

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## SMUGGLING.

“May that mistaken taste be starv'd to reason,  
That does not think French fashions—English treason.  
Souse their cook's talent, and cut short their tailors;  
Wear your own lace; eat beef like Vernon's sailors.”

*Aaron Hill, 1754.*

WE have had occasional mention of this kindly looked upon offence, in the carrying out of which many a reckless seaman paid the penalty of his life in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

From 1700 downwards, though the edicts prohibiting the entry of Flanders lace were repealed, the points of France, Spain, and Venice, with other fabrics of note, were still excluded from the ports. (Coloured Plate XIV.) “England,” writes Anderson,<sup>1</sup> “brings home in a smuggling way from France much fine lace and other prohibited fopperies.” Prohibition went for nothing; foreign lace ladies would have, and if they could not smuggle it themselves, the smuggler brought it to them. It was not till 1751 that the customs appear to have used undue severity as regards the entries, prying into people's houses, and exercising a surveillance of so strict a nature as to render the chance to evade their watchfulness a very madness on the part of all degrees. In short, there was not a female within ten miles of a seaport, writes an essayist, that was in possession of a Mechlin lace cap or pinner but they examined her title to it.

Lord Chesterfield, whose opinion, that “dress is a very silly thing, but it is much more silly not to be dressed according to your station,” was more than acted up to, referring to the strictness of the customs, writes to his son in 1751, when coming over on a

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<sup>1</sup> 1764.