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"This is true Liberty, when Freeborn Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free."---Euripides.

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LITERATURE.

ON THE MARCH.

A soldier lay on the frozen ground,
With only a blanket tightened around
His wary and wasted frame;
Down at his feet the fitful light
Of fading coals, in the freezing night,
Fell as a mockery on the sight,
A heartless purple flame.

All day long with his heavy load,
Weary and sore, on the mountain road,
And over the desolate plain;
All day long through the crusted mud,
Over the snow and through the flood,
Marking his way with a track of blood,
He followed the winding train.

Nothing to eat at the bivouac,
But a frozen crust in his haversack,
The half of a comrade's store—
A crust that, after a longer fast,
Some pampered spaniel might have passed,
Knowing that morsel to be the last
That lay at his master's door.

No other sound on his slumber fell.
Than the lonesome tread of the sentinel,
That equal, measured pace,
And the wind that came from the crackling pine,
And the dying oak and the swinging vine,
In many a weary, weary line,
To the soldier's hollow face.

But the soldier slept, and the dreams were bright,
And the rosy glow of his bridal night,
With the angel on his breast;
For he passed away from the wintry gloom,
To the pleasant light of a cheerful room,
Where a cat sat purring upon the loom,
And his weary heart was blest.

His children came—two blue-eyed girls,
With laughing lips and sunny curls,
And cheeks of ruddy glow—
And the mother pale, but lovely now,
As when upon her virgin brow
He proudly sealed his early vow,
In the summer, long ago.

But the reville wild, in the morning gray,
Startled the beautiful vision away,
Like a frightened bird of the night;
And it seemed to the soldier's misty brain
But the shrill tattoo that sounded again,
And he turned with a dull, uneasy pain,
To the camp fire's dying light.

THE GUINEA SMUGGLERS.

A STORY OF THE COAST.

It wanted but a few minutes to seven o'clock on an April evening, in the year 1812. The moon, in her second quarter, had just graciously shown herself to the world, gliding into sight from behind a dark rolling bank of cloud. There was certainly no doubt about the fact that even Lawyer Wedger thought it a gracious and pleasant night. A mile from Seaford, and on the chalk-cliffs, was, however, not exactly the place where one would have expected Lawyer Wedger to have been found at such an hour. A clean skin of parchment was a pleasanter sight to him than a field of young corn; and a tin deed-box, labelled in white letters, 'Re Dawson,' or 'The Honourable Fitzcarder's Mortgage,' a sweeter view than the moonlight ever shone on from Seaford cliffs. But let us not think evil even of an attorney. Perhaps a successful action at the assizes, then holding at the neighbouring town, had warmed his millstone heart, and sent Wedger out to bless nature, and in his turn to receive her blessing. My Lord Bacon, in the middle of his bribe-receivings and present-takings from suitors, would often, we are told, go out into his stately garden, and there, taking off his jewelled hat, stand bareheaded in the rain, receiving on his bald cerebrum what he, noble pedant, was pleased to call 'Heaven's benediction.' Why, then, should not Wedger, imitating that great example, and having, perhaps, that morning got his parchment-chains well round some new victim, not have come out to bathe in the moonshine, and to feel his old wizen heart grow young again in looking at the great gray wall of the sea?

Wedger was a hard, cruel, unjust man, every one round Seaford knew; but he had feelings. He had love for that prodigal scapegrace son of his; he was human at least in that one corner of his heart. Why not, then, in others? His manner as a mere lover of nature, however, was rather calculated just at present to excite suspicions. He skulked about in the shade of trees; he evidently shunned the open path; he peered, he pryed, he stared at particular holes in the cliff; in fact, he had more the manner of a terrier looking for a wounded rat, than that of a good man taking an evening-walk. A sarcastic person might have said that he looked as if he had dropped a writ over the cliff somewhere, and was trying to find it. Well, on Lawyer Wedger went along the cliff-path, dogged by that untiring bailiff, his black shadow, for all the world like a bloodhound on the trail, scratching here, nosing there, stopping at this place, hurrying over that place, evidently bent on some mischief, and making straight for a little sea-side inn, the Zebec, the tile-roof of which could just be seen far away to the left.

Suddenly, Wedger started—yes, started as if lightning had fallen and ploughed up the turf at his very feet, then fell on his knees, and crouched in the shadow of a chalk-pit, as if he were trying to make himself as small as he possibly could; at the same time he ground his yellow teeth, slapped his thigh, and exclaimed in a low breath: 'Thank God, I have it at last.'

