders supplied them with the slightly bigger *Columbus*, of 194 tons, in 1865.

Later they acquired the iron p.s. *Conqueror*, of 102 tons, which had been built at South Shields in 1857.

In 1885 the firm was Cruse and Company, and the next year Michael Dodd was the owner; then in 1889, W. H. Dodd, and finally in 1894 the firm became Edward De Soberon and W. H. Dodd.

When their remaining tug, the *Conqueror*, was disposed of in 1901, a business career of 49 years was terminated.

In 1856 one Peter Maddox, described as a steam tug proprietor, was associated with the INDEPENDENCE STEAM TUG COMPANY, and, as an iron paddle steamer named *Independence*, of 110 tons, was built at Newcastle in 1852, "expressly for plying on the Mersey," it may be taken that this Company was established that year. Further, it appears that in 1853, the iron paddle tugs *Universe* and *Enterprise*, each of 311 tons gross and 120 h.p., were also built for this concern, and the *Rocklight*, of 181 tons, was added in 1863. The Company terminated in 1890.

In 1857 the firm of JOHN STRONG AND SONS, consisting of John, identified with Steam Boat Packets, Henry and William, Master Mariners—the latter was described as a steam boat owner in 1854—Nicholas, an Engineer, Robert and Thomas, a regular family affair, joined the already not inconsiderable body of tug owners. Later they styled themselves the General Steam Tug Company.

Their tugs, as far as the records available show, were the wooden paddle boat *Victory*, built in 1852, in which year the business may have commenced, and the iron paddle tugs *Guilding Star*, *Brilliant Star*, *Merry Andrew* and *City of London*.

The business continued for 51 years, being given up in 1905.

THE UNITED STEAM TUG COMPANY came into existence in 1854.

The name of their first vessel or vessels is not known, but the *United States*, of 235 tons, was built at Newcastle in 1858, and she was followed by the *United Kingdom*, *Emperor*, *Royal Alfred*, *Brother Jonathan* and *Alliance*, all iron paddle tugs.

They continued in business until 1894, a period of 40 years.

HENRY JOHN WARD AND COMPANY were Shipbrokers in 1848, and in 1850 they were described as Shipowners; however, in 1854 they were Shiphandlers and Sailmakers. H. J. Ward was then manager of the St. Georges Steam Tug Company.

Their first tug seems to have been the *Iron King* (paddle), of 169 tons, built at St. Anthonys in 1853, followed by the *Fire King*, built at South Shields in 1856.

Next year the *Sailor King* and *Storm King* came into service, and subsequently other *Kings* were added to the fleet.

In 1895 they acquired from the Wallasey Ferries the iron p.s. *Heather Belle*, of 205 tons, built in 1865, and true to tradition they changed her name to *Erins King*.

The firm went out of business in 1905, after a career of 52 years.

Another Mersey Steam Tug Company commenced their activities in 1857, with the new wooden p.s. *Great Conquest*, of 110 tons, just built at North Shields. In 1860 their title was Mersey Steam Tug Company (*Great Conquest*), while in 1862 Wm. Chisholm and Company were the proprietors, with the name of *Great Conquest Steam Tug Company*.

This tug continued to ply on the Mersey for many years, and in 1880 Chisholm bought the iron p.s. *Agincourt*, of 161 tons, and on the sale of the *Great Conquest* in 1902, the *Agincourt*, having previously been disposed of, the business ended.

A second NEW STEAM TUG COMPANY was established in 1857, their pioneer tug being the *Resolute*, of about 200 tons and 120 h.p., built at Renfrew that year, described as "the largest and most powerful tug in the United Kingdom."

Other vessels were added to the fleet with similar names, *Reliance*, *Relief*, *Retriever*, *Rover* and *Phœnix*, all iron paddle.

It appears that in 1875 George Percival, who was a Shipbroker, bought the *Knight Errant* (ex *Reliance*), *Relief* and *Sunshine* (ex *Phœnix*), and continued operating them under the name of the New Steam Tug Company.

The firm eventually became G. R. and R. Percival, and was in business until 1894, when they sold the *Knight Errant*, their last remaining tug.

THE LIVER STEAM TUG COMPANY commenced activities in 1861, Joseph Newton, Junr., master mariner, being the proprietor. He

had just bought the tug *Liver* from the Liverpool Steam Tug Company—a wooden paddler of 142 tons and 80 h.p., built for the latter company in 1846. Later she was renamed *Warrior*.

In 1864 the owners of the company were Edward Griffiths, Brother and Company.

Three years later they had built for them at Glasgow the iron paddle steamer *Black Prince*, of 212 tons, while in 1874 the *Gladiator*, of 223 tons, came into service from Lairds at Birkenhead, and the *Hotspur*, of similar tonnage, in 1876 arrived from the Clyde.

This Company continued until 1910, and then came to an end, a firm with few tugs but practically half a century's service to their credit.

THE CALEDONIAN STEAM TUG COMPANY came into being in 1864, with Alexander Muir as manager, and 14 years later Beaumont Crook took over control.

Their earliest vessels are unknown, but in 1870 Crook was the owner of the tug *Pioneer* and the new paddle tug *Fiery Cross*, of 239 tons, built at South Shields, and three years thereafter he purchased the *Surprise*, of 157 tons. The business was discontinued in 1888.

Coming to the present-day Companies, W. Beckett Hill, who was a Director of the Allan Line, commenced operating tugs in 1877, with the large iron twin screw *Storm Cock*, of 329 tons and 250 h.p., just built for him by Lairds of Birkenhead, and additions followed with similar names.

As the Admiralty took a fancy to the *Storm Cock*, she was purchased by them, and another twin screw vessel of same name, but of 372 tons and 300 h.p., came into commission in 1883. She also was bought by the Admiralty.

In 1885 ~~About 1886~~ this firm took as their title, the Liverpool Screw Towing and Lighterage Company, but it was, and still is, generally referred to as the "Cock Tugs." To-day they are the owners of twelve tugs.

1882 George Bell Cowle commenced operating tugs on the Mersey about 1882, when he became the owner of a number of vessels that had been built on the Clyde. They were: the *Flying Hurricane*, of 154 tons; *Flying Kestrel*, of 135 tons; and *Flying Breeze*, *Flying Whirlwind* and *Flying Kestrel*, each about 80 tons; he also purchased the tug *Turbot*. However, on the formation of the Alexandra Towing Company in 1887, these tugs, with the exception of the *Flying Hurricane*, were taken over, and Cowle became a Director of the new Company.

As just mentioned, the Alexandra Towing Company made its appearance in 1887, when they took over Cowle's five tugs, while in 1888 there was built for them at Ayr the twin screw *Alexandra*, of 142 tons and 75 h.p.

By 1900 their fleet had increased to twelve tugs, and more were added as the years went by, most of them being named after the Liverpool docks.

As already stated, in 1908 the Alexandra Towing Company obtained control of Joliffe's business and six of their tugs, but continued to operate them under the old firm's name until 1924.

In 1933 they purchased the well-known passenger Tender *Magnetic*, a steel twin screw vessel, of 619 tons, built at Belfast in 1891, for the White Star Line, and renamed her *Ryde*.

At the present time the Company have no less than 29 tugs in commission, and also three passenger Tenders: the *Flying Breeze*, of 387 tons, *Romsey*, of 509 tons, and the *Flying Kestrel*, of 700 tons—five of which are registered at Swansea and four at Southampton.

To-day the Alexandra Towing Company has the largest fleet of tugs in the United Kingdom, and including their present units have owned no less than 77 tugs.

THE REA TOWING COMPANY was formed by R. and J. H. Rea in 1899. Actually their first tug was the *Cumbria*, of 94 tons, built for them in 1895, and registered at Southampton, which name was altered to *Hallgarth*, to bring it into line with their other *Garths*—the *Holmgarth* in 1899, the *Fellgarth* in 1902, followed by the *Edengarth*, etc.

Larger tugs gradually came into service, and to-day Rea's fleet consists of 15 tugs—seven registered at Liverpool, six at Bristol, one at Southampton, and another at London.

ELDER DEMPSTER AND COMPANY, in 1901, purchased three Cardiff tugs, of about 150 tons, and renamed them *African*, *Beaver* and *Panther*, and in the following year they were owned by the Mersey Towing Company, with Elder Dempster and Co. as managers.

In 1906 the Mersey Towing Company was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the *African* was renamed *Otter*.

At the present time the fleet consists of the *Bison*, 274 tons, *Moose* and *Wapiti*, each 208 tons.

