

THE ALCOHOL SMUGGLERS OF PARIS.  
BY AN OFFICER OF THE PARIS CUSTOMS HOUSE.



ALCOHOL without a doubt is the article most often smuggled through the gates of Paris, and this is due to the fact that the tax upon it has steadily increased during the past few years. Naturally, increased taxation means higher profits on contraband goods and, therefore, quickens the ingenuity of smugglers. Under our very eyes these men annually pass thousands of gallons of valuable spirits into the city, where it is readily disposed of at high prices to makers of perfumes, or to liquor dealers who use it for adulterating their goods. Yet we keep a sharp watch on all who pass through the gates of the capital. None can enter until he satisfies us that contraband articles are not hidden on his person; no vehicle is admitted until it has been thoroughly searched, and every cask of liquor must be declared before the owner is authorized to pass on. Nor can any one question the severity and conscientiousness of the inspection, as the men under my orders have a share in the proceeds of the sale of any alcohol seized at the barriers. At given periods this is sold by the municipal authorities, one-half of the receipts going to the city funds, and the other half to the *octroi* employees. These men are not over-well paid, so they look forward to increasing their incomes by extreme vigilance in capturing smugglers.

I can assure my readers that it is well worth while to smuggle alcohol into Paris. The dues on each liter or quart amount to four francs fifteen centimes, say eighty-six cents. Imagine the profit to be derived by anyone who succeeds in smuggling several thousand gallons of alcohol a year. Among the thousand-and-one methods employed by smugglers, some very curious ones have come under my observation during the twenty-odd years that I have been connected with the service. The accompanying illustrations represent some of these. They are reproductions of special photographs taken in the warehouses of the Hotel de Ville, where are stored all sorts of ingenious smuggling apparatus. They are so numerous that quite a museum could be formed, were it not for the fear of teaching dishonest men how to defraud the government.

For several months smugglers disguised as stone masons carried wooden beams through the gates without our suspecting for a moment that they were hollow and contained large quantities of alcohol. But the fraud was eventually discovered by pure accident, as nearly always happens. One day, just as the last man of a squad passed the barrier, with a cheery "*Bonjour, camarades,*" he stumbled over a stone and fell headlong. Fearing that the man was hurt, I darted forward to help him to his feet, but had no sooner done so than to my utter astonishment he arose with astounding rapidity and made off, leaving the beam behind him; moreover, his companions also took to their heels. The reason for their flight was soon apparent. From one end of the beam there oozed a thin stream of liquid, which I instinctively detected as alcohol.

Double-bottomed bottles and other vessels are common contrivances of smugglers. In order not to awaken

our suspicion they are usually filled with some beverage, beer or wine, and this is duly declared by the man in charge of the vehicle. We have often been swindled in this way in the past. Now we are never deceived by double-bottomed bottles, nor for that matter by hollow horse-collars (see illustration) which was at one time another favorite dodge of the alcohol smuggler.

But I have come across even more ingenious tricks than these. In smuggling alcohol through the gates of Paris, it is not at all necessary to have a vehicle and a bulky cargo. A single man can carry quite a quantity of alcohol, and in quite a different sense from that usually applied to drunkards. A smartly-dressed gentleman is represented in one of the accompanying photographs. Under his spotless waistcoat and white shirt, he carries an India-rubber plastron brimful of alcohol. True, his appearance is rather bulky, but then he can probably put that down to good living, and ten to one he will slip through our hands. Sometimes the India-rubber waistcoat is replaced by a tin one, also filled with alcohol; and I have known even an immaculate-looking tall hat to be found to contain some heavily-taxed liquor. Then again this class of

pected for a moment that it contained 40 liters of pure alcohol. The smugglers took every precaution against discovery, avoiding, for instance, passing through the same barrier twice running. However, the trick was eventually discovered by an officer who insisted on examining the wreath, and found that it contained a tin interior filled, of course, with the valuable spirits.

