Before us lies what in outward and visible form is a genuine blue book, and which is really the report of a committee, but which nevertheless has not been published by any warrant or authority of Parliament. It is neither more nor less than the document to which we alluded the other day, respecting the issue of spirits to the Royal navy. At the beginning of the present year, a committee of naval officers, presided over by the Admiral of the Fleet, were requested by the Whitehall Board to make inquiries into the actual working of the present system, and to communicate their conclusions. This commission was accepted, and has been discharged. The leading recommendations of the report have already appeared in our columns, but the subject is one of more than usual interest, and our readers may, perhaps, like to learn something more respecting the 100,000 gallons of "Navy Rum," the contract for which is annually announced to have been taken by the eminent and appropriate firm of Messrs. Lemon and Hart.
Whether from accident, or from consideration towards our West Indian colonies, or from any circumstances not preserved by tradition, rum has been for generations considered an indispensable part of an Englishman's maintenance, whether afloat or ashore. The first thing learnt by a soldier or seaman was to drink rum. He was enlisted upon rum, worked upon rum, rewarded by rum, and punished by a stoppage of rum. One of our best army surgeons states in his "Reminiscences" that when he first joined his corps in the West Indies he found the troops preparing for a forced march in the hottest season of the year, and the preparation for this exercise consisted in the service to each man of half a pint of raw spirits, the effects of which judicious provision were witnessed in the loss of about 10 per cent. of the force upon the road. In the navy the practice was the same. What was the original estimate of the capacities in this respect of the British sailor we are unable to say. Our information goes no higher than the degenerate days of peace, and we can only state that in 1824 half a pint was the measure of spirits which was issued for the daily comfort of each seaman. This allowance was then, upon inquiry instituted, diminished by one-half, but the effect of the regulation was frustrated by a singular accident. Two years later the imperial measure was brought into use, and the substitution of this new standard for the old wine measure previously in use, and which had been referred to in the abovementioned calculations, again raised the daily allowance of spirits beyond all control.
to something like its former quantity. This, therefore, is the present standard—viz., one gill, or a quarter of a pint, per man, imperial measure, which, when mixed with three equal parts of water, and a little lime or lemon juice, becomes grog. The method of serving it out is from a large tub, in quantities sufficient for a mess—that is to say, for 12, 15, 20 men, or more, according as the messes in the ships are large or small. One of the mess comes to the tub for the entire allowance of himself and his companions, which he carries off in a vessel called “the monkey.” There are two deliveries a day—one at noon, for dinner; and the other in the evening. In what way these regulations operate upon the sobriety and discipline of a ship’s company will very soon be seen.

The allowance of grog is said to be rather too much, except for well-seasoned heads, even if fairly consumed; but the system seldom has so reasonable a trial. At dinner time, the practice is tolerably unobjectionable. Each man drinks his portion with his rations, and there was a common concurrence of evidence to the effect that drunkenness at this period of the day, and from this service of grog, was very rare. But the plans of the evening are altogether different. The “monkey” is carried off in due form, but its contents, instead of being distributed among the members of the mess, become the property of a single man. The cook of the mess, or the officer with whom the mess is connected, disposes of it as he will.
mess, as the phrase goes, "takes the monkey"—that is to say, he disposes, at his own discretion, of the grog of 15 or 20 men. In some cases he drinks the whole himself, but usually he summons a "chum" to partake of his prize. The men take the cook’s place for so many days together, turn about; so that in point of fact each man in the mess sacrifices his grog for nine evenings out of ten, in order to get ten times his allowance on the fortunate night when his own turn comes round. Nor is this quite all, for even at dinner the cook gets a little consideration. The measure in which the allowances are served out from the "monkey" is usually made somewhat less capacious than it should be, by inserting a piece of leather at the bottom, or some similar expedient, and the "plush," or surplus, thus realized, being about one extra allowance, is likewise the perquisite of the cook. Bearing in mind that half a gill, or one-eighth of a pint, is the measure at each service, and that this is mixed with three times its quantity of water, the reader will discover that the worthy officer intrusted with the mess cuisine for the week gets at dinner time one pint, and at supper time, say, three quarts of remarkably sound rum and water. If the mess consists of 20 men, the evening "monkey" would contain ten pints of grog, over the whole of which the cook is lord absolute, and it is seldom that he invites more than one friend to share his festivity. A witness deposed to his having himself seen the allowance of 24 men consumed at a sitting by one of these happy pairs. No wonder that "the cooks" are generally the worst example of drunken-ness."
In considering the question of a reduction, it will not have escaped the notice of the reader that the inquiry is, in fact, conclusively satisfied by statements like these. If nine out of every ten seamen do actually subsist for nine days out of ten upon something less than half a pint of grog, it is clear that they can do so permanently, unless the excess of the tenth day be admitted to contribute to their bodily health and well doing—an argument which will hardly be urged. Various expedients have been tried to check the practices referred to. Sometimes the men have been required to drink their grog at the tub’s side—a system, for obvious reasons, extremely unpopular. Sometimes they have been induced to commute the allowance for a money payment, but the “savings price”—that is, the actual value saved to Government by the relinquishment of a single measure of spirits—is so small that it answers the man’s purpose better, if he be thirstily inclined, to dispose of his allowance below deck, which results in the very evils complain-
ed of. The step, therefore, which has been now recommended by the committee is a reduction of one-half in the quantity of grog served out—that is to say, an allowance of half a gill of spirits, or half a pint of grog, per diem instead of double that quantity. This is to be issued at a single serving, viz., at dinner, so that the evening grog will be entirely discontinued. This single service was, in fact, put in practice, and with the very best effects, at the reduction of 1824, but the substitution of the imperial measure in 1826 rendered the allowance too large for a single distribution, and the evening grog was again resorted to. In lieu of the allowance to be thus withdrawn a very liberal compensation is proposed. The "savings price" is not to be taken as the basis of the calculation, but 3s. 6d. per calendar month is to be added to the pay of all warrant officers, working petty officers, able and ordinary seamen, and non-commissioned officers.
sioned officers and privates of the marines. The expense of this money-compensation will be about 55,000l., whereas the contract value of the spirits saved will be only about 10,000l., but the committee justly consider that the country will readily provide the difference “in the attainment of the great objects this plan has in view—namely, the efficiency of the fleet, the diminution of crime and its consequences, and the comfort and happiness of all on board.” Such is the leading proposal of the committee’s report. Their other recommendations have been already laid before the reader, and we can only trust that a measure so liberally devised as regards individuals, and so well calculated to improve the character of the British navy, may be found in practice as effective and as beneficial as its authors intend.