Between 1929-30 FURNESS, WITHY & CO. had three screw tugs built for them by Cammell, Laird & Co., each of 186 tons, and named *Beemore*, *Creemore* and *Deemore*; they were placed under the ownership of the Johnston-Warren Lines, and to-day are still in service.

WILLIAM LAMEY bought the iron paddle tug *Troon*, of 130 tons, about 1935, and then the screw tugs *Dorunda* and *Florida*, of slightly smaller tonnage, and these vessels still ply on the Mersey.

This story would be incomplete if reference were not made to the well-known Cunard Tender *Skirmisher*," which has carried thousands of passengers to and from that Company's steamers, since she came into service 60 years ago. Built by Thompson, Glasgow, in 1884, she is a twin screw vessel of 607 tons, and is still doing excellent work.

It will likely be a surprise to learn that the old *Stormcock*, built at Birkenhead in 1877, is still in existence. After being sold out of the Navy she belonged to several owners, and is now registered at Cork, under the name of *Morsecock*, being 67 years old.

The Ship Thomas of Liverpool

READ BY ARTHUR C. WARDLE.

The following episodes in the career of the ship *Thomas* of Liverpool are of interest because they record an instance of armed resistance to the press-gang, the dangerous practice of 'Slavers' in arming their cargo to repel enemy attack and, not only a case of the unusual 'privateer-corvette' action, but also the only instance that I have come across of an action between a privateer and a frigate.

All that is known of the *Thomas* is that she was a 'guineaman' of 307 tons burthen and carried 24 guns, her complement was 78 men and boys, and the year of her launch 1790, from the yard of Mr. W. N. Wright of Liverpool. All the events recorded, with the exception of the first, were contained within the scope of a single voyage when she was under the command of Captain Peter M'Quie. The first was related many years later by a Captain Brassey. He says:—

"You will be surprised to hear me detail to you the particulars of a striking occurrence at sea, to which I was an eye-witness. It took place about the year 1794, when I was a sailor boy on board H.M.S. *Veteran*, 64 guns, under the command of Captain Charles Edward Nugent, and I well remember at the very time we had on board H.R.H. Prince Edward, afterwards Duke of Kent and father of her present Majesty Queen Victoria.

"Our ship *Veteran* with others was lying at anchor in the harbour of Grenada in St. Vincent, under orders to proceed to Barbados with the convoy, previous to our attack on the Island of Madeira.

"About daybreak, having descried a large ship on the horizon at the mouth of the harbour, our boats were ordered out and manned with instructions to board her. The strange vessel, however, no doubt dreading the loss of any of her crew by impressment, would not permit the approach of our men and fired upon the boats. Our captain, seeing this, instantly ordered us to give chase, which we did with all sail set; at the same time our boats were ordered to return to the harbour and await our return.

"At the close of the day we came up to the ship and prepared for action. Unfortunately for us, at the very moment our fore guns were firing upon the strange vessel to bring her to, by some mischance our ship took fire abaft and twenty men were killed and wounded by an explosion of gunpowder.

"This strange ship proved to be the *Thomas* of Liverpool, Captain Peter M'Quie, your father. (This is an error, since Captain M'Quie did not succeed to the *Thomas* until 1796 in 1794, Captain T. Dodgson was in command.) Our commander gave your father orders to keep his ship in sight during the night, but a gale of wind

came on soon afterwards and your gallant father contrived to get away from us, and we shortly lost sight of the *Thomas* altogether, after a waste of 48 hours fruitlessly employed in chasing a British ship which we had at first believed to be an enemy.

"We subsequently proceeded to Barbados alone, having lost sight of the convoy during this singular adventure."

Continuing now to the most noteworthy voyage of the *Thomas*, the following is an extract from a letter written by Captain M'Quie to his owner in Liverpool, and is quoted from Gore's *Liverpool Advertiser* of 30th March, 1787:—

"On the 2nd inst., in Lat. 37.40, scudding under easy sail, the man who I had stationed at the mast head, gave the signal of a sail ahead and bearing down for me. I, however, judged it most prudent to keep the course I was then steering. On the vessel approaching nigher I discovered her to be an armed vessel, of course made the necessary arrangements to act on the defensive for the preservation of the *Thomas* and cargo. The vessel having come within gunshot of the *Thomas*, I fired a gun and hoisted my colours to learn who or what she was; when I found her to be a French National Corvette, mounting 18 guns, twelve pounders, with four carronades of very heavy calibre, with two to three hundred men; the shot of one of these carronades made a hole in the side of the *Thomas's* cabin of ten inches diameter, but no material injury occurred therefrom.

"But to commence with a detail of the whole action: the corvette steering right down upon me I hoisted my colours, giving him a shot, which for some time was not answered. I, however, took every necessary precaution. The Corvette now being abreast of me, I gave him a full broadside, which was answered by several guns miserably conducted and from which I received no damage. The Corvette kept her course for some time, and I expected had no further intention of engaging, which was wished for on my part, being agreeable to your instructions, I therefore continued my course. In the course of a few hours the Frenchman about ship, hoisted his bloody pennant for boarding, made sail, and in a short time (he sailing, comparatively speaking, two feet to my one) came off in y larboard quarter, and in a very peremptory manner ordered me to haul down my colours, otherwise he would grant me no quarter whatever. I hailed him through my Linguist, that if he would come alongside I would treat upon more amicable terms, but to no effect. He then like a man laid his ship alongside of me, with his bowsprit entangled in my fore shrouds, when the action became general and for forty-seven minutes continued in this position with a determined resolution to board me, and a determination on my part to resist him to the last. His bowsprit being thus entangled, I, with my own hands, lashed my shrouds to his main topmast backstay, which if the lashing had not been cut away, I am convinced that you would have had a very good account of her. The men were armed with

tomahawks, etc., etc., her tops were all crowded with men, and from so well continued and kept-up fire of small arms, I am surprised the injury was not greater. The enemy threw on board hand grenades, stink pots (five and thirty hand-grenades and stinkpots I have on board), marling spikes, boarding pikes, and even the arm of his ship's head.

"My first broadside, I am assured, injured his masts very considerably, his fore topmast and jibboom being both shot away. In the general part of the action my quarter guns tore him to pieces, the carnage dreadful, sweeping everything before them, being both well loaded with grape, ball and canister shot and well conducted. After the smartness of the action was over the fellow gained on me much and shot ahead of me like an arrow (in plain truth I never saw a vessel sail so remarkably fast in all my life) and soon about ship and went astern of me, suppose to repair the injury caused by my guns. The same evening he came several times down, I believe with the idea of finding me unprepared, and to board me, but was ever ready to receive him, my men always resting on their guns.

"The following day the 3rd January the fellow bore down on me, as if to engage, but the cowardly scoundrel never came so near me that one of my shot could tell, I therefore kept them in reserve. The whole of that evening and until 4 o'clock on the morning of the 4th the fellow kept pestering me by turns.

"What must be my feelings when I inform you that my surgeon (Mr. James Beatty) was shot through the head and died simultaneously at my feet on the quarter deck, after having fired several muskets at the enemy. I had also one seaman shot through the head (John Stile), my ship's steward, Thomas Bevington received a shot through his leg but is in fine way of recovering, my gunner's mate (James Hogat) received a shot through his arm, but will soon be of service to me again, several others of my hearty crew received small wounds, but of no material consequence. I should be wanting in feelings if I was not to observe with what firm resolution the whole of my small ship's company consisting of forty-seven behaved. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Gullin for the grand manner in which he worked the stern chasers and quarter guns which must injured the enemy. Mr. Douglas, who commanded the main deck guns, his conduct was such as will ever reflect honour upon him, as well as Mr. Crabbe, my boatswain, who behaved in grand manner going through the most imminent danger; I recommend him to your notice, in fact the whole of my small crew behaved in the most gallant and heroic manner.

"At 12 o'clock a.m., I observed a fleet to the S.E. and from the number of vessels judged them to be an English fleet. Four o'clock, came within hail of a small sloop, who gave us to understand that the fleet was from England, under the convoy of the *Sheerness*, James Cornwallis Esq. in command, to whom I am particularly

obligated he having sent his surgeon, after finding my situation, to examine the wounds of my people with a promise of every assistance."

After making one, or possibly two prizes, the *Thomas* proceeded to the River Plate, and again I quote a letter from Captain M'Quie to his owner:—

"In my last to you dated from Rio de Janeiro, I gave you information of my being under way for cruising in the River Plate and the coast. Being on our cruising station in the River Plate I sent a boat on shore to the Island of Seals which I found to be uninhabited. Having remained in this situation sixteen days and finding nothing in this part, which in the tract for homeward bound vessels, we went to the South Cape in the expectation of taking a craft that we might explore further up the river.

