

MYSTERY HULK DWIGHT WIPED OUT, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Though Wreck of Rum-Runner Lies Shattered by Explosives at Bottom of Vineyard Sound, Probe Continues on Theory That Eight of Crew Died from Foul Play—Recent Investigation Into Vast Liquor Smuggling Plot Strengthens Belief That Lighter Was Scuttled After Victims, Perhaps Already Dead, Were Placed in Ocean

By ALBERT D. BARKER
A sunny, calm day in Vineyard Sound.

The low cliffs of Nashawena island and a mile or more to the northeast, Cuttyhunk island, a humpy hill, straggling off into low beach. And south across the sound, Gay Head, the tip of Martha's Vineyard, colored like a rain-washed stick of Christmas candy, guarded on its southern approach by hazy, solitary No Man's Land, guarded to the east by the hills of Chilmark and Tisbury.

In the foreground are two ships—one deep and heavy, its grim gray superstructure a mass of mysterious gear, the other a cheerful white, yellow-trimmed—intent on unusual business, just aside from the busy navigation course through the sound.

They are the U. S. mine sweeper Falcon and the U. S. revenue cutter Ossipee, war veterans both of them. The Ossipee, you note, wears two chevrons on her funnel; the Falcon, drab paint that renders her almost invisible from the Vineyard shore.

Diver Drawn Over Side of Falcon

Over the high side of the Falcon, from the suck of the tide, here running a full 100 feet deep, is drawn a human figure, which appears not unlike some monster of the sea—a diver with his bulbous helmet and leaden shoes.

The Falcon slides away from the spot to the full stretch of a long anchor cable. The Ossipee, hovering off to the westward, is given a signal. Somebody on the revenue cutter presses a button.

A breathless moment, then the water, where the diver was hauled out, wells and gushes as though there were a gigantic spring below.

Another moment or two and out pops a splash of spar, as though in a hurry to reach open air, and falls back soggy into the water, where a lifeboat that has put out from the Cuttyhunk coast guard station makes it fast and starts tugging it ashore. Then come strips of cork, the remains of life preservers, and a few cork stoppers, and many dead fish.

Then, all is cleared away by the silently flowing tide, and the last trace of the steam lighter, John Dwight, sinister, mysterious rum-smuggler, has disappeared.

TNT MINES DID IT

Six or seven fathoms down, the government diver had placed in the hull of the Dwight, already embedded in sand, four 57-pound TNT mines—one in the bow, two amidships and one in the engine room—and wired them together, tamped with the whole weight of Vineyard Sound waters, this charge, when exploded, rendered the wooden Dwight to water-logged splinters, broke and twisted her machinery and made ground-glass out of the bottles filled with contraband ale which packed her hold.

No more with fishermen, "rum pirates" and other adventurous men of coast ports peer covetously across the water to "where the John Dwight went down." Nothing remains to be salvaged, either of liquor or of money. The mines took care of the one, and there is the assurance of three deep-sea divers that the other didn't exist, at least in any strong box, closet or locker of the wreck.

It was three months ago that the John Dwight, once herself in government service, later used to salvage coal from Long Island sound wrecks, and still later in illegal ferry service between points beyond the three-mile limit and the terminals of certain equally illegal motor truck lines—three months ago that she went down quickly, inexplicably, leaving in her wake eight corpses which could be counted on to tell nothing and five survivors who have been every bit as reticent as the dead, but much harder to find.

MORE INVESTIGATION

In the investigations which have followed the sinking, early joined officials of Dukes, Bristol, Barnstable and Middlesex counties. Then stepped in Commissioner of Public Safety Foote, Atty.-Gen. Benton, Ass't. Atty.-Gen. Warner. The state police, and state prosecutors, after sending down a diver to inspect the wreck, apparently made an end. Now enters U. S. Atty. Robert O. Harris on behalf of the federal government with government vessels, whose operation costs a fifty penny, and there's more diving and investigation.

And the end is not yet, except for the Dwight herself.