Among the many smugglers whom I have caught red-handed, there was one man who disarmed suspicion for months by his pleasant manner. He would come up in the most friendly way imaginable, shake me by the hand, wish me "*Bonjour,*" ask after my health, and talk for half an hour at a time about the news of the day. All this time his vehicle was standing at the gates, a vehicle which we little suspected contained no end of untaxed alcohol. Apparently his cart was filled with beer and cider, for which he always paid. One day, however, he was caught. A young employee who had never seen him before was alone on duty, and insisted on ransacking his vehicle. Nothing save the casks of beer and cider was to be seen, and he was about to let the man pass when a drop fell on his hand from the roof of the covered cart. He looked at the spot of liquid, smelt it, and at

once detected that it was alcohol. In the roof of that vehicle was a cleverly-arranged tank let into the woodwork, and in addition to this hundreds of liters of alcohol were stored under the driver's seat. You can judge of the astonishment of myself and colleague when we heard that the *brave homme*, who for six months past had inquired so kindly about our wives and children, had been throwing dust in our eyes.

You can now imagine what large sums of money the city of Paris loses through the ingenuity of smugglers. The alcohol thus introduced into the city is used for various purposes, sometimes for making perfumes, but more often, I suspect, for concocting cheap alcoholic beverages. Once within the city, the smuggler can easily find a market for his produce. Frequently he is in the employ of a manufacturer who thus realizes enormous profits on his goods. I can assure you we customs officials have often a very hard task. In spite of all our endeavors, smugglers gain their ends. We are pitted against a class of men who are sometimes perfect geniuses—men who

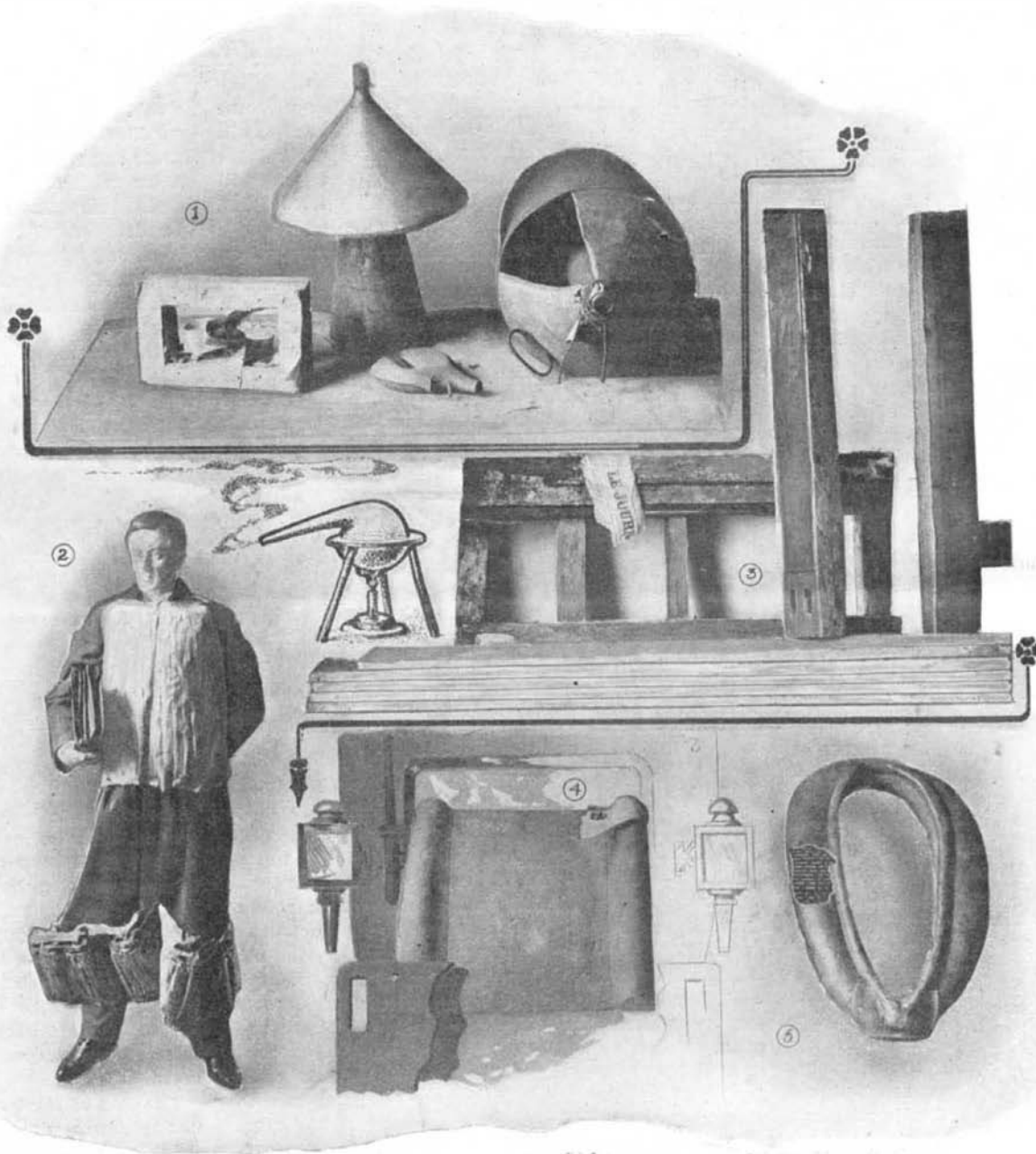
had they directed their energies into other channels, might have been inventors with a wide reputation, and with incomes honestly earned.