"When in Lat. 36.40 South and in 10 fathoms water at daylight, saw a sail standing to the S.S.E., which from her course convinced us she was going round the Cape. We made sail and gave chase, to which she took no particular notice; drawing nigh to her I was convinced she was a ship of war, though my officers were of the opinion that her ports were only false, being painted black and hauled in. Still approaching nearer she showed Portuguese colours, she then hauled down her Portuguese colours and showed Spanish ones, hauled up a few of her ports when we left fly with our English colours and gave her three guns, when she made sail and we did the same, ran alongside her and gave her a broadside which she returned with a volley of musquetry, we then let him run ahead of us that he might not get to windward of us, as, it blowing fresh, t'was impossible to fight our lee guns, and coming nigher her again we discovered thirteen of the ports hauled up and guns run out on her main starboard deck besides quarter deck and forecastle guns, and when we came under her stern, she backed her main topsail in expectation of our engaging on the weather side but we manoeuvred and laid our ship on the lee side, where only five ports were open and guns run out, which we soon silenced and from our grape flying in all directions the enemy could not load their guns, as they were obliged to come out of the ports to load them. But finding his people would not stand to their quarters, we could clearly see him fill his forecastle full of troops and twice endeavour to run us down, which gave us an opportunity of raking him twice fore and aft, from which great slaughter must have happened as we could plainly see him throw overboard his dead bodies in our presence.

"The action commenced at 8 o'clock in the morning and continued until half-past twelve without any intermission, and at no greater distance than from pistol to musket shot, excepting one time drove off. On shooting ahead of her she hauled to windward and made sail, and from our being so much fatigued from the long action, it was some time before we could get our ship put in order and at which time she was at a great distance, we gave chase and pursued

her to the west end of the English Bank, which is twelve leagues from Monte Video, from which place she could not have been eighteen or twenty hours. We were satisfied that she was a ship of war bound round the Cape with troops, which provided she had been prepared would soon have silenced our guns, as she mounted thirty to forty guns, from 900 to 1,000 tons burthen. We nevertheless gave her a sweet drubbing, chased her to within twelve leagues of harbour and then after a consultation, from the situation of our ship being much injured in the rigging, nine of our men injured, some with their arms shot away, besides two of our main deck guns disabled, and considered it best to pursue the voyage.

“The want of men has been very disadvantageous to me and rendered boarding the Spaniard impracticable, and are now steering as direct a course as possible for St. Helena. The ship’s quarter deck was once on fire owing to the explosion of some gunpowder, but no material damage followed. The carronades on the quarter deck are miserable and beg you will never send one out again with chambers being bad to load, and which were immediately disabled. If Mr. Fawcett had been on our quarter deck, he would have given both his guns and bill to have been back in the foundry again. As to the small arms, several burst in the hands of the people when fired, the worst ever manufactured. The ship’s sides are much shaken, the starboard bulwark quite loose, the standing rigging and back stays we are obliged to shift, being much injured.

“The officers of the Spanish ship merit every praise, fighting their own guns and driving the people to their quarters, who, in attempting to load their guns, dropt their sponges overboard.

“Too much praise cannot be given to my officers and men for their valour. This is forwarded to you via St. Helena by the schooner which I this day despatched for St. Helena and Malimba.”

Later, writing to his uncle from St. Helena, he says:—

“Since I wrote you last from South America, I proceeded to the River Plate where I unfortunately met a Spanish frigate of forty-seven guns, when I was under necessity of fighting or be taken tho’ my ship’s company was only forty in number, twelve of them small boys, the Spaniard I suppose upwards of 400, and after an action of four hours and twenty minutes, beat her off with a loss of only six men, but my ship all cut to pieces. Such a thing never was known before—to think a small ship of only 16 guns to attempt such a ship of war, is a scandal to their country, as we not only beat her off but chased her to within 15 miles of her Spanish port and were afterwards necessitated to make the best of our way to an English port to repair. . . . Out of my ship’s company of 78 men at sailing, there remains 26. You will say the *Thomas* has paid for the war.

"Nothing gives me so much uneasiness as the loss of my doctor, whose head was shot off the first action, and think of my feelings when I look round the ship and see my good men, some without a leg, some an arm, makes me almost damn all Kings, why should we suffer on their account.

"You will excuse this as I have no time to be particular, the ship being under weigh."

In describing the next episode and incidentally the last in the career of Captain M'Quie, I quote from the *Mariner's Chronicle*, an account of various maritime disasters which was published in 1805. This is headed, "Sufferings of a part of the crew of the ship *Thomas* of Liverpool, bound from the coast of Africa to the Island of Barbadoes, in 1797," and reads:—

"In the afternoon of Tuesday, 10th October, 1797, a boat containing two men and a boy, drifted on shore on the north east part of the Island of Barbadoes. They were part of the crew of the ship *Thomas*, M'Quie of Liverpool on the middle voyage from the coast of Africa to the above Island. The coast being infested with French privateers, Captain M'Quie had taught his male slaves the use of arms, in order that they might be able to assist him in repelling any attack of the enemy, as he had had frequent skirmishes with them on his previous voyages. But instead of becoming auxiliaries in his defence, they took advantage of his instructions and seizing his ammunition chest, early in the morning of the 2nd September, about two hundred of them appeared on deck, armed and fired on the crew, some of whom fell and others in dismay leaped overboard and were also fired at; while others cut away the boat lashed to the stern and escaping through the cabin windows, took refuge in her, leaving the captain and the rest of the crew endeavouring to quell the insurgents by discharging such arms as are usually kept in the cabin. The captain observing that some of his men were in the boat and about to quit the ship, remonstrated so warmly as to induce them to return; but perceiving that they were overpowered and that there was no possibility of escaping the danger in any other way, they, to the number of twelve, again secured the boat and quitted the ship.

"Having fled from the fury of their enraged fellow creatures, they became the sport of the winds and waves, and a prey to hunger and thirst; after suffering the horrors of which for some days, they accidentally took a small turtle, while floating asleep on the surface of the water. This they devoured, and being again driven to an extremity of want for food, they soaked their food and two hairy caps which they had among them in water, and when they had become soft, each partook of them. Thus, day after day passed and the cravings of hunger increased to such a degree that they fell upon the horrid expedient of eating each other. To prevent any contentions concerning the person who should become the victim of their wants,

they cast lots, and he upon whom the lot fell resigned his life with fortitude, in the persuasion that his body would become the means of existence to his wretched companions. He requested to be bled to death, the surgeon being with them and having his case of instruments in his pocket when he quitted the ship.

“ No sooner had the fatal instrument touched the vein, than the operator applied his parched lips and drank the blood as it flowed, while the rest anxiously watched the victim’s departing breath, that they might satisfy the hunger that prey upon them. Those who glutted themselves with human flesh and gore, and whose stomachs retained the unnatural food, soon perished with raging insanity, from putrefaction having, it is supposed, superseded digestion. Thus the dreary prospect became still more terrible to the survivors, who beheld their companions expire from the very cause which they imagined would have preserved their existence. Those who remained attributed the preservation of their lives to their having refused to follow the example of their fellow sufferers.

“ On Tuesday, 10th October, being the thirty-eighth day after they had quitted the ship the forlorn party sighted the shore, but having no helm to guide their little boat, despair took possession of their minds, and they resigned themselves to their fate without any hope of escape. Providence, however, became their helm and guide and directed them to the shore. When they approached it, exhausted nature would hardly permit them to leave the boat, and embrace the earth they so fervently wished for; the boy fell into the surf, and being unable to make any effort, was drowned.

“ The remnant of the wretched twelve, exerting their little strength, crawled on their bellies to the mouth of Joe’s River, where they slacked their thirst, and being discovered by a Mr. Mascott, when in the Bay-house of Mr. Haynes, he humanely gave them all the assistance in his power; but hearing that two men of colour had taken possession of the boat, he left the sufferers in the care of Mr. Mayers, a neighbouring indigent shoemaker, who showed them all the hospitality his circumscribed ability would permit.

Two further survivors of the mutiny, Daniel Meney and Henry Miller, give further details in a deposition made in November, 1797.