Why all this fuss, all this prying and all this expenditure of public funds, over a dumb, sluggish old steam lighter and her crew—dead though they be—both of whom had apparently placed themselves outside the law and normal considerations of sympathy by the trade in which they engaged? Why all the fuss?

First, because (despite an early finding that the victims of the Dwight met death by drowning) it seems not unlikely that some or all of the eight men who met death were murdered.

Second, because the John Dwight, though big enough to carry a \$100,000 cargo of smuggled liquor, was

only a small unit of the equipment used by a bold and business-like ring of "boozers" merchants whose turnover in "importing," distributing and selling had mounted into millions.

DWIGHT ONE OF FLEET

The Dwight, it has been confidently declared, was but one of three lighters used by the rum ring, with headquarters in New York and Boston (or Cambridge) to bring ashore liquor brought from Canada or the West Indies by a vessel so large as to become known as the queen of the bootleg fleet. The rum ring also has had at its disposal other smaller but speedy craft, motor trucks and great touring cars which could be counted on to run away from the average constabulary auto as a grayhound could distance a poodle.

All this sounds like made-to-order "yellow" rackets in the average stay-at-home, law-abiding citizen's eyes, but the fishermen of Menemsha Creek, in the lee of Gay Head, or ask any of the other level-headed, practical men who take nets out of a score of other ports, big and little. They know what is going on; nothing gets by them. Particularly they know that the furtive scurrilous and sometimes brazen appearances of craft not on ordinary business in and about the sound are marks of a systematic trade in contraband. So great is this trade and so frequent are mishaps that no fisherman in the sound ever goes by a bit of floatage. He always rounds up on it, and, if it looks heavy, hauls it aboard. Sometimes it's Scotch.

MAY GET LEAD HOLD

If these officials learn what really happened on board the Dwight and who was responsible, they unquestionably will have new light on the operation of the rum ring—and have a hold on certain men, which will mean a more serious bout with the courts than anything written into the Volstead act can prescribe.

What they have learned, particularly what new information resulted from the diving investigations just before the Fourth, is not being divulged. U. S. Atty. Harris has been very reticent, but has made no secret of the fact that he headed the Falcon expedition into the sound as representative of higher federal officials; to whom his reports are submitted. There has been, however, in no guarded statement or by inference in any of the developments of the probe, any evidence that the government has abandoned a theory that there was violence in the end of the John Dwight.

But theories are as thick as minkows in Menemsha pond. What are the plain facts upon which any inquiry into the John Dwight sinking and fatalities must be based, the bed-rock facts from which can be built up many an absorbing structure of surmise? They are as follows:

BED-ROCK FACTS

Tuesday, April 3, or early the next morning, the lighter John Dwight sailed from Newport, R. I., for a destination unknown to its crew.

Its navigating captain was John F. King of Brooklyn, N. Y., its "managing captain" Malcolm John Carmichael of Jersey City, N. J.

There were known to be eight others aboard—perhaps there were 13.

Leaving his home at 124 Jefferson avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y., Capt. King told his wife and daughter that he was going to Newport to bring a ship back to Brooklyn. He has not been home since.

On the afternoon of Thursday, April 5, when King had said he would be home in Brooklyn—Capt. Walter Lovelidge, piloting the mail boat from New Bedford to Cuttyhunk, spoke the John Dwight anchored one mile north of Quick's Hole in Buzzards Bay. The Dwight had every appearance of being "hung up."

He went alongside, and yelled: "Are you in trouble? Can I help you?"

THEY HURRY BELOW

There had been several men on the deck, apparently sunning themselves. As the mail boat approached, they went below hurriedly.

At his hail, a man poked his head through a hatch and answered: "We are having a little engine trouble, but will be all right in a few minutes. Thank you."

Capt. Lovelidge took the "Thank you," as a dismissal, and went on.