A red light had shown itself for an instant from a window of the Zebec, and was answered by some boat out at sea. There could be no doubt about it to any one who knew anything of the bad goings-on at Seaford and its neighbourhood. It was a smuggler's signal that had been given from the window of that public-house — a signal to land, or a signal warning of danger. Lawyer Wedger did not know which, but it gave him a clue he had long wished for, for he now knew that the Zebec was the depot of smugglers, as he had suspected. But hush! He rose, and crept towards the edge of the cliff, for just then he heard a faint splash and fall of oars. Suddenly, from out of the dark shadow of a little bay between the cliffs, a long white, ghostly boat, swift as a water-snake, shot out of the darkness into the moonshine; it was pulled by four men, while one stood at the helm, and pointed the boat straight for the French coast. In a moment — and Wedger's eyes received everything with the greediness with which a cat in ambush watches the movement of a nest of young birds—two short masts were raised, and two lug-sails and a jib were shaken to the wind. The boat, aided by this new power, flew off like a swallow, as the favourable wind caught her sails, and soon passed into the gray dim perspective of the coming night.

In a moment, the dark, wily brain of the lawyer had planned his campaign. It should begin that very moment. He determined at once to steal round the back of the Zebec, get into the road from the assize town, and *then return* and enter the tavern as if for a glass of grog on his way home from business. He would watch the landlord's manner, and either coax or threaten as he found it best.

'So it *is* true,' he said to himself, as he rose to execute the plan, 'and no mare's nest, and I have seen the guinea-boat, after all, and found out where it harbours. A crown to a bad shilling, young Master Davison, but I stop your courting Polly, and hang you in a wire-basket before April comes round again. Damerham would have it that it was a mere ghost-story, but I stuck to it, it was not, and I'm right.'

Wedger was a lean, shrunken man, with a yellow puckered face, with little spiteful eyes, hair powdered in the old fashioned way, and with black clothes of a formal and scrupulously respectable cut. Even to his very black gaiters, there was a design in everything he wore. As had once heard of a certain merchant on 'Change who gained a fortune entirely by wearing a frilled shirt, gold seals, and a blue coat and brass buttons; so he determined to dress, too, in character, and assert his special individuality. There was almost a suspicious air of respectability about the guests in the parlour of the Zebec when Wedger entered. Jumper Davison, the landlord, had his arm fondly round the waist of his pretty daughter Polly. Three or four farmers sat gravely at their brandy and water, and looked steadily at the kettle, as if they were watching a tardy chemical experiment. They all rose and bowed, like automatons, through the smoke, as Wedger entered and called for a glass of hot rum and milk. One amphibious sea-coast farmer was in the midst of a stolid sea-song, something about

It blew great guns that night,
It blew with main and might,
With a fury, and a savage lion's roar;
It blew so hard, d'ye see, if you'll credit Ben and me,
It blew away the wig of our brave old commodore.

But even the applause given to this song seemed formal and mechanical, and there was nothing hearty in it at all.

'Rum and milk, Mr. Wedger, sir; and how do you do? Any news at 'sizes? Here, Polly, run and heat the milk at the kitchen-fire; it'll do sooner there. Take a seat, sir. Here; there's room between Muster Jobson and Muster Wilkins.'

'Thank you, friends—thank you, Davison,' said Wedger, bowing coldly and grandly, taking a seat, as if intentionally, not where the landlord bade him, but close to the parlour wall, and laying his loaded stick on the table as he spoke. 'Plenty of sugar, if you please, and not too much rum. I'm a temperate man. Lawyers must keep their heads cool, in order to get other folks to run theirs into hot water, eh, eh? News at the assizes, Davison! Well, not much; except that they expect to hang those three smuggling fellows from Eastbourne.'

There was a slight involuntary shudder ran through the room as the lawyer spoke so coolly of hanging smugglers, and one farmer, perhaps unintentionally, crushed a stray piece of coal with his heel.

'Every one, too, is talking of this guinea-boat that has been seen on the coast lately.'

'Pack of lies!' said Davison sulkily.

'And where's Robert to-night?' said Wedger, looking round for a smart young farmer-cousin of Polly's, who was generally said to be a formidable rival of the old lawyer's in that quarter.

'Gone to Eastbourne for a load of malt,' said Polly blushing, and speaking with nervous haste. 'Didn't you meet him, Mr. Wedger?'

'Not I,' said Wedger, in his turn taken somewhat aback, not having been, in fact, near Eastbourne at all that day. 'But lies or no lies,' he added, feeling in his pocket for something, 'ministers and the government believe in it, for the guinea smuggling increases terribly, and here's a proof of it.'

And, as he said this, he drew a large posting-bill out of his pocket, and moistening four wafers, which had been previously attached to the four corners, he stuck it, with a slap of his bony hand, on the parlour wall, just over Jumper Davison's head. It read thus:

"GUINEA SMUGGLING."

"This is to give notice to seafaring men and others, that a reward of £150 is offered to any one who will apprehend or assist in the apprehension of any sailor, boatman, or other on the coast, engaged in smuggling guineas to France. Vivat Rex.

"WHITEHALL, April 1, 1812."

'Look you here, Mr. Wedger,' said the landlord, starting up, quite red in the face. 'I'll not have the paper of my inn parlour, spoiled by your cock-and-bull posting-bills, not for you or any lawyer in the country.'