Fireless Cook Stoves.

In an address to an audience consisting largely of working people, Mrs. Back, wife of the director of the industrial school (*Gewerbe Schule*), at Frankfort, brought to the attention of her hearers the following interesting information in regard to a new article of kitchen furniture—the hay box, or fireless stove.

Every housewife knows that a pot of coffee can be kept hot for a considerable length of time, without the aid of fire, simply by wrapping it securely in a dry towel in order to hinder the escape of heat. It now seems very strange that the world has been so slow to make a practical and more extended use of this idea.

At the Paris exposition of 1867 much attention was attracted by a wooden box lined with wool and felt, which was called "the Norwegian automatic kitchen." In this box food which had been boiled for only a very few minutes continued to cook slowly and in two or three hours was found to be ready for the table. For



1.—Can which contained alcohol, with its false interior; also portfolio used for alcohol smuggling. 2.—India-rubber waistcoat for smuggling alcohol; also rubber bag for attachment to the skirts. 3.—Hollow beams in which alcohol has been smuggled. 4.—Driver's seat with a hollow interior. 5.—Hollow horsecollar.

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smuggler will often carry an innocent-looking portfolio which contains not papers, but alcohol. Thus surrounded by alcohol on all sides, he walks past us with the gravest of airs, taking care not to make a false step, otherwise his heavily-loaded hat might fall to the ground and reveal the fraud. I have known this class of smuggler to be accompanied by a fashionably-dressed lady, under whose skirts there has been enough alcohol to stock a small saloon. These two defrauders are very difficult to catch, for the reason that they do not need to pass through the gates of the city, but can come into Paris by boat, and my colleagues at Charenton or Bercy are hardly likely to detect them in their perfunctory examination of baskets and hand bags. Sometimes, of course, suspicion is aroused, and the well-dressed gentleman and lady are followed, not by ordinary *octroi* employees, but by detectives who are always on duty near the barriers and landing stages.

During a period of over six months the customs employees at the various barriers at Paris saw two men regularly pass before their offices, carrying a very fine funeral wreath. Naturally, they never asked them to pay dues on such an article as that, and never sus-

some unexplained reason all efforts to bring this useful novelty into general use proved unsuccessful until the matter was recently taken up systematically and with more enthusiasm in Baden. The propaganda is now being successfully pushed in Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, and other cities by means of popular lectures and public demonstrations of the convenience and practical value of this method of cooking.

Mrs. Back stated that she has now been using the hay box for thirteen years, and that it has greatly reduced for her the cares and annoyances of house-keeping. At first she used the box merely for the purpose of keeping finished food warm, but it was not long before she discovered that the process of cooking continued in the box. She thereupon extended its use, making a series of experiments which resulted in pleasant surprises. She soon found that she could finish in the box all boiled and roasted meats, sauces, fish, soup, vegetables, fruit, puddings, etc. Of course the box cannot be used for beefsteaks, cutlets, pancakes, and the like, articles whose chief attraction lies in the crispness resulting from rapid cooking on a hot fire, but when food of this kind is being prepared it is a great comfort to know that the rest of the meal is ready and hot in the box.