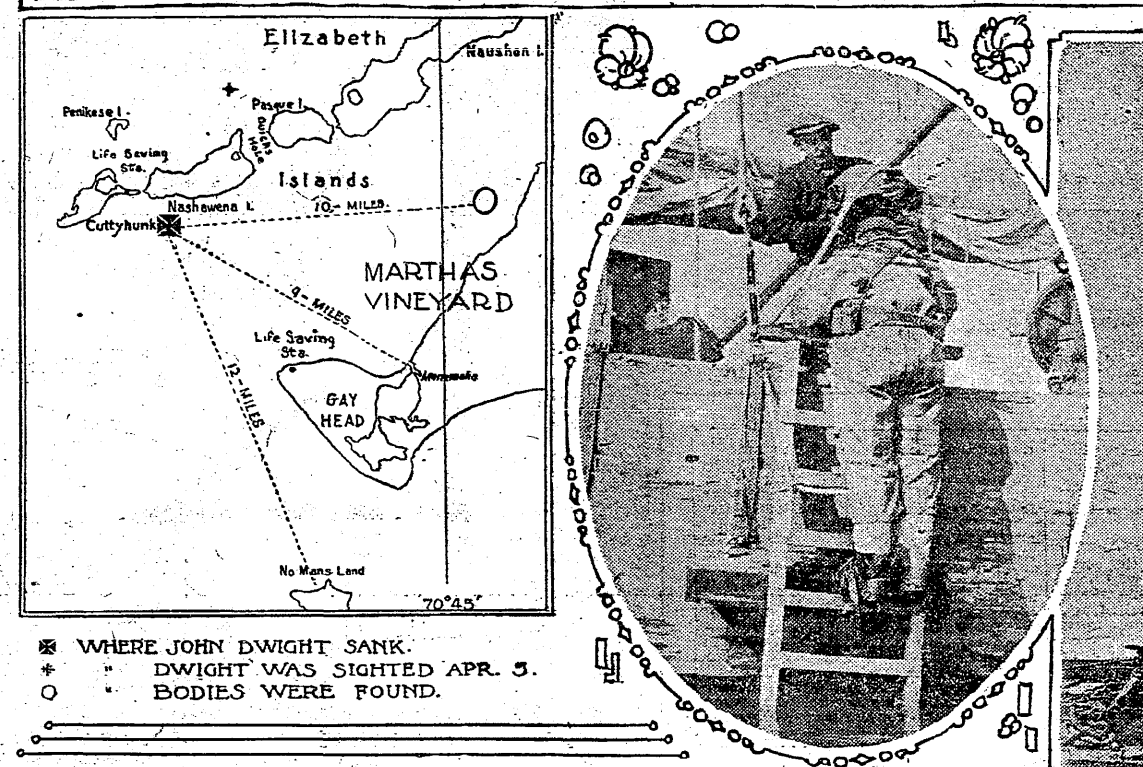
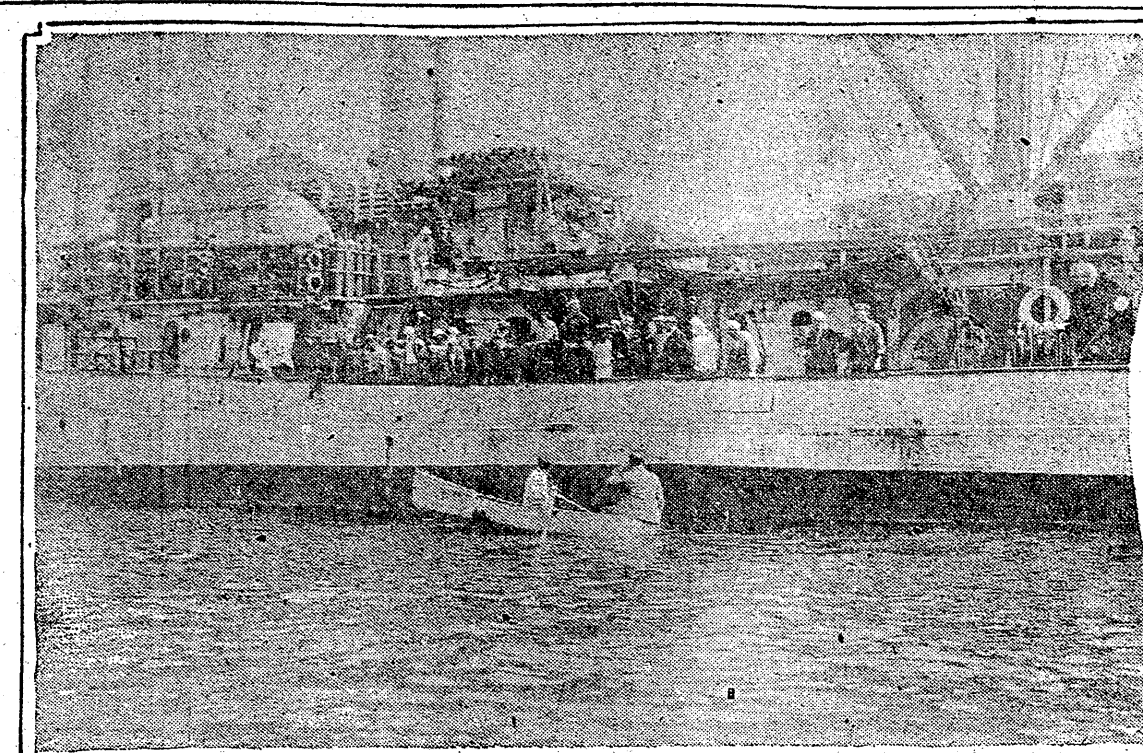
His suspicion had been aroused, however, and he remarked when he reached New Bedford that he believed the Dwight was a rum runner.