“ I Daniel Meney, Mariner, sailed from the coast of Africa in the ship *Thomas* of Liverpool commanded by Capt. M’Quie. I being one of the crew of the said ship, on or about the 7th August, 1797, with a cargo consisting of 375 slaves bound for the West India Islands. Our voyage was prosperous until the 2nd September when the slaves rose and destroyed the ship’s company, except seven or eight hands who got from the ship in a jollyboat and ten hands who they spared to work the ship back to their country. Their manner

of rising was as follows. All hands being at breakfast on the 2nd September, two or three of the women slaves got into the after hatchway, the arm chest being left open by the armourer, they conveyed all the arms through the bulkhead to the men slaves, who immediately ran up the fore scuttles and killed all who came in their way. After they had got possession of the ship, they ordered the remainder of the crew to keep the ship's head always to the rising sun, the stern to its setting, threatening to put us to death if we offered to alter the course. In this position we kept her as well as we could for about forty days, during which the slaves had drunk all the liquors except the wine, which they said was some of their blood, by which means we got a part of it, they also fell upon the provisions eating and destroying vast quantities, they threw away every barrel of salt beef believing it to be the flesh of negroes during this time it was with the greatest difficulty that we could get a meal of any of the provisions, expecting every moment to be put to death by the barbarians, they frequently coming on deck at midnight to put us all to death, being informed by some of their companions that we were steering a wrong course, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could get them pacified until the provisions and water were all exhausted, when through hunger and thirst they consented that the long boat should be hoisted out, as we told them that we could go to their country and get water in four and twenty hours. Our intention being to get ourselves off after the boat was out, but they would suffer only two white men and about ten black fellows to go in the boat with empty casks, etc. The breeze springing up after they had left the ship, the boat soon dropped astern which caused us to heave to and take them; they were now determined to destroy all except a small boy. On the following morning, we knowing our destiny, determined to make our escape that night if possible. Four of us accordingly got into the boat under the pretence of making her fast astern, gave the rest a call, but they were so feeble that they could not follow us having been three days without vituals or drink; and finding there was no time to lose, I myself let go the rope that held the boat. We soon dropped astern and next morning the ship was not to be seen. We having in the boat one old topgallant sail, one oar and a mast, we hoisted the mast and stood as near as we could guess, having no compass, west-north-west for six days and nights, the seventh we made land and ran the boat on shore, and got into the woods as soon as possible in quest of water, having not had a mouthful for three days and nights before we left the ship. This we fortunately found, and after getting a little refreshed we made for a house that we saw from a hill and after a good deal of fatigue we got to it, and were informed that the land we were on was called Watlings Island, one of the Bahamas, where we were taken up and humanely treated by some of the inhabitants, until we were sent to an island called New Providence."

Still further details are given in a letter written by Mrs. Eliza M'Quie in January, 1798; these however are not confirmed:—

“ It is three weeks last Tuesday since I got the account of Mr. M'Quie's death from five of the people of the crew, who were on board the ship forty-two days after the insurrection happening, expecting to suffer like the rest every hour, but on the 14th November they saw an American brig and bore down upon her, but the American fearing some illtreatment if taken possession of by the *Thomas*, seeing no one but slaves on board of her, forsook his own ship and both he and his men took to their boat and suffering a great deal they arrived at Turks Island. So the slaves lashed the ship to the *Thomas* and went on board of her, and there being a great deal of rum on board, they all got drunk and came back on their ship again and fell asleep. So, when they were all quiet, these five white men and two of the blacks along with them cut the brig from the *Thomas* and left her, and after a great deal of fatigue they arrived at Providence, but they lost the brig upon the banks going in, as none of them knew navigation as all five of them were common men, all the officers being killed with Mr. M'Quie. But what has become of the *Thomas* we cannot tell, but I expect she would upset if some ship did not sight her soon, as the slaves would not know how to steer her; but they could not survive for long, for when the five men left her they had no water and only one day's provisions.”

A footnote to the above account is contained in Gore's *Advertiser* of the 14th June, 1798; it reads:—

“ The *Thomas*, late M'Quie, that was cut off by the negroes, was afterwards taken by the frigate *Thames* and carried into Cape Nicola Mole and sold there.”

Old "Customs"

READ BY B. J. HERRINGTON.

Some few years ago a well-known publicist told me that in the order of Best Sellers in this country, articles and books relating to the business of the Customs Department ranked third. He said "there is a 'something' about your department that stirs the imagination of our people." This was very gratifying to hear, but my pleasure was brief, as he continued:—"Only a gory and mysterious murder or a salacious Divorce Case make greater appeal than do good smuggling yarns." What a shocking commentary on the literary palate of John Citizen and Mary Citizeness. Some while after this conversation, I came across the statement by a Commissioner of Customs for Scotland—none other than Adam Smith—who, in his well-known work *Wealth of Nations*, said:—"Not many people are scrupulous about smuggling when, without perjury, they can find any safe and easy opportunity of doing so. To pretend to have any scruple about buying smuggled goods, though a manifest encouragement to a violation of the Revenue laws and to the perjury which always attends it would, in most countries, be regarded as one of those pedantic pieces of hypocrisy which, instead of gaining credit with any body, serves only to expose the persons who affect to practise it, to the suspicion of being a greater knave than most of his neighbours. By this indulgence of the public the smuggler is often encouraged to continue a trade which he is thus induced to consider as in some measure innocent." I hope that all present are now in a chastened frame of mind, ashamed of any inherent naughtiness in regard to Revenue matters, and prepared to direct attention to the more worthy if less exciting object of tracing the origins of established practices, and to note the gradual development of Customs control from rough and ready and arbitrary methods to the establishment of regular, legal, and equitable procedure.

It must be acknowledged that the information that will be given has not been gleaned from original documents, but rather has it been freely borrowed from:—

Smith's *Wealth of Nations*,

Felix Hamel's *Laws of the Customs* (1854),

W. D. Chester's *Chronicles of the Customs*,

Henry Aaton and Henry Hurst Holland's *The King's Customs*,

Charles McCoy's *Dictionary of Customs and Excise*,

and I am indebted to the Librarians of the Customs and Excise, Messrs. Bernard Leftwich and R. C. Jarvis, for several out-of-the-way items. In addition, the Honourable Commissioners of Customs and Excise have graciously granted me permission to quote from certain confidential official reports.

At the outset, I must admit that I cannot tell you when the Customs was first instituted in these islands, nor by whom, and not even why the name of Customs was given to the system of taxing imports and exports. Lord Coke referred the legislative foundation to the reign of Edward I, and in this opinion Justice Blackstone concurred, but Lord Chief Baron Gilbert accounts for the institution in a different manner: he says that in the reign of Edward I houses were erected in every port for keeping wares and merchandise imported and exported, and there was a particular sum paid for the custodium, which was called the Customs, and whence he took the word to be derived, "For," he says, "when Edward the First, Richard the First, or whatever other King first erected those houses and appointed particular sorts of payments, they could not be called customary or usual payments, for it is a solecism in language to say that they were customary or usually paid when they first began." "The subjects bore these payments very well upon their wool--woolfels and leather from the convenience that arose from the Custom-houses which formed a place of deposit for their goods." Felix Hamel, Solicitor for the Customs Commissioners, in his *Laws of the Customs*, published in 1854, cites this difference of opinion between Lord Coke and Lord Chief Baron Gilbert and gave the latter's conclusion that "there is no room to suppose that the Customs began by an Act of Parliament which is lost," and which he describes as "the common refuge of lawyers when they cannot find the original of things." With all the deference due from a layman to such a high legal authority as Lord Coke, I shall attempt to show that it was not only the King's Custom to levy duty--taxes--on goods long before the Plantagenet King—but that it was customary for monarchs and despots generally to raise money by quota payments on goods—the *ad valorem* system in fact—from earliest recorded times. Without attempting to trace a direct connection between Biblical traditional practices and the 10% taxes of early English Kings, it is interesting to note that *vide* Genesis 14 : 20 Abram paid a 'tithe of all' to King Melchisdec, King of Salem—and historians agree that while there is no record now in existence of the Customs levied by the Romans following Cæsar's invasion there is reason to believe that duty was levied on the exports of lead, tin, hides, horses and cloth.