In any household such a box will be found of great advantage, lessening the worries of the housewife and cook, and leaving much more time for other duties and recreations, but for working women it is more than this—it is almost indispensable.

A little patience and interest will secure all the experience that is needed and remove all doubts. A few experiments will teach how much preliminary cooking on the gas stove is required for different substances. In general, it will be found that two or three minutes of actual boiling on the fire is amply sufficient for vegetables, while roasted meat requires twenty to thirty minutes. Most articles should remain tightly closed in the box for two or three hours, though they can be left there to keep hot for ten or twelve hours, if necessary.

Rice, dried beans, lentils, dried fruit, etc., should first be well soaked in cold water. After being allowed to boil for from two to five minutes, one to two hours in the box will prepare them thoroughly for the table. Cabbage should be prepared the evening before it is to be used. It should be placed in the pot with very little water, cooked well in its own juice, and put overnight in the hay box. Just before dinner on the following day it should be warmed on the stove. Cauliflower and other soft vegetables should be merely brought to a boil and then placed for an hour or two in the box. It will be found that soups are greatly improved by being allowed to develop for two or three hours in the hay box. The covers of the pots should, of course, not be lifted when the pots are being transferred to the box. By the old method of cooking, it is necessary to boil dried beans two and one-half to three hours. When the hay box is used, boiling for five minutes will be found sufficient. This will give a clear idea of the amount of fuel saved.

Science teaches that many substances become ready for use as food at temperatures below the boiling point; and that, unless the pots are hermetically closed, a temperature exceeding 212 deg. F. cannot be attained, no matter how much fuel is consumed nor how long the boiling is continued. Accordingly, the object to be kept chiefly in view is to retain the heat as long as possible when it has once been developed.

One of the first things for a novice to learn is how much water to use. It will soon be found that too much is better than too little, and that if beans, peas, lentils, oatmeal, etc., have less water than they can absorb, they cannot become properly cooked, no mat-

ter how many hours the process is continued. No water should ever be poured from the pots, not even from potatoes, as it always contains valuable salts derived from the cooking substances whose loss must lessen the alimentary value of the vegetables or meat.

The hay boxes now being offered for sale in German stores are usually lined and partitioned with hay, felt, etc., and the receptacles are furnished with covers which can be securely locked. Such boxes are no doubt useful when food is to be transported—for instance, from restaurants; but there is one serious objection to them—their immovable felt and upholstery may become moist and moldy. A home-made hay box will usually be found cheaper and more practical. Almost any box will do which has a tightly-fitting cover. The wood of which it is made should not be too thin, and of course there should be no knot holes or cracks. Old trunks and valises may sometimes be successfully utilized in this way.

The box should be loosely filled with shavings, paper, or hay—the last mentioned being probably the most

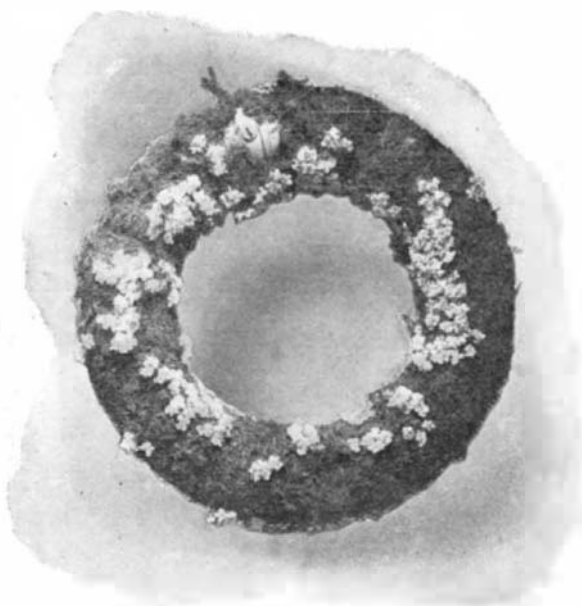
not blackened, and they will last for an almost indefinite period of time.