That night—Thursday, April 5—a heavy fog shut in. Though the weather was thick, and there was a swell running in Vineyard sound, there was little wind and almost no "chop." Barring the fog, conditions were not menacing to navigation.

The next morning—Friday, April 6—Daniel Vincent, over at Menemsha creek, 10 miles across the sound from Cuttyhunk and Nashawena islands, heard a gruff whistle, which he interpreted as a distress signal.

NOBODY ON DECK

At the same hour the pilot of the Merchant & Miners liner Dorchester, Boston-bound in the sound, saw a vessel with davits swinging empty, ropes loose and nobody on deck. As the vessel was apparently deserted, he did not stay, but merely reported her.



WHERE JOHN DWIGHT SANK. DWIGHT WAS SIGHTED APR. 5. BODIES WERE FOUND.

Almost at the same time, he said, a boat with five men in it—three of them rowing, two with heads just showing—was seen from the location of the Dwight (about a mile from the southern shore of Nashawena and some eight miles from Gay Head) to what he described as "the high land of Cuttyhunk"—referring to a mile from the southern shore of the island. He assumed that this was the entire crew of the rum runner, making to safety.

At 7:30 o'clock the Gay Head coast guard lookout also saw her sinking, going down fast by the stern.

NO SIGNS OF BODIES

Both crews started for the spot. The Gay Head crew, however, had engine trouble with their motor lifeboat, and with six or seven miles further to go, reached the spot quite a while after the Cuttyhunk life savers. Neither crew, however, saw any signs of life or of bodies.

Next "Martin R. Cronan," under his cutterman from Woods Hole. Cronan went to an official and confessed the body had been wrongly identified.

He said that had been done to keep the name of an aged mother and to protect another brother, Thomas Craven, who had been arraigned and held in jail in New York with seven others March 20 on charges of having been engaged in a gigantic conspiracy to smuggle millions of dollars' worth of rum across the Canadian border. (Craven and his alleged associates were indicted last month by a federal grand jury in New York.)

The same inquiry also disclosed that the dead brother not only had lived in Rutherford, but owned a \$20,000 house there.

Meanwhile, mysterious telephone messages continued on the Vineyard and between that island and the mainland.

Newspaper men are down here as thick as bees in a hive.

"We've got to get them out of here and stop this public foolery, even if you have to identify them falsely."

INTERESTING SEQUEL

This injunction, phoned from the island to "somebody higher up" on the mainland, had an interesting sequel.

