

Hampshire Smugglers.  
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## HAMPSHIRE SMUGGLERS

### ROMANCE AND REALITY

**THE SMUGGLERS OF CHRIST-  
CHURCH. BOURNE HEATH AND  
THE NEW FOREST. By E. RUSSELL  
OAKLEY. Hutchinson. 3s. 6d.**

Mr. Russell Oakley, in a slender volume based upon a broadcast talk on the subject of smuggling and smugglers, has devoted a good deal of his rather limited space to an effort, more courageous than convincing, to rehabilitate the somewhat battered reputation of a class of law-breaker whose romantic qualities seldom really existed outside the pages of fiction. Mr. Oakley's arguments in the "free-trader's" favour are more distinguished for their enthusiasm than their logic; for example, while he claims that the root cause of smuggling was poverty, elsewhere he mentions more than once that practically the whole of the community, rich and poor alike, were concerned in the trade. Again, he adduces, as an argument in the smuggler's favour the fact that he invariably paid for his goods in gold—ignoring the point that the greater part of his dealings were with his country's enemies, and that he was therefore adding the crime of treason to the much milder one of evading the Customs. To tell the truth, save for a spice of adventure, smugglers, in Hampshire as everywhere else, were never much more desirable citizens than their contemporaries the highwaymen.

When Mr. Oakley leaves these debatable matters for the realm of local history, however, he has much to tell that is of interest about the doings of the Hampshire smugglers, who ran their contraband cargoes to the havens and beaches along the coast between Christchurch and what is now ultra-respectable Bourne-mouth. One notes a rather surprising omission from his brief biographies of personalities in the shape of Jack Rattenbury, who—though strictly speaking he belongs more properly to Devonshire—records in his autobiography one of his early adventures of which Christchurch was the scene. On the whole the Hampshire smugglers appear to have been, if not more law-abiding, at least less desperate characters than their neighbours to east and west—which may possibly be explained by the fact that the coast hereabouts produced few but small fishing craft, not to be compared with such boats as the Deal luggers and the beach yawls of Suffolk, and that probably the smugglers' operations were as a rule on a small scale.