3. The food is better cooked, more tasty, more nutritious, and more digestible.
4. Kitchen odors are obviated.
5. Time and labor are saved.
6. There is no need of stirring nor fear of scorching or burning.
7. The cares of the housewife are lessened, and her health and happiness are thus protected.
8. The kitchen need not be in disorder half of the day.
9. Warm water can always be had when there is illness in the house and during the summer when fires are not kept up.
10. Milk for the baby can be kept warm all night in a pot of water.
11. Where workmen's families live crowded in one or two rooms the additional suffering caused by kitchen heat is obviated by the hay box, for the preliminary cooking can all be done in the cool of the morning.

12. At picnics the appetites of young people are only half satisfied by sandwiches and other cold food. The hay box can furnish a hot meal anywhere and at any time.

13. Similarly, men and women working in the fields or having night employment can take with them hot coffee, soup, or an entire meal, thus avoiding the necessity of returning home at a fixed hour or having it brought to them by another member of the family.

14. When different employments make it necessary for the various members of a family to take their meals at different hours, this can be arranged without a multiplication of work with the assistance of the hay box. Of course it is necessary that the box be kept perfectly clean, as otherwise it may become sour or musty.—George H. Murphy, Consular Clerk, Frankfurt, Germany.



This Funeral Wreath is Tin-Lined and Holds Forty Liters of Spirit. After Passing the Customs Many Times, the Fraud Was Detected.



India-Rubber Plastron Worn by Women.



Tin Waistcoat for Carrying Alcohol.



Even a Hat Is Used for Smuggling Alcohol.

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satisfactory. The hay should be renewed every two or three weeks. Before the pots are ready the requisite number of nests in the hay should be prepared, and when the pots are placed in these holes the hay should be packed under and around them tightly. Any kind of pots can be used, although of course earthen ones hold the heat best. The tighter the top fits the better, but if the food is to be used within six or eight hours, it is not necessary that they should be of a kind which can be hermetically closed. Ordinary tops will be found perfectly satisfactory. When the pots have been placed in the box carefully and without lifting the lids, they should be covered with a pillow and the lid at once securely closed.

When not in use, the box should always be left open and the hay loosened, the pillow being hung in the air to dry thoroughly.

The chief advantages of the hay box may be summarized as follows:

1. The cost of fuel can be reduced four-fifths, or even nine-tenths.
2. The pots are not made difficult to wash; they are

Aside from the production of cattle, by which Argentina first attracted attention, the country is known as a wheat grower, and will continue to increase in importance in this direction. The extraordinary gain made during the year 1903-4 in crop raising as against animal production was not due to any unnatural or phenomenal causes. Exports of farm products during the first six months of 1904 increased more than a third over the same period in 1903, which was considered a very good year. At the same time the exports of animal products fell off about 8 per cent. The total wheat export of Argentina up to the 1st of October, 1904, was 100,000,000 bushels, while the total for the year 1903 was only 75,000,000, and for the preceding year only 23,690,070 bushels. The wheat area is rapidly extending to the west and southwest. The acreage estimated by the Argentine Department of Agriculture for the past season was 9,275,178, and the estimated production 124,160,636 bushels. This is chiefly in the provinces of Buenos Ayres, Santa Fe, and Cordoba, with smaller amounts in Entre Rios and in the Territory of the Pampa.

A novel instrument for illustrating the magnetic properties of iron was described some time ago to the Cambridge Philosophical Society by Mr. A. H. Peake. In this instrument a strong magnetic field is produced by sixteen bar magnets; this field, which is normally horizontal, may be slightly inclined at will by rotating a turn-table, to which the permanent magnets are attached, through a few degrees. The specimen of iron under test is very thin in proportion to its length; it is supported in a freely pivoted cradle, to which a control weight and a long pointer are attached; the axis of the cradle is in the same straight line with that of the turn-table.