All seven of the bodies that remained on the island were identified and removed within 48 hours.

That they are all in the right graves, very few who have followed the inner developments of the case fully believe.

Two weeks after the Dwight sank the state police came into the case. The trail was somewhat cold, but there was much to be looked into, even though the medical examiner had given it as his opinion that the victims met death by drowning.

The state police dug up a number of loose ends and then chartered the schooner Hermosa, L. Rogers, Capt. George Fred Titton, and put in four days

diving and dragging, aided by the Restless.

David J. Curney, diver, formerly of South Boston, entered the Dwight's cabin and pilot house, 100 feet under water, and reported them gutted, practically cleaned out. There were barrels of ale in the hold, he reported, but he went neither into the hold nor the engine room.

Early in May the state police apparently gave up the inquiry. There was, however, a conference with U. S. Atty. Robert O. Harris.

The interest of federal officials—something more than the interest aroused by the average rum-running episode in the Massachusetts district—was evinced when Harris obtained the use of the mine sweeper Falcon and personally in charge of her operations, began Monday, June 25, to locate and further inspect the wreck of the Dwight where she lay down off Mashawona.

After dragging two days, the Falcon found the hulk.

Thursday and Friday two divers thoroughly inspected the wreck, and, when their reports to United States Attorney Harris, aboard the Falcon, were completed, that official sent for the coast guard cutter Ossipee.

CHARGE IS EXPLODED

The Ossipee put down mines, with the Falcon standing off nearby, and at 1:35 in the afternoon, a week ago yesterday, the heavy charge was exploded.

As has been said, what the two navy divers (one of them, Clarence Gillian of Worcester, remained in and around the wreck 100 feet down for more than four hours and a half without emerging) discovered, groping about and peering at slimy objects never visible at more than six feet and often not visible at four inches, has not been divulged and may never be officially.

But if the subsequent trend of quiet investigation is any criterion, it may safely be asserted that the federal diving expedition once for all disposed of some of the "explanations" which have been so freely advanced regarding the cause of the Dwight's sinking.

One such "explanation" was that the Dwight had been in collision in the fog.

Another was that the Dwight struck a rock in Quick's Hole or some other passage of the Sound or Buzzards bay, and that when she sank, the eight victims were speared out in a welter of timbers, hatches and movables, causing fatal injuries or injuries which hastened their death by exposure.

It is not considered probable, however, that the government is proceeding on that theory. The most serious obstacle to be overcome in sustaining it is that the bodies were not amid the floating wreckage soon after the vessel went down, despite the fact that so severe is the stress on a vessel at the sinking point that the sea strikes with pressure generally bursts open all the hatches and forces out all objects not fastened, whether living or inert.

ENGINES CRIPPLED?

More than one amateur "investigator" has pointed out, too, that the Dwight, unless her engines were crippled, had every opportunity to run ashore, and probably would have done so, if saving life were the first object.

Despite the run-runner's natural aversion to having his cargo forced to the beach. But if the Dwight's engines were crippled, they were crippled a second time, for she must have got up steam in order to move from comparatively safe anchorage the afternoon be-

fore in Buzzards Bay through Quick's Hole, unless, bereft of anchors and seaworthiness she were merely drifting, trace of marauding vessel afloat, and repeated draggings of the sound have shown no wreck—either innocent or marauding—near the Dwight's anchorage for the only alternative—that the attacker went to the bottom, too. It might be added that this theory may have terrified some persons, but it merely brings a smile to the tanned face of the Sound fisherman.

As to the immediate cause of the sinking, therefore, it seems safe to say that only two theories are still tenable—the Dwight sprung a leak or the Dwight was scuttled.

SETTLED INTO SAND

It is no secret that the Dwight, in her three months in Davy Jones's locker, had settled into the sand, leaving her only about six feet of "freeboard."

It is also no secret that her hold was so crammed with wet goods that a diver could not inspect the inside of her skin.