As he said this, Davison angrily stepped forward to peel the obnoxious bill from the wall; but Wedger, putting his back to the bill, to keep it on, for several ready hands were now raised to tear it down, drew out a letter from his breast-pocket, and requested silence. The letter was from the chief-magistrate of Eastbourne, and written by the Secretary of the Home Department. It urged him to do his best to put down the guinea smuggling on the coast, and ordered him to have copies of posting-bills posted up in every inn parlour in his county. Penalty for tearing down or refusing to put up the same, £20; second offence, £30.

'Now, then,' said Wedger, folding up the letter with a quiet smile, 'I should like to see the man who'll dare to touch that piece of paper.'

No one stepped forward.

'I thought that would damp your courage,' said the lawyer. At that moment Wedger, who was lifting angry Polly's hand to his lips at the doorway, was roughly thrust one side by a strong, handsome young man, who entered, and asked in a loud voice what all the fuss was about, and 'who was scaring his Polly.'

The farmer pointed to the bill on the wall.

Young Robert, for it was Polly's lover who thus abruptly presented himself, went up to the bill and with a saucy air of ridicule, read it through, in mimicry of the lawyer's manner. He had completed his perusal, and was about to tear it in two, when Farmer Wilkins caught his hand:

'Stand by,' he said, 'Master Robert, stand by; it's twenty pounds penalty, the lawyer says, to tear it.'

The young farmer laughed as he peeled off the bill and stuck it on again, turning its face to the wall.

'The bill's dated the first of April,' he said laughing; 'and as the fools in Lunnun have said nothing as to how it is to be stuck up in the inn parlours, let me see the lawyer as 'll dare to give evidence against us for putting it up as we like. It is all a dream, this guinea-boat. They'll want to hang us next, because we coast-people don't all go and join the men-of-war.'

'Don't, Bob—don't, Robert, dear,' said Polly coaxingly to her lover, laying her hand softly on his arm, and looking up at his angry face with pretty beseeching eyes.

'We don't want spies here, Lawyer Wedger,' said the young man, flashing round suddenly on the rather frightened lawyer. 'That I tell you, though it is my uncle's house. If you come here out of your way to get liquor, you may have it like any other tramp; but you shall not sneak about an honest man's house to work out mischief; and as for Polly, I'll not have her worried. She don't want to have anything to do with you.'

'No I don't,' said Polly, half crying, half fretfully.

'Take care, take care, young man,' said Wedger, 'or you'll never die quietly in your bed. You have defamed my character, you have insulted his majesty's government. I tell you, you are suspected. Take care, I warn you, that were I not a merciful man, I could frame two actions out of what has occurred only this very night.'

'Frame away, lawyer, and give the devil more clients!' said the young farmer. 'You merciful!—Merciful as a weasel sucking at a hare's blood—merciful as the Goodwin Sands on a rough night. Ha! ha! I say, friends, a lawyer merciful! Well, that is a better joke than even the fool of a story about the guinea-boat.'

'I warn you,' said Wedger, throwing down the money for the rum and milk, 'there are queer reports at Seaford of this Zebec inn.'

'And I warn you,' said Jumper Davison, the ex-pilot, and now landlord—'I warn you, for all your nasty threat, that the day you see the guine-boat, or any one who is in her, will be the worst day in your life.'

'O ho!—So there *is* a guinea-boat then,' thought Wedger to himself, as he took up his stick, frowned heavily at every one, and strode out of the room.

'I have them, I have them,' exclaimed he, as he strode rapidly home along the cliff, and closed his hand as he spoke, as if clutching on a living thing, 'I have seen the guinea boat; I have found its starting place; I know the signal for its starting. No doubt that young cub of a farmer, too, is one of the lot—and he'll hang. I have them thank God! I have them in a net, reward, and all. O lucky, lucky walk! But'——

This triumphant soliloquy might have lasted till Wedger had reached Seaford, had not a thought of danger suddenly struck a momentary chill through the lawyer's nerves. 'That warning,' he thought, 'what could it mean? Would some friends of the smugglers waylay him?'

It would be well to show that he was armed. He instantly drew a pistol from his breast-pocket—for he generally went armed—and fired it into the air. There was a flash of light, a report, and then a deeper silence than before. But, to Wedger's astonishment, he was answered by a shot in the direction of the Zebec Inn. Then a blue light shone out, and cast a lurid, corpse like light over thecliff, sea, and inland fields. It seemed almost like an omen of some evil to ensue from the events of that night.

'Signals again!' said Wedger; 'why the very air's alive with them to-night; but I'll soon smoke out this hive of fire-workmakers.'

Twenty minutes more sharp walking brought the lawyer to Seaford. The country town was already still and hushed, for sleep seizes on such places at an early hour, probably because in the daytime it is never very far away from it. There was no sound but the regretful music of the chimes, as they sang the dirge of another hour, and an occasional fitful burst of drunken singing from the Sir Home Popham Inn. Wedger gave a spiteful and suspicious knock at his door—a knock that seemed to say in a staccato way: 'Come look alive, for I know there is something going on inside that ought not to.' A trembling slut of a servant black with heedless industry, came shuffling to the door, and opened it with a rattling of chains. Wedger, like most bad men, was a tyrant; he said, in a cold, stern voice: 'Pru, is my son in?'