The Saxons had a system of taxation, not strictly by Customs duties, but of interest to us in our review of old taxation practices. Goods were appropriated for the maintenance of the King's household and he also received what our American friends would term a rake-off on all fines paid as penalties for acts of violence. There were also taxes earmarked for special purposes—the bryg-bot for the maintenance of bridges and roads—the burg-bot for equipping fortresses, and the "Fyrd" for maintaining soldiers and sailors. In addition, the maritime districts paid "ship-geld" for the repair and

equipment of war vessels. In 1303 Edward I adopted this method in a tax termed Murage--tolls on goods brought into a walled town for sale and applied towards maintenance of the walls. I am unable to state when taxes or dues on ships were instituted and do not accept the popular view that these were first imposed by Ethelred in A.D. 979 at his Witanagemote held at Wantage, because, as I shall presently show, there is evidence of ships' dues levied by King Æthelbald of Mercia in A.D. 743. For those of you present who have experience of paying dues for Pilotage, Lights, and Dock facilities, amounting to pounds per ship per voyage, it may cause some heart-burning to contemplate the Wantage rates: Item "every smaller boat arriving at Billingsgate shall pay for toll or Custom (note the introduction of the word Custom) one half-penny, a larger boat with sails one penny, a keel or hulk four pennies, a vessel with wood, one piece of wood, a boat with fish coming to the bridge, one half-penny or a penny according to the size." It may be that these rates were local rather than national, but they serve to show that it was the custom to levy dues on ships and their cargoes. In *Miscellaneous Charters*, page 28 (Benjamin Thorpe, 1865), appears a copy of a declaration by King Æthelbald of Mercia which shows that not only were there regular dues levied in 743 A.D. but that the system of rebate or exemptions for particular persons or institutions was in vogue. It read:—

" King Æthelbald of Mercia.

" In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I, Æthelbald, King of the Mercians, have been solicited by the Venerable Bishop Mildred that I should allow to him and his holy convent, all the dues of two ships which are thereto belonging, that I should grant them to those who serve the Blessed Peter the Prince of the Apostles in the monastery which is seated in the Province of Hwiccas in the place which is called Worcester.

" To that prayer, I have given very honourable consent, for the healing of my Soul, that for my sins, they vouchsafe to be frequent mediators with the Lord.

" Very joyfully, then giving, I have allowed them all the dues of the two ships which shall there be demanded by the Collectors in the Hithe of London Town, and never I nor my successors, nor the Collectors, may ever presume this to frustrate or oppose.

" If they will not that, be they excommunicated from participation of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and from all proximity of the Faithful, be they severed and sundred unless they here make amends with prayer.

" I, Æthelbald, King, confirming my own grant have written it. Mildred, Bishop, has affixed thereon the Sign of the Holy Rood, Ingwald Bishop consenting has written it. Wilfrity Bishop, has written it. Alda, the King's companion has written it."

One may well believe that this penalty for wrongful charging would act as an effective deterrent to even such tough 'customers' as Collectors.

To revert to Saxon times: the King had a method of purveyance, under which goods were appropriated for the maintenance of the Royal Household, which bore the quaint name of "feorm." Much later we read of the national Customs duties being 'farmed' to various speculators, and it is my view that the farm of later years had its origin in the Saxon feorm.

It is evident that the collecting of duty had some backing in law when we find that in the time of Ethelred, A.D. 979, a system of "Entry" and "Report of cargo" was operated as it is to this day, and we read that "The men of Rouen in Normandy that came with wine and large fish and those of Flanders and Ponthieu and others from Normandy and France were wont to 'open their wares and free them from toll.' The Emperor's men (Germans of the steelyard) who came with their ships might buy in their ships, but they were not to forestall the market from the burghers of London. They were to pay toll, and at Christmas two grey cloths and one brown one, ten pounds of pepper, five pairs of men's gloves and two vessels of vinegar, and as many at Easter. The term 'open their goods and free them from toll' meant, according to McPherson in his *Annals of Commerce*, "showed their goods and cleared the duties." Until we come to the Records of the Exchequer in the time of Henry II there is no evidence of the value of these imports. In the twenty-third year of the reign of Henry II we find that the farm of the Queens Hithe—the then port of London—was accounted for at £36, which, after allowing for the greater relative value of money in those days, was yet a very insignificant amount. Subsequently, in the eighth year of Richard I the amount paid into the Exchequer by the Chamberlain of London for "tin and other mercatures" amounted to £379 1s. 6d., and the levies to import woad into England and sell it there to £96 6s. 8d. It is at about this time that we first find the smuggler and the crooked official on the job. We read that in 1198 A.D. the itinerant judges held pleas of the Crown in which "inquisition was to be made of the keepers of the Sea Ports if they have received anything which they have not paid and if they have received any bribe for withholding the King's rights, and if any person has received anything who has not been duly appointed for the same purpose. Inquiry is to be made, if all appear, who such person is, and what is his name, for it is by these and other vexations, whether justly or unjustly, that all England has been reduced to poverty from Sea to Sea."

In 1205 King John claimed one fifteenth of all merchandise imported—with the significant addition "together with such other Customs as might be laid according to his pleasure," and although the barons at Runnymede secured a Charter from him, he obtained a good equivalent from these imports. The early sovereigns benefited largely

on the importation of wines—certainly from the time of Richard I. It is from this custom of taking for the King a proportion of the wine imported, that we can trace the *tonnage* dues still imposed. The original method was for the King's butler to select from the best sorts of wine, for which he paid 20 shillings per tun for freight. Strictly the King's allowance was one tun in every twenty, but if the cargo was not of wine it became necessary to measure up the mixed cargo and then decide what proportion would give the King the same volume of goods in kind, for his use or custom. The tun of wine has become the ton avoirdupois. A wine gallon is 231 cubic inches, a modern gallon is 10 lbs. weight of water and is 277.274 cubic inches, therefore a tun of 252 gallons of wine is $\frac{252 \times 231,000 \text{ LBS.}}{277.274}$ which, allowing for the difference of gravity of wine and water, gives (approximately) 2,240 lbs. eq. one ton. Now a tun of 252 gallons is an enormous cask so unwieldy that it could not be stowed in the small ships of those days without the risk, if stowed on its side, of its breaking loose and sinking the ship. It was, therefore, stowed vertically, and as it was so large and liable to spring a leak, a space was left round it for a member of the crew to walk round with a caulking iron and a wisp of straw to stop the leaks. The space thus occupied by each tun was found to be 94 cubic feet of cargo space, and by a complicated formula the ship was measured to determine how many tuns *could* be carried. This remained, with several variations, the gross registered tonnage of the ship until 1854, when the Board of Trade squared off the 94 and decimal places cubic feet to 100 cubic feet, which remains the basis.

Some idea may be formed of the consumption of foreign wine in this country in the reign of Edward I from the fact that from Martinmas (11 November) 1272 to Michaelmas (29 September) 1273 the duty collected at London, Southampton, Portsmouth and Sandwich was £8,846 tuns, and this did not include dues paid on small importations of less than twenty tuns under the term *prisage*—but this levy was not taken from a cargo which did not exceed 9 tons. In 1303 *Prisage* of wine imported by Aliens was by agreement commuted into a money payment of 2/- per ton and this composition became known as *Butlerage*. To complete the story, which entails running ahead with dates, *prisage* was subsequently commuted into a money payment for English traders also. The right to *Prisage* or *Butlerage* was confirmed in 1660 by Parliament, and of this Act of 1660 we shall presently note many interesting features. Wines on which *Prisage* or *Butlerage* was paid were exempt from Customs duty until 1670. *Prisage* or *Butlerage* was also held by others than the King, but it is noted in England, Ireland and Wales, not in Scotland. The privileged persons were the Duke of Lancaster in the County Palatine of Lancaster, The Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall in the Duchy of Cornwall, The Duke of Bedford in Swansea and Chepstow, The Marquiss of Bute in Cardiff, The Duke of Grafton in other ports

in England and Wales, and the Duke of Ormonde in Ireland. To us who are familiar with the division of political opinion on the systems of 'Free Trade' and 'Protection,' it is interesting to note that in the Parliament held at Stamford on 20th August, 1309 (Edward II), it was directed that "duties upon wines, broad cloths and avoirdupois" should cease, "in order that it might be ascertained what advantages would result to the King," and Collectors were ordered to stay the Collection of Customs until further notice. However, on 20th August, 1310, exactly one year later, the duties were reimposed, the parliamentary writ reading "and it being evident that no advantage has ensued either to the King or his people, the prices of such merchandises not having become lower after the cessation of the duties, the Collectors are commanded to resume the collection of the duties and to answer the receipt to the King's Butler." There was evidently no "Regulation of Prices Orders" in those days.