Therefore, if the sand hid splintered planking, down near the keel, or the sea cocks were opened, this could be definitely learned only by raising the hulk—which, it now appears, would have been an all-summer job.

That, in spite of the size of the investigation now going on in several states, the government officials did not consider this task worth while, apparently leads to a supposition that they are pretty well satisfied as to the probable cause of sinking.

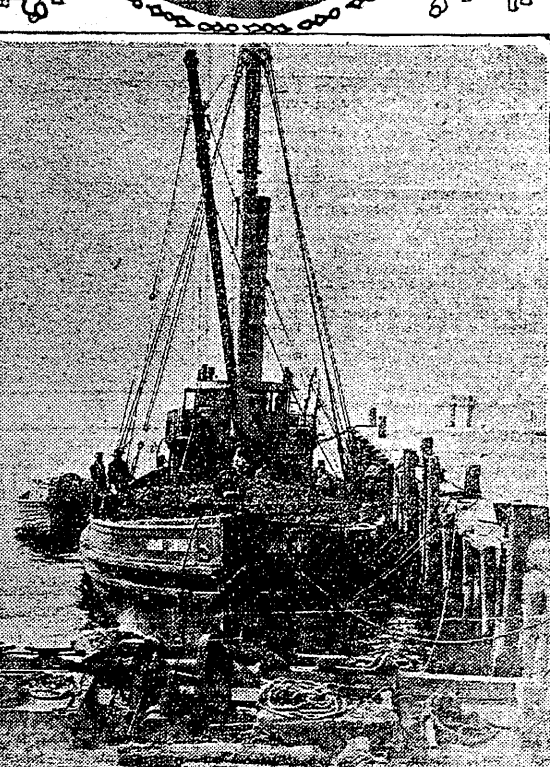
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ABOVE, LEFT—CREW AND OFFICERS OF THE UNITED STATES MINE SWEEPER FALCON LINING THE RAIL. U. S. ATTY. HARRIS IN THEIR MIDST. AFTER THE DWIGHT WAS BLOWN UP. RIGHT—FORMER JUDGE ROBERT O. HARRIS, CONDUCTING INVESTIGATION AS UNITED STATES ATTORNEY. BELOW, LEFT—MAP OF LOWER VINEYARD SOUND, SCENE OF THE DWIGHT MYSTERY. CENTRE—DIVER CURNEY MAKING READY TO GO DOWN TO THE DWIGHT. RIGHT—THE JOHN DWIGHT AT DOCK, AS SHE APPEARED IN HER RESPECTABLE DAYS

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Their lack of confidence in this explanation has resulted from stories, apparently well authenticated, that the bodies were found in the small boat, which, though not extensive on the surface, may have indicated violence; and, particularly in the case of the young King, dead in the small boat, there was much blood. Regarding another victim, it is confidently stated that he was scuttled before he entered the water at all.

All this, if true, were any way checking up at this late date, would indicate a fight among those aboard the Dwight or aboard the Falcon, and a smaller satellite craft. Particularly would this be true if it were provable at this time that there were signs, as has been assumed, that the bodies lay buried in shore sand before they entered the water at all.

SATELLITE CRAFT

The Satellite craft—that's another angle about which much has been made on the wharves and in the fishermen's cottages of the sound.

It seems well established that a 30-foot launch left Newport with the Dwight. The launch was not sighted in the sound, nor reported from any quarter at the time the Dwight was "blowing round the bay." For an hour following the sinking a craft of similar description showed up at the report on lonely No Man's Land, with three men aboard. They talked with Caretaker Larsen, and hired a motorboat to take two of the men to Vineyard Haven, whence they went to Edgartown, where they explained to get repair part for the motor of the launch.

This launch, if it had a part in the mysterious end of the Dwight, could be made to explain much that seems hazy. It could have supplied the apparent additions to the crew of the larger craft. It could have supplied transportation for the bodies and "planted" them wherever desired.

Moreover, it could have picked up and taken to safety the bodies, as they were from the John Dwight.