Pru faltered out: 'Yes, I think so.'

Wedger stepped back a foot or two, and looked up at the third-floor window. There was no light. He returned. 'Liar!' he said; 'you know he's out drinking and gambling as usual. If you don't tell me when he comes in, I'll discharge you this day fortnight. Mind — d'ye hear?—and look 'ee, call me early, for I have important business with the town-clerk to-morrow.'

There was a crowd of prisoners, smugglers suitors, watchmen, and sailors, in the outer office of Mr. Shipton, the town-clerk, next morning, when Mr. Wedger, sending in his name and a line written in pencil on a card, was instantly bowed into the inner sanctum of the great man, to the envy and chagrin of a dozen or so of other visitors.

'The ferret and the terrier always work well together, drat 'em both,' grumbled a farmer in top-boots, flapping the door-mat with his hunting-whip.

But let us follow the lawyer into the great man's terrible presence, where he was in close confabulation with a local magistrate, a pompous and tremendous person, who prided himself much on the circumstance of his having once been in the 'City Light-horse Volunteers.'

There sat the great men, opposite each other, at a table crowded with bundles of papers, depositions, and other magisterial machinery. Now the great man bowed to the right-hand bundles, now to the left—the town clerk now tugged with his teeth at obdurate red-tape knots, now split up quill pens in the hurry of fretful nibbing.

'Good morning Mr. Wedger,' said both gentlemen, as Mr. Wedger entered, took a seat, and pulled out a paper.

'And what is this—what is this information you have to give us, Mr. Wedger? Smuggling, of course,' said the magistrate. 'Oh, those depraved people of Seaford—how long will they trouble us? You received, of course, that ill-judged, and, I may say, irrational proclamation about these imaginary guinea smugglers. I am surprised to find our ministers perpetrating such a blunder.'

'Not so imaginary, I fear, Mr. Damerham,' said the lawyer calmly, 'as you will allow, when I tell you what happened to me only yesterday eve.'

The town-clerk looked up in astonishment at an attorney who could actually contradict a live Seaford magistrate.

'To smuggle guineas, sir,' said the magistrate pompously, putting his two thumbs rhetorically into the two arm-holes of his plum-coloured velvet waist-coat, and shaking his large gold seals with indignation at the lawyer's want of logic—'is the act of fools. How can Bonaparte hope to drain a country like ours of gold? What are guineas fit for but to be melted down into bullion? What can the dogs of French pay the misguided men in but worthless assignats? I tell you, sir, the guinea has never been at a premium anywhere. Turn to the 1st Geo. I. cap. 4, or to the Clipping Statute, second Queen Anne—nowhere do I find penalties for this offence, sir. The thing is a rank absurdity. Men do not incur severe penalties without adequate motive. Now, when I was in the City Light-horse Volunteers there were'——

Could the town-clerk believe his ears—Mr. Wedger actually interrupted the magistrate.

'But, Mr. Damerham, I have proof; I never move in legal matters without proof.'

The town-clerk was petrified. What, the low attorney of the place — the felon's refuge—dare to have proofs to support a fact contradicted by the chief-magistrate of Seaford! He was astonished—nay, more, he was hurt.

'Some garbled words of a drunken coast-guard's man, I suppose,' said Mr. Damerham, somewhat nettled, and refering as he spoke to a corpus juris as big as a family Bible to hide his annoyance; 'some dream of a suborned fisherman, I suppose, again, who swears he has met a great white boat brimming with loose guineas. Tut, tut, Mr. Wedger, I am surprised at a man of your years and sense!'

'As for our years,' said Wedger, nettled in his turn, 'they're pretty near equal.' Could he mean to imply that their senses were of a different calibre? Wedger here rose, and laid his old knuckled and gloved hand on the corpus juris: 'I do not come here to waste a magistrate's valuable time with rumours, dreams, or ghost-stories. I come here, gentlemen, to speak of what I myself have seen not twenty-four hours ago, and not a mile from this very room.'

The magistrate and town-clerk pricked up their ears, and stared with positively open mouths as the lawyer related the events of the preceding night, confirming the current story of the mysterious white boat that, when pursued, seemed always to melt away into the distance.

'Very important evidence, no doubt, *very important*,' said the magistrate, as Wedger finished his story by urging strong and prompt measures. 'No doubt you have seen, I may even go so far as to say, a smuggling-boat; but why a guinea-boat, of all things? What proof of the guineas, Mr. Wedger? How can we proceed, Mr. Town-clerk, on evidence like this? A gentleman sees a white boat, and observes corresponding signals; that's the total of his evidence.'

'Not quite,' said the attornery coldly, between his teeth, as, rising from his chair, he opened the door, and cried with a loud voice to the door-keeper: 'Call John Belton.'

Before the sound of the name thus called had died away, a thick-set man, closely muffled, entered; what with comforter, long hair, and hat pulled over his eyes, there was no making out face or features of the man. His own father could not have recognised him. Wedger pulled out a deposition, and read it; the stranger looked straight in his face as he read; 'Deposition of George Wilson *alias* John Belton, taken down by me for the use of the Seaford magistrates.—April 16, 1812.'