As I have said, an ancient method of collecting the King's revenues was by a system known as farming. Private individuals or a body of Merchants could pay a fixed sum in advance for the privilege of collecting and retaining the duties—a flagrant gamble. It is noted that one definition of our word farm is "fixed payment," derived from the Latin *firma*—firm, durable—but as remarked earlier, the Saxon imposition of duties was known as the *feorm*, and we may leave it to the philologists to determine whether the English farming was of Teutonic or Latin nomenclature. The farming system was in force at the time of Henry II and continued for some centuries. There were some questionable and unsavoury features in this system and it will not be possible in a lecture to indicate more than a very few of these practices. We who groan under heavy taxation in a righteous cause, at least have the satisfaction of knowing that our money goes into Public Funds expertly controlled and disbursed, whereas in early days the powerful and privileged few—and these not always of British race—waxed fat and ever more prosperous on taxes arbitrarily imposed and vexatiously collected. We had a Secretary of State under Queen Elizabeth—Sir T. Smith, first farming the Customs revenue, for which he had paid the beggarly amount of £14,000 per annum—but subsequently he was required to increase his yearly farm fee to £50,000. It still paid him. When one notes that in 1688 these dues were let or farmed for £600,000 per annum it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that trade and commerce must have increased enormously in a century or the financial acumen of the Exchequer's Advisers must have been quickened. To hark back it is noted that the merchants of Lucca farmed the duties on wool and skins in the reign of Edward I, whilst the merchants of Frescobaldi farmed the General Customs. They were creditors of the English Crown, and thus squared the debts—but according to one historian they also robbed the Exchequer of £100,000 Sterling. In 1282 we find the farming operated by Genoese and Florentine speculators and I venture to suggest that these gentry were moneylenders, while in 1329 the

famous house of Bardi of Florence farmed the entire Customs revenue for the payment of £20 a day. It is plain that the King and Government were at the mercy of these foreign usurers, but as time wore on, the exactions and vexations of the farmers became intolerable. It was during the reign of Charles I that efforts to increase trade and to encourage imports were made by a special arrangement whereby only a part of the duties on certain articles were demanded on entry—the remainder being secured by bond. The bonds for silks and linens extended over 12 months, tobacco 18 months, but there was a discount of 10% allowed if payment was made in cash at the time of importation. This practice of giving credit foreshadowed the present warehousing or bonding system—which was introduced partially in A.D. 1700. To those who care to examine the Patent Rolls of the reign of Charles I between 1625 and 1632, a shocking state of affairs will be revealed. Prominent British persons advanced large sums to the King—the revenue being hypothecated to these financiers. Names which frequently occur in these patents are Sir Paul Pindar, Sir John Wolstenholme, Abraham Dawes, and John Jacob. The King on March 7th, 1631, granted a demise to these gentlemen for a year of the general Customs duties at £150,000 a year with power to retain £30,000 already advanced by them and £26,500 disbursed for the King's use. The King borrowed very extensively from his subjects and on every possible occasion pledged the moneys coming to him directly or indirectly. His jewels, plate, and even the household gold and silver, were continually in and out of pawn.

The sorry state of affairs, pawning and farming of Customs, was tackled at last. The lease of the last 'farm' was due to come into effect on 29th September, 1671—but two days prior to this, 27th September, Commissioners were managed to manage the Customs revenue. W. D. Chester in his *Chronicles of the Customs*, in a footnote to page 15 states "I find however in the Public Record Office Report for the year 1881, Appendix 1, page 607, mention of an Order in Council, 25th June, 1661, ratifying and confirming articles between the Commissioners of Customs and the factors residing in Dover for the composition trade, to be settled in the port of Dover. Dover Road and the Downs, so that Commissioners existed prior to the date supposed." It is interesting and amusing to note that the Exchequer authorities were not entirely simple, and it is doubtless due to the state of affairs revealed by their servants that farming at long last came to a sudden end. The Crown appointed officials to watch over its interests in certain farm collections, and as early as the time of Richard II we find mention of the following classes of exchequer officers: Searchers, Weighers, finders, customers or collectors, controllers and aulnagers, or measurers of cloth. In 1671 these offices, of course, became patent offices under the Crown. These government nominees thereupon appointed deputies—who in turn selected persons to assist. In every grade, therefore, the officials owed their

employment to political or local influences and the patentees frequently retained their offices as sinecures.

If I give a few examples of the latitude enjoyed by these privileged persons it will serve as a blow to any who mistakenly yearn over the passing of the so-called "Good Old Days." I am tempted to quote *Punch* to any who bemoan existing conditions: "Nothing is so good as it used to be, in fact, it *never was*." The patentee, for example, was not compelled even to reside in the place of his business, and we find that in 1774 the Collector for Hull was located in London, his deputy resided at Glasgow, and his chief searcher at Dorchester. It should be observed that on examination it was found that out of 63 patent offices in the Customs Revenue Collection, 53 were sinecures. Digressing from Customs' survey somewhat, I should mention that from early days Chester had regarded Liverpool as a mere dependency, in fact she claimed the right to control the Mersey trade. Bitter disputes and constant friction lasted, according to one authority, until 1658, when the matter was settled by the Surveyor-General of Customs, in favour of Liverpool, and this decision was upheld by the first Surveyor-General under the Restoration (1660). What Liverpool has always owed to the Customs Department it would be immodest for one of its local officials to stress. It should, in fairness, be mentioned that the salaries from the Crown received by Principals and Deputies, were merely nominal. Their remuneration really came from the merchants and by fees which in the main were arbitrarily fixed. It was as recently as 1831 that these fees to Customs Officers were abolished, but it is the fact that large fortunes had been made by the unsatisfactory system. One passing item of interest is that when the fees were abolished there were in the Long Room in London patent officers styled cocket writers, whose salaries were £60 per annum and whose fees averaged £1,000 per annum each. I am afraid I am digressing from my history proper, but cannot resist telling you of an instance in which the wily Customs official was "hoist with his own petard." These parties, at the time of the abolition of the fees, had been called upon to furnish a statement of their emoluments. They suspected a Government intention to levy a tax on them—so, all but two righteous men very much understated their profits. Imagine their chagrin when the Treasury notified them that their offices were to be abolished and that compensation for loss would be paid to them according to the returns they had themselves furnished. To withhold the sequel would be to spoil the story; these gentlemen were permitted to retain their seats in the Long Room, but as private agents to the Mercantile Community irrespective of the Crown. They were twelve in number and were widely known as the "twelve apostles" because they, like Matthew, "sat at the receipt of Customs." One of the two honest writers enjoyed his pension for 52 years, during which he was paid £52,000. As I mentioned earlier, in reference to the confirmation by Parliament of Prisage and Butlerage in the Act of 1660, there were by this Act

some very interesting fiscal innovations. To cite but a few:—

“Books Duty.” 5% *ad valorem* on imported books; and the fact that duty was later fixed on the weight of the books, suggests that no satisfactory method of determining value could be found.

Sails Duty. 5% *ad valorem* on imported sails and sailcloth. An additional duty of 1d. per ell (45 inches) was imposed in 1713 on foreign-made sails used in or on board a British Ship.

Salt Duty. 5% *ad valorem* on imported salt, but this became an Excise duty in 1694 at 2s. per bushel.

The field of taxation has been very wide, and well explored. It may surprise you to know that in 1695 we had a Bachelor Duty at the rate of 1s. a year on every bachelor above the age of 25 years except such as received alms, with a surcharge up to £12 10s. 0d. a year according to his social business. This expired in 1706. Now while it cost 1s. a year in 1695 to remain a bachelor, it was twice as expensive to be born, as the duty rate was 2s. on the birth of every child, except of those in receipt of Poor Relief, with a surcharge up to £30, according to the social position of the parents. You will not be surprised to hear that in the same year there was a Marriage Duty of 2s. 6d. with a surcharge up to £50, according to social position, and to complete the round there was a Burial Duty of 4s. with a surcharge up to £50, according to the social position of the deceased. In 1662 a tax of 2s. was imposed on every hearth and stove in dwelling-houses in England and Wales. An interesting duty levied in 1694 for a specific purpose, was “London Orphan duty.” This was a charge of 4s. per tun of 252 gallons of wine imported into London and of 6d. per ton on coal carried coastwise into London. The proceeds were paid to the City of London for relief of the orphans and other creditors of the City. Eventually the fund was appropriated towards the cost of constructing the Thames Embankment and of raising Holborn Valley.

There were Alloa Beer Duty, Dumfries Duty, Dunbar Duty, Dysart Duty, Edinburgh Duty, Elgin Duty, and in England, Hull Duty; the sums realised being allocated to the local authorities for the making of quays, harbours and mercantile facilities generally. As we are reviewing ancient customs and practices it may be interesting to observe the old methods of keeping Customs accounts. The Customer, or Collector, delivered to the Exchequer a parchment roll setting out the receipts. The roll was thrown down a pipe into the Tally Court at the office of the Tellers of the Exchequer. The name Tally as here used derived from the French word *tailler*, which means “to cut,” and was appropriate because the Customs tally was a piece of wood on which was written on both sides an acquittance for the money paid. The wood was about 3 inches wide and 3 and a half feet long. It was split down the centre by a Deputy Chamberlain. One part, called the Stock, was handed to the payer and the other

part was retained till called for, when the two parts were joined together. Any attempt at fraud would be discovered when these were united. In addition to the writing, notches were cut in the sticks to indicate the sums paid; a large notch meant £1,000, a smaller one £100, a still smaller notch indicated a payment of £10, and so on for single pounds, shillings, or pence. Subsequently the wooden tallies were burned, and it is sad to relate that the Houses of Parliament were destroyed by fire in 1839 due to overheating of the flues through the burning of Exchequer Tallies.