RUMORED SEEN IN CUBA

It could have landed in New Bedford or at some other mainland point. Capt. King and Carmichael, who then could easily, before the hue and cry arose, have made their way toward Cuba, where they have been rumored seen and recognized in Cuba.

King and Carmichael, with either one or three other men (and their boat) to show that two of the men (King and the lifeboat) from the Dorchester weren't dead), were, presumably, the men seen making their way toward Cuba, when the Dwight was sinking. Since then there has been no definite trace of them. When the lifeboat was found on a neighboring island it contained the two men named from the pilot house of the Dwight—further evidence that the Dwight was scuttled with the hope it would be another addition to the list of "missing" ships.

Those who escaped, then, either spent some time on Cuttyhunk or isolated Ponkeese, and then made their way to the sound and the waters about it were scoured in the next few hours by fishermen on the lookout for anything of unusual nature, or were immediately taken away by the auxiliary.

Though wide areas of the Elizabeth islands are unexplored, making ideal spots for catching liquor and carrying other illicit traffic under cover of darkness, it is, in day time with fishing and other occupations, and with keen-eyed pilots, quite another matter. It is hardly a huckleberry bush for a man to hide under," as one fisherman remarked.

INEVITABLE QUESTION

In view of the lively interest the men, women and children of the Elizabeth and Vineyard islands always show in any craft or stranger, and the fact that none was reported during the rest of the day, April 6, it does not seem unlikely that the launch, in the slow-moving fog, picked up the survivors and landed them, returning later by dark—if this had not already been done—to deposit the bodies in the sound.

But why the bodies? Is an inevitable question. Investigators are said to be going on the theory that the Dwight was an ordinary well-behaved craft, with rigid discipline. They are not unmindful that some of the Dwight's crew may have sampled the strong liquor which was in stock in trade, or even stronger liquor obtained from the "mother ship." There are no signs of "mutiny" possibilities on this basis.

But there are other possibilities as well. "Cronan," as alleged representative of his brother, is said to have \$25,000 of him between \$90,000 and \$100,000—whether this was actually so or not is not known, but it is known that he must be admitted to the "game" which would appeal to those who were but cogs in a big rum-running machine.

BIG "SPLIT" NECESSARY

"Cronan" might well have been put out of the way, but there would be difficulty in explaining how the bodies, the rest of the Dwight crew (perhaps "gang" would be better) and the "high-ups" on shore. There would all have to be a big "split" but not a "big split" in the usual sense.

Given a crew which could be drugged stupid with liquor right out of the cargo and the ordinarily difficult feat of getting away with eight men is much simplified. It is not considered possible that the men in this condition, perhaps with the addition of a judicious amount of chloroform, were thrown into the water or temporarily buried under the craft soon after scuttled and abandoned. Weather conditions for such a feat are already a big question.

In any event, it left the conspirators, if conspirators they were—in a plausible position. "The Dwight sank, and most of the men drowned." Meanwhile, off they go with the rum-runner's sinews of war.

Here, too, however, is a puzzling point. If Capt. King was one of the "high-ups" and if he was one of the men who met death in the small boat, was not a survivor also? It could be explained, for he was the only one who was not killed, but only on the basis of panic or a free-for-all fight.

PLOTS FOR FICTION WRITERS

Yet perhaps it is useless to theorize on the mysterious end of the John Dwight. The already a big question, they provide nothing else, probably will provide scores of plots for fiction writers.

But already they have brought about a vigorously renewed search of hidden places on sea and land for evidence against the "ring of rich and powerful big game." They already have, on occasion, a raid on one alleged bootleg headquarters in Inman square, Cambridge, and seriously curtailed the activities of the "ring of rich and powerful big game." They already have, on occasion, a raid on one alleged bootleg headquarters in Inman square, Cambridge, and seriously curtailed the activities of the "ring of rich and powerful big game."

What will it bring about next? The possibilities are infinite, not only with the immediate John Dwight "incident" but with the whole rum, lawless, money-grasping welter of bootlegery of which the Dwight was a part.

The Dwight is gone, but we've not heard the last of her.