The man nodded assent, as much as to say, 'I'm Wilson.' I, George Wilson, depose that I am guard to mail-coach between Eastbourne and London, and that on the 5th of February last, a Jew money-lender, one Ezra Levi of Tabernacle Street, in the Minories, before known to me, came to the coach-office in Lad Lane, and offered me five guineas if I would secretly convey twenty leather sealed bags of guineas from London to Eastbourne, for shipment to Messrs. Delesseaux of Gravelines. I was to give them to an old woman in a red cloak, who would be waiting in the inn-yard with a covered tilt-cart when the coach got in. I agreed to take them, and I did so, and have since conveyed ten such loads, one every Tuesday; the last was yesterday. I have turned king's evidence on the promise of a free pardon from the crown, and a promise of the place of coachman of the next mail that is vacant.

'(Signed) GEORGE WILSON, *alias* JOHN BELTON.'

'George Wilson, are you the person herein mentioned, and is that your signature?'

'I'm George Wilson, and that's my signature,' said the traitor-guard gruffly, as if rather ashamed of himself.

'Astonishing! astonishing!' gasped the magistrate. 'And may I ask Mr. Wedger how you became acquainted with this man?'

'That's my secret,' said Wedger, coolly taking snuff, cozy as a hangman when the 'little affair' is comfortably over—'it is sufficient that here's the man.'

'And now, sir'—Damerham called every one 'sir,' sometimes as a rebuke, and sometimes as a compliment—turning to Belton, *alias* Wilson, under whose coat appeared suspicious peeps of scarlet, 'can you aid his majesty's government a little more by just telling us the depot of those guinea smugglers?'

Wilson scratched his head, and said: 'Well, he didn't know; it was a bad affair. He hoped they wouldn't go and hang any of the poor fellows; but as the cat was almost out of the bag, he saw no harm in making a clean breast of it, and saying that the guineas were, he had heard, taken to some sea-side inn near Seaford'

'Exactly—the Zebec!' said Wedger, triumphantly pointing to the feather-end of a pen he held at the magistrate, who was astonished at the lawyer's presumptuous energy. 'Wilson, you may go; you shall hear from me.'

'I shouldn't wonder if I have some of these sea-dogs after me for this, gentlemen, but I have got friends here' (tapping his breast-pocket) 'as have settled many a highwayman, and I see no reason why they should'nt pull just as true on a guinea smuggler. At all events, I've now made clean hands on it, and I wish you a very good morning, gentlemen. Good morning, gentlemen all. Good morning, Mr. Wedger. It'll be a pretty stroke as ever you made, netting them all; but mind when you trawl for whiting you don't get a shark in the net in mistake.' With this fisherman's metaphor, Wilson muffled up again, doubled himself up like an old man, and departed.

'We'll catch these miscreants next Tuesday,' said Wedger nodding. 'Have two eight-oared custom-house galleys, Mr. Damerham, waiting just round the point, beyond Seaford, out of sight of the Zebec at nightfall. Directly the signal I saw goes up again, one shall pull for the Zebec jetty, and another shall cut off the guinea-boat as it makes for the French coast.'

The magistrate, puffing himself up, said he knew very well what it became him to do without interference or direction. 'Thank you, Mr. Wedger.'

Now was the time to put on the handcuffs. Mr. Wedger pulled out a letter from the minister of the Home Department, requesting him to give his (Wedger's) best assistance to the Seaford magistrates on the subject of guinea smuggling. The magistrate was cowed; but he bent his head to the storm, and affecting extreme urbanity, he shook Mr. Wedger by the hand, and thanked him for his important, he might say his invaluable information.

'Delighted with your help and advice. And now, my dear sir, that business being settled, and we public men having a moment's breathing-time, try a glass of sherry.'

Wedger said he never touched sherry when there was anything to be done.

'Curious! Well, now, it makes me work better, good sherry. And, before we part, let me ask you, my dear sir, how you get on with your son that you once consulted me about; not so wild, I hope? Why not send him to sea! No school for wild youths like a man-of-war.'

Wedger shuddered at the thought of losing his boy; he was softened for a moment by the very idea.

'No,' he said. 'Mr. Damerham, you are kind, but I can't part with him. Sir, I love that boy; he is my only child, my only solace, and he reminds me of my dear wife. No; I'll try him again. I think he is sorry for what he does, for only this morning, when I sat on his bed, and warned him of vice, told him how vice turned to crime, and how certainly sooner or later justice overtakes crime — talking of these very guinea smugglers whom we shall soon have on the gallows *swinging*—he buried his head in the clothes, and seemed struck dumb. No, no, there is grace and innocence in the boy still; he'll do, he'll do, sir. He is my Absalom but—'

Here the door was thrown open, and a voice shouted in a monotonous way: 'Two smugglers, sir, from Cragford to be examined. Officers took 'em last night, tubs and all, after a tussle.'