It is a British characteristic to grumble at any restrictions, and the servants of the state are fair game for critics who have little acquaintance with the vast business controlled by the Civil Service, and one may humorously reflect on the fact that at times of abnormal stress, during war times for instance, when large numbers of the business and professional members of the community augment the regular services, it is found that the state machinery that has been built up during some hundreds of years gains the respect of the newcomers, who recognize that conducting a business enterprise for profit is a very different proposition from controlling the affairs of a nation with fairness to all, which is the first consideration in the State Service. In the brief survey of ancient practices we have made, it has become plain that much as we dislike the present-day so-called soulless and mechanical handling of state business, this is immeasurably preferable to the capricious and inequitable systems of earlier days when 'Privilege' held sway. However, there was a certain picturesqueness in the procedure of those bye-gone days which those who have witnessed the ceremonial of the Yeoman of the Guard at the Tower of London, for example, may appreciate. Those of you who conduct business at the prosaic modern Custom House may be surprised to know that as lately as the early eighteen hundreds the higher officers of Customs were surrounded by impressive ceremonial. A beadle clad in gorgeous uniform, carrying a silver mace, preceded the Collector in London when proceeding to an interview with the Board of Custom. The underlings generally wore scarlet robes and gold lace, and even landing waiters on duty were attired in Court suits with swords, knee breeches, silver shoe buckles and silk stockings. The only remains of the gorgeous uniforms formerly common are to be found in those worn by the constables who guard the London Customs and Excise Headquarters.

W. R. Chester, in his *Chronicles of the Customs*, cites some interesting and amusing discoveries he had made in certain valuable old books which escape the fire of 1814. I will quote two entries:—

1719. April 27. "In order to a frugal management of this revenue, as well as an example to officers, the Commissioners of Customs resolve that for the future they will themselves pay for such coffee, &c., as they may have for their breakfast, and pay for such books and pamphlets

as they may want." This is surprising until it is realized that members of the Board were accustomed to attend in the Long Room at 7 a.m. to sign cockets. Here is a delightful picture of the solemnity and dignity prevailing in those not so very remote days:—

1720. It is decided that the patent officers in the Bench, having been allowed a chair when they attended the Board, the Commissioners think fit to allow a like indulgence to the Receiver-General and the Comptroller-General.

The term cocket has been mentioned twice, and this word, as with many Customs terms still extant, has interesting features and history. I will deal briefly with some of them. The cocket dates from the early days of export duties and was generally an "Entry outwards," a perfect oxymoron. It included all the goods intended to be shipped by the vessel to which the entry referred, but as it was not necessary to ship all the goods in one lot, separate shipping bills were passed for each occasion, until the total quantity entered was accounted for. When the Entry was fully endorsed by the Exporter and certified by the Customs Export Officer, the entry was termed a cocket, and although there is some question as to its origin, it is generally believed, and is so shown in best dictionaries, notably in Charles McCoy's valuable *Dictionary of Customs and Excise*, as being an anglicised form of the Latin term 'Quo Quietus est.' The titles of certain old-time officials are of interest: Jerquer, for instance, is the official known to, and shall I say somewhat feared, by most outdoor officials. His function is to scrutinize Records and Documents to ensure complete accuracy. Dictionaries will not show the etymology of this term. By some it is believed that Jerquer derives from the French "Chercher"—to search, while others regard it as deriving from the Latin "Circare"—to go round. As with many other terms the spelling has varied, and we have "cerquer," "cierquer," "cherquer" and "cherquier." The original function of the Jerker was to examine the hold of the ship to see that it was entirely empty and that all the cargo was on the quayside, and in charge of the "Landing Waiters." The Certificate of Pratique, or Quarantine Certificate, which is required to be produced at the Custom House by the Master of every ship which has arrived from a foreign port, is issued by the Boarding Officer of Customs when he is satisfied that there is no dangerous health condition on board the vessel. The word Pratique is believed to be derived from the Norman-French—equivalent of our word Practice. It was the practise to prevent contact with the shore of any ship with a case of plague or other foul disease on board, and the term Quarantine, indicating 40, is very clearly derived from the French. The period of "40 days" shows a Biblical association, and is not surprising when we realize that actual segregation of ships and persons was instituted, in its modern form, by the Republic of Venice, 1348, and there is another

ecclesiastic association in the name of Lazaretto—now Lazaret, the compound in which the sick were segregated—and so named after Lazarus—the sick man of the Gospel: *Luke* 16, 20.

Notwithstanding what Adam Smith had to say about those who encourage smuggling—quoted by me in the introduction to this ramble through the bye-lanes as well as along the main road of Customs' tradition, it must be admitted that some of the exploits of the smugglers were colourful and adventurous as well as being—as in many cases they were—sheer lawless affairs by brutish men. Before narrating one or two authentic stories of smuggling ventures I should briefly refer to some of the notable worthies who have served in the department, and add some Customs history of particular local interest. Foremost I suppose we place Geoffrey Chaucer—the father of English poetry. After his return in 1373 from Genoa, where he had been sent to hire ships for the service of Edward III, he was appointed Comptroller of Customs on Wools and Comptroller of Petty Customs in London. His salary and emoluments should be noted:—

Wife's pension 25 marks, Own pension paid by the King 20 marks, pension paid by John of Gaunt 15 marks. Salary as controller 15 marks. He also had a share in the seizures of contraband wool, and a pitcher of wine a day to be delivered to him by the Butler of England. His total income may be reckoned as 150 marks per annum, equivalent to our £1,500. In 1386 he fell into disfavour and lost both of his Customs appointments. In 1389 we read of him as Clerk of the works at Westminster and Windsor, and other places. He suffered for his religious opinion during the following reign of Henry IV, and had to leave the country awhile, but when he died in 1400 he was buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

William Congreve, Nicholas Rowe, and Matthew Prior are three more Customs poets, while the immortal Rabbie Burns served in the Excise.

Sir Dudley North, brother of Lord Guildford, keeper of the Great Seal of Charles II and James II, was a Customs Commissioner. Adam Smith, the celebrated political essayist and author of *The Wealth of Nations*, was Commissioner of Customs for Scotland in 1781. Incidentally the first Earl of Liverpool was Collector of Customs—inwards—in 1792.

Mention has been made of the dispute between Liverpool and Chester, and contrary to the statement of one authority that Liverpool gained her independence in 1658, Picton in his *Memorials* asserts that the shackles of Chester were cast off in 1581. This would appear to be supported by a reference to the Customs Returns of 1586, which reads:—Customs duties of Liverpool produced £272 3s. 0d., but the associated ports of Chester, Conway and Beaumaris yielded only £211 4s. 8d. The relations between the two ports is shown in *Liverpool Town Books* (Twemlow) as follows:—

1565. "A Blancke booke contleiygnyng ten leavys for they customers, comptrollers and serchours wythin the towne of Liverpole a cricke of the porte (of Chester) for all goodes comyng or goying oute of the same by waye of marchudizes from Easter 1565 until the feast of St. Michalle than next following." This book was sent down by the Lord High Treasurer at Easter, 1565, and contained the above words. This gave great offence to the town so the Mayor, Johannes Crosse, having business in London, took Counsel's opinion there "that if it should come to passe to call Liverpole the cricke to Chester it were not only a povershinge of Liverpole and thinhabitantes theare." According to Picton, in 1581 the dispute of long standing between the rival ports was brought to a legal issue. From an early date Chester had looked upon Liverpool as a mere dependency and, as I said earlier, claimed to control its trade. A company of Spanish and Portuguese merchants in Chester wished to restrict the trade of Liverpool. The Earl of Derby brought the matter before the Privy Council, who referred it to the Master of the Rolls. The decision of the Judge was in favour of Liverpool and the town sent him a present of a hogshead of wine. The settlement by the Surveyor-General of Customs in favour of Liverpool in 1658 was probably on some point of Customs procedure, so, while compelled to respect the statement of Picton in regard to the advocacy of the Earl of Derby, I am inclined to place a little to the credit of the Customs Surveyor-General.