'The very thing,' cried Mr. Damerham, radiant with an idea at last — 'the very thing. Call them in, Mr. Town-clerk; they'll be sure to know something about the guineas and the extraordinary white boat.'

'Bring in the Cragford smugglers,' cried the town-clerk grandly, through the cautiously opened door.

The door opened, and four custom-house officers entered, leading between them two rough men in torn pilot-coats, with black and cut faces, and with hands coupled together with bright steel handcuffs. The head officer advanced, and made his statement.

'Was on duty last night, as ever was, at Cragford Waste, top of Cragford Cliff, when I sees the smugglers' flash-boxes answering along shore; and presently down a road to the sea-shore cut in the chalk, I sees, five hundred yards off, about two hundred horses, ridden or led by some fifty men, and on every horse two casks of 'Godsend,' as we folk call it. The men were in white round frocks, and every one seemed to carry pistols or cutlashes, and they were led by a man on a big black mare, riding between two brandy-tubs. 'We shall be soon at home, men,' says he, as they passed us.'

'Well, never mind what he said, but get on,' said the Solon. 'And then you stopped them?'

'What! stop two hundred horses and fifty men, your honour? Not I; I knows better. But I flashed my pistol as soon as they were out of sight, and up comes Bill Davis here, to where I lay hid, and we watches.'

'So you *watches?*' said Mr. Damerham sneeringly.

'*And we watches*, your honour,' said the stolid witness, quite unmoved at the keen sarcasm. 'Presently up goes a rocket—whiz, and who come by but three men, the prisoners and one other.'

'And where is the other? It doesn't do, sir, to let prisoners go!'

'Flat as ninepence, your honour. Ran away, and fell over Cragford Cliff. Got him outside, sir, on a stretcher. Well, as I was observing, these three men begin fastening a rope with hooks to run tubs on to the top of the cliff, when we leaps up. They out with cutlashes, and to it we went, one up, another down, for ten minutes. At last I fetches that black fellow a wipe that cuts him from his nose to his chin.'

Here the black fellow obligingly pointed out on himself the 'cutlash' slash alluded to.

'And he ups and cuts my hat through from crown to brim.' Here he produced the severed hat.

'And but for the blessed iron in it, had sent you after poor Tom Jackson,' said the wounded smuggler.

'Eventually we overpowers them, and puts on the darbies; and that is the long and short of it.'

'Your name, prisoners?' said Mr. Damerham impressively.

'Matthew Walker' and 'Davy Jones' were the answers.

The magistrate wrote the names down deliberately in a royal hand.

'Lor love you, sir, don't put down that gibberish,' suggested the custom-house officer under breath. 'Them's only make-believe names.'

'Rig in the booms, and coil away the gear, Jack, for we're coming to anchor,' whispered one smuggler to another, as they saw they were about to be examined.

'I think it right to inform you, prisoners,' said the magistrate, 'that your future treatment will depend very much on your present behaviour. And now we want to ask you a question. Have you heard anything about the Seaford guinea smuggling? Do you know anything of it?'

The men looked at each other. The wounded man answered saucily: 'No more than a monkey knows of the bagpipes.'

'Impertinent fellows,' groaned Mr. Damerham. 'Oh, you're making pretty rods for your own backs. This is not to be borne. It is no use, officers. Take the men away, and put them both in irons.'

'Lor, it's never no use asking smugglers questions,' said the preventive-men to each other, as they jostled their prisoners into the next room.

'They do say,' said the town-clerk to the magistrate, 'that these guinea smugglers are encouraged and led by some young man of good family.'

'Impossible!' said the great man—'impossible! Young men of good family don't take up with smugglers and thieves. Impossible, Mr. Town-clerk!'

Mr. Wedger, having received many congratulations at his success in unearthing the conspirators, now left the room with many bows and much hand-shaking.

'And now he is fairly gone,' said Mr. Damerham, looking first at the glass-door, next at the keyhole, and then at the town-clerk, 'between ourselves what is your real impression of this person Wedger? Now, come, speak fairly—remember we are friends.'

'A low, mischievous, dangerous attorney, Mr. Damerham, who foments quarrels, inculpates innocent persons, and preys on the widow and orphan; but with much power at head-quarters, ever since he helped Lord Tranceover at the last Seaford election. Besides, he has, I am told, a strong personal motive in this case, for he has been slighted by the pretty daughter of the landlord of the Zebec. My advice is, however, don't check him; do whatever he wishes. If you don't, he'll set all the corporation by the ears, and plunge us into endless expenses, sir.'

The magistrate—contradictory and a very lion in public, in order to show he was not led—in private was a very lamb. He followed the town clerk's advice to the letter. The attack on the guinea smugglers was carefully planned by Wedger—planned with all the care with which a gamekeeper draws his nets round the covert in anticipation of the next day's shooting. Two custom-house galleys, remarkable for their swiftness, were carefully conveyed into a boat-shed not far from the Zebec, and two crews of eight strong, sinewy men, each armed to the teeth, hidden in the same place, prepared, the instant they saw the Zebec's rocket, to run down with the boats, launch them, and pull off after the guinea-smugglers. The men were eager for smugglers as half-starved greyhounds for a hare. They had heard that the guinea-boat was painted white, so as to best escape detection at night; but this time, taken by surprise, she would have no chance of escape. They were all eager for the reward, waived glitteringly before their eyes by Wedger. The sixteen men spent the whole morning of the appointed day in grinding their cutlasses and cleaning their pistols, for they swore, whether dead or alive, no guinea smuggler should that night escape uncaptured.

The night came. It was dark and heavy, as had been anticipated. Almost at the exact moment that Wedger had seen the signal from the Zebec window, a rocket rose up with a swift hiss into the air, and scattered its golden sparks in a momentary shower over the Zebec roof. The next minute, a second rocket rose in answer from some vessel hidden by a point of chalk-cliff. Then there was a sound of muffled oars 'I think there must be two on 'em,' said a gray old officer, peering intently into the darkness through a diamond hole in the planks of the shed, 'for I hear the oars at the Zebec landing every time as the rocket goes up over the cliff. Now, if I know a spanker-boom from a yard-arm, that there boat never sent up that there rocket. Get your pistols ready, boys, and be ready for a start when I cry, 'Now!'

Another moment, and a dark boat could be seen dimly, its cargo taken in, stealing under the cliff, and passing round the shoulder of land. It is not a white boat, then, after all.

'Now!' cried the old boatswain.

The men ran like tigers, with their boats on their shoulders. In a moment they had them in the water, and had leaped into them; in another moment the oars were in the row-locks, and the men pulled swiftly in the train of the smugglers. Suddenly, they swerved round the point of land: two objects met their eyes—the boatswain was right—a large heavy lugger, painted a light-gray colour, evidently to better escape detection at night; and a long, sharp-nosed, white centipede—a sort of boat built specially for swiftness, and with planks no thicker than crown-pieces. They both lay in the dark shadow of the promontory, as if waiting for some signal. In a moment, however, they had caught sight of their enemies, and with a shout of defiance and a blaze of small-arms at the approaching boats, put out to sea, aided by a wind just then blowing freshly from the land. The lugger tacked, and putting out sweeps that moved like two great wings, bore off in a contrary direction from the attendant boat, that shot across the sea swift as an arrow, and straight for the French coast. At that moment, the moon shone full upon the smuggler as it left the shadow, and showed its white sides with ghostly distinctness.

At last, then, they were on the trail of the guinea-boat. 'Put your backs to it, lads!' roared the boatswain in command; 'we Cragford men take the guinea-boat; you Seaford lads board the lugger. Pull away with a will, boys—with a will?'

Off dashed the boats, each after its peculiar prey. Let us follow the more important of the two, the guinea-boat, closely pursued as it was by the boatswain and his crew, leaving the lugger to its fate. The coast-blockade men were now so near that they could all but see the faces of the smugglers as they bent savagely at their oars, driving their boat on till its white planks quivered at every stroke.

'Another mile, and we have them between us and the Knocker Sand,' said the boatswain, who was steering; 'our fortune's made if we only get up to them. Give way, then—give way!'

'I think the beggars are planning some mischief, bosun. I hope they ain't going to fling grenades in on us,' said the stroke-oar, as a movement in the guinea-boat was now clearly perceptible.

'Hand-grenades, be hanged, Jack!' said the boatswain; 'but I'll be cursed, though, if they ain't going to fling some of their shiners over, to lighten their craft; and we shall get hold of nothing but an empty purse after all, if we don't look out; so pull, boys, pull.'

The boatswain was right. In the clear moonlight that now shone full on the chase, still much ahead of the blockade-men, a man could be seen to stoop over the side of the boat, with a small bag he had dragged to the gunwale, and slash it twice with a knife; the guineas poured out in a golden stream into the sea. Six times he cut open bags, and six times the gold poured into the sea. The coast-blockade men gave a yell of rage and vexation as the bright spadaces flashed in the moonlight and disappeared for ever. The smugglers answered with a laugh of triumph, as their boat, now so much lightened, shot forth as if a steam-engine had suddenly propelled it. In ten minutes, they had gained considerably on their opponents; in another twenty, their boat was out of sight, faded away in the inner brightness of the moonlight.

'If old Harry hasn't had a trick as coxen in that craft to-night, I'm a Dutchman,' growled the boatswain, as reluctantly he gave orders to pull back to the shore.

'And the blessed golden guineas,' said the stroke-oar, 'gone to make oyster-beds of. It's a sin and a shame, that's what I call it. but get home, boys; the cursed boat has witchcraft in it. Master Bosun is right: no one will ever catch it; that's my opinion.'

A more serious misfortune, in the meantime, happened to the companion-boat. The revenue-men had already headed it, and were turning to board—cutlasses between their teeth and loaded pistols in their belts when suddenly to their horror, the lugger boldly put on all sail, and bore straight down on them. There was no possibility of escape. In a moment, their boat was cut in two, and a few shattered planks were all that were left of it. Three of the men, encumbered with their heavy coats, instantly sank; another clung to the rudder, and for a moment or two floated; four others, crying for mercy, clung to the gunwales of the lugger.