It would seem that provincial officials had their own ideas on local affairs, and from the letter from the Commissioners of Customs to the Collector, Chester, which I shall now read, it is obvious that notwithstanding decisions proclaimed at Headquarters, local pride and possibly vested interest weighed heavily with Public Officials.

CUSTOM HOUSE,

LONDON, *12th December, 1660.*

After our hearty commendations, having by a former letter taken notice of the differences and disputes arisen betwixt some Officers and other interested persons, within the port of West Chester and the town of Liverpool, concerning the bounds and limits of each port and place, and having declared our opinion and knowledge that Liverpool—however it may be accustomed a member of West Chester, yet in the execution of all Customs affairs hath ever been distinct and absolute of itself, and that the whole River of Mersey, and the shores on both sides, was and ought to be under the care, privilege, and inspection of the Officers of H. Majesty's Customs at Liverpool; but finding our letters either misunderstood or not regarded, and the same dispute and worse troubles prosecuted and fomented, as well against the merchants as Officers these, which is a very great prejudice to His Majesty's Service. We are again necessitated, for the prevention of further inconvenience, to order and desire that what ships, goods or

merchandise soever shall be exported or imported from or into the River Mersey on either side of the Shore, beginning on the Worrall side at a place called the Red Stones and not further southwards, be entered and accounted for at the Custom House at Liverpool and to the Officers there without any your let or hindrance: and hereunto we do expect your ready compliance with, the quiet and welfare of his Majesty's Service being very much concerned therein and so we rest.

Your very loving friends,

NICHOLAS CRISP.
JOHN SHAW.
JOHN HARRIS.
JOHN WOLSTENHOLME.
JOHN JACOB.

To the Custom Collector

and all his Majesty's Officers in the port of West Chester.

At long last we will turn to smuggling and smugglers. If the full story of the exploits of these old smugglers, or Free Traders, could be written I feel sure that my friend the publicist would find that even the gory murder and the highly spiced Divorce case would have to give place to these accounts of actual events which occurred around these shores within comparatively recent years. For those who enjoy the ordinary smuggling story I recommend a small book, *Smuggling Days and Smuggling Ways*, by H. N. Shore. From earliest days we find that events of thrilling adventure were baldly and coldly recorded, and one needs the eye of imagination to appreciate the movement, colour and drama inherent in the smuggling exploits. Try to picture the setting of this true story:—Prior to 1884 British silver plate, if new and unused, was entitled to Drawback on exportation of the duty paid by manufacturers to the Exchequer through the Goldsmiths' Hall. As is the practice when claims are made for refund of duty, or Drawback as it is called, the Customs Officer has to examine the goods and certify to the shipment. A person engaged in this plate export business possessed a silver candelabra of considerable weight, the drawback on which amounted to a large sum. The candelabra was shipped to Jersey and the shipper was duly paid his Drawback. On arrival in the Channel Islands the article was coated with a green compound which gave it the appearance of being made of bronze. It was then reshipped to London and passed in free of duty. The candelabra was taken to the owner's place of business, the green compound washed off, and there was the silver article ready for shipment again and the repayment of duty as before. This fraud went on for a long time and was in fact only accidentally discovered. Here's another effort of a wily trader:—

When goods were liable to the old *ad valorem* duties, disputes arose as to the correct value for duty purposes. Under the existing law the importer had the option of receiving from the government the

value he put upon the goods, in which case the articles were kept and put up for sale by the Crown. One wily member with his eye to business imported into Folkstone a case of gloves and declined to pay the duty assessed on them. They were therefore detained by the Customs. Into London he imported a similar case, which also was detained by the Crown. When the goods were offered for sale at the two places it was found that the case at Folkestone contained all right hand gloves and that in London all left hand gloves. They were naturally considered to be almost valueless, and were knocked down to a bidder at a nominal sum. The buyer—in each case—was the importer. He later paired his gloves and made a handsome profit.

By kind permission of the Board of Customs and Excise I shall read two extracts from authentic letters to the Board, to the second of which I invite your close attention.

Extract from Exeter, Letters to the Board.

23rd April, 1766. "We beg leave to acquaint your Honours that in the night of the 19th inst. some of the Officers of the Customs in this port were out upon the watch for smugglers and run goods and that between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock they fell in with a body of smugglers consisting of upwards of forty in number with about fifty horses all loaded as they apprehend with tea. The Officers finding the smugglers were too many to encounter with were glad to escape out of their way as fast as they could but William Hunt, a boatman, at Exmouth, having but an indifferent horse and being the hindmost fell into their hands and was most barbarously wounded and beat insomuch that his life is in great danger. The smugglers at a moderate computation could not have less than five thousand (pounds ?) weight of tea with them at the time and they were armed with bludgeons and loaded whips. The Officers from the hurry and confusion there were in cannot take upon them to swear to any of the smugglers but believe they were the Beere gang whose chief place of rendezvous and running of goods at present is between the Start Point and Torbay within the Port of Dartmouth from whence they remove the tea and other goods by land in the manner beforementioned and are become very desperate."

12th July, 1766. "Your Honours having been pleased by your order of the 10th May last to direct that all possible care should be taken of William Hunt, a boatman of Exmouth, who had received very cruel usage from a large gang of smugglers and would pay the expence attending his cure and hereafter his case. Inclosed we beg leave to transmit your Honours the surgeon's bill amounting to £4 15s. 0d. and Hunt's own of £1 16s. 0d. making together the sum of £6 11s. 0d. and thereon we think it our duty to observe to your Honours that Hunt hath undergone great pain and misery during his confinement from the shocking treatment he met with from the smugglers, his shoulder being dislocated but not discovered by the

surgeon from the terrible condition his arm and body was in until three weeks afterwards insomuch that he was obliged to be carried to an apple engine and being fastened round the body to a stake in the ground it was by the meer force of that screw brought in again. He is now tolerably well recovered and able to do duty again."

S.K. J.C.

One wonders if the Service term "Screwing him down," applied to disciplinary action, had its origin in this actual screwing of a man down for his own good.

A more recent report from a Customs Preventive Officer provided a delightful example of official and characteristic British understatement:—

"On boarding the steamship—at 2 a.m.—I found the ship in darkness and the crew turned in. At I was proceeding along the tweendecks and passing the Engineer's quarters, I was suddenly struck with great force upon the nose. *This at once aroused my suspicions.*"

The history of the Customs Department does indeed provide rich material for the student, and in the very rapid and somewhat unordered survey of old times and Customs that I have given to-day much has been scamped. If I have dealt with the incidence of Customs duty rather than with the exploits of smugglers, it is because I accept the members of this Society as being serious students of maritime affairs rather than as persons who would revel in accounts of law breakers—in fact, as being the kind of person that my friend the publicist maintains that all Britons really are.

In case there are any wayward ones among you I think it will be salutary if I conclude with an extract from Felix Hamel's Introduction to the *Laws of the Customs* (1854), in the hope that any such will "hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the lesson contained therein:—"It seems the fatal necessity of this crime (smuggling) that whilst every other breach of the divine and social law may be visited by penalties, accordant with the mild temper of our civilized times, the law, with respect to smuggling cannot be disarmed of its rigours. This may be attributed to two causes, first the strange anomaly which appears to be generally admitted, that many persons who would recoil from committing a dishonourable act towards a neighbour, and spurn with indignation the suggestion of cheating their fellow men in the ordinary relations of business, or the common affairs of life, nevertheless feel no compunction in defrauding the Crown with reference to their statutable liabilities. So far from having any scruples as to the evasion of the imports and taxes which the exigencies of the state demand from him in common with his fellow subjects, the contrabandist views the perpetration of such fraud not only with complacency but persuades himself that

there is something meritorious in the achievement of success. Thus smuggling ceases to be viewed as a crime, and moral restraint has little influence on its prevention. Secondly, the artifices to which the professed smuggler resorts are of so subtle a character as to present in their application proof of the highest degree of ingenuity. Smuggling is no longer the bold profession of the daring contrabandists who, until the close of the last century (18th) landed their cargoes in defiance of the law and resorted to open violence on the least show of resistance. It has, as exercised by modern practitioners, degenerated into petty chicanery. Fraud is perpetrated by every species of deception that can be devised, and in proportion to the difficulties of detection consequent on such dexterous practices, does the necessity for punishment become indispensable when detection nsus. If any doubt could exist as to the exceptional character of penal enactments designed to protect the Revenue collected for the benefit of all, it must be found in the fact that, however strange, a morbid sympathy for the offender is felt rather than abhorrence of his conduct, whilst those whose unpopular duty it is to protect the Revenue and punish the violators of its laws are stigmatised as 'myrmidons of oppression.' " Well, as Alphonse Karr said:—" Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose."