'Mercy!' cried one of the smugglers, seizing a carpenter's axe; 'yes, the same mercy, you devils, as the poor fellows who rot in the chains at Cragford got; we'll have no one to witness against us.' And as he said this, with dreadful curses, the wretch lopped off the hands of one of the revenue-men, who fell bleeding into the sea. The other three relinquished their hold, and fell backwards, and were almost instantly drowned.

Then, crowding all sail, the lugger steered straight for Gravelines with its crew of murderers and outlaws. The night after this cruel murder, and while all Seaford was shuddering at the news, Wedger's son ran away from his father's house, leaving a short letter behind, to say that, sick of the law, and the severity and dullness of his father's house, he had enlisted, and hoped no further inquiries would be made for him. Wedger bore the disappointment with deep grief, though he treated the act as a mere young man's caprice, a mere intention. He would soon tire of it, he said; he would return when the freak was over, and all his money was gone.

A few days after, news that could not be gainsaid reached Wedger. The guinea smugglers had been tracked to a fisherman's house in a lonely lane not for beyond Eastbourne. They were going to keep close there all day, and at night to strike into the interior. The murderers of the revenue galley-men were, it was well known, among them.

Wedger's and the magistrate's plans were soon taken. At sunset, a cordon of revenue men closed in on the cottage; among them, but not in the van of the attacking party, were Wedger, and pompous, strutting Mr. Damerham, neither of them much liking the affair, but determined to personally superintend an arrest that might else be bungled, and prove a failure; not, indeed, that either were cowards, but only that fighting was not their profession.

The whole country was crying for the lives of these guilty men, who so long had evaded detection, and whose crimes had now turned public opinion unchangeably against them. "The gibbet was crying for them," was the popular saying, and certain popularity awaited the captors.

The attack was so sudden and unexpected, the tired smugglers having set no pickets, and the night being so stormy, that the whole gang were surprised sleeping, drinking, or half disarmed. The blockademen poured in with cutlasses drawn and pistols cocked. For five minutes the fight was hot and obstinate enough, but at the end of that time six of the smugglers were wounded and manacled, and four lay dead on the cabin floor under a pile of broken chairs, bottles, and benches. Three or four only of the victorious party were put *hors de combat*.

Into the stifling room, still choked with powder-smoke and slippery with blood, came Mr. Wedger and Mr. Damerham. The attorney, rubbing his hands, coolly asked "how many of the rascals had been killed."

'Four on 'em are dead chickens,' said the boatswain, pulling his forelock, and scraping with his right foot, as a mark of respect to lawful authority; 'and there they lie just where we shot 'em. I say, you, Jack Tiller, clear off their top hampers, and let's look at their faces. There was one lad, a sort of cap'in, I think, who was very spiteful with his cutlash, to be sure, till I caught him over the left eye. Turn 'em over, lads, and let's look at their faces.'

The men, half in the dark, cleared away the broken chairs as the boatswain ordered, and dragged out the dead one by one. The first body drawn out was that of the young man the boatswain had shot. He was quite dead; a bullet had struck him just over the left eye. There was a quiet fixed smile on his lips.

'Here's the young game-cock,' said the boatswain, touching the body in a friendly manner with his foot. 'Give us a lantern here, one of ye; Mr. Wedger wants to look at our dead birds.'

The stroke-oar obediently brought his dark lantern with an 'Ay, ay, sir,' and turned it full and suddenly on the face of the dead youth; but Wedger was standing with his back to the body, talking to Mr. Damerham at the time, and for a moment did not turn round. The boatswain, pulling the attorney respectfully by the sleeve, asked him if he wouldn't like to see the 'dead rogues who had gone and shirked the gallows.'

Wedger, half petulantly turning round, said: 'Certainly.'

The boatswain pointed down silently to the dead youth, on whose face the stroke-oar's lantern was shedding a strong yellow light.

Wedger turned, and gave one keen look; the next moment, without saying a word, he threw his arms into the air, and fell in a deathlike swoon on the body. It was the attorney's wretched son. The poor scapegrace had long been secretly enrolled in the gang of guinea smugglers.

Wedger never wholly rallied; on recovering from his swoon, paralysis seized him, and he died within the year, a broken-hearted, imbecile man.

Of the guinea smugglers, three were hung, and the rest transported. Jumper Davison, with Polly and her lover, fled to France, and soon after embarked for America, where they eventually did well.

As for Mr. Damerham, he told his stories of the guinea smugglers and the City Light-horse Volunteers till he reached a good old age, and finally, like other City Light-horse Volunteers, he died, leaving behind him an epitaph, written by himself, in the character of virtuous church-warden, in large gilt letters, on the front of the organ gallery in Seaford Church.

A poor but honest stone-cutter in Port Byron, Conn., recently received intelligence that a fortune of $300,000 in gold is awaiting his order at the Bank of Dublin.