

The 'Prentices' Mutiny.

BY WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON,

Author of "The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig,'" etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ARCH WEBB.

Mr. Hodgson is well known as a writer of fiction, but in this remarkable story he has drawn his material from actual facts that occurred within his own experience. It is the history of what is perhaps the most amazing mutiny that ever happened—the revolt of eight mercantile marine apprentices against brutal officers. Every imaginable device was used to subdue them, even to firing a cannon against their stronghold; but they won out triumphantly in the end. For obvious reasons, seeing that many of the participants in this extraordinary affair are still serving in various capacities afloat, Mr. Hodgson has carefully disguised the identity of the ship and all concerned.

I.



IN giving the following account of an actual and distinctly unusual happening, I have discovered, somewhat to my disgust, how awkward crude facts are to recount with plausibility. In fiction one realizes that mere statements are not sufficient; the invented fact must always have a road of plausible lies to aid its journey into the reader's belief. Here, dealing with the bald, naked truth, I am permitted to make no preparatory road of plausible inventions. I am allowed only to present to you the things that actually happened—in short, the truth.

I have also endeavoured to present, along with the narrative of what occurred, a slight though constant picture of the emotions and feelings of the actors in the scenes I have set out.

Finally, I wish the reader to understand definitely that, for the sake of many who are yet living, in different parts of this little world of ours, the names of the personalities mentioned herein have been altered, and certain other precautions taken to safeguard them from any results which might follow upon the publication of this severely unvarnished account of their several actions in the affair of this quite unique mutiny.

The following is, as far as possible, an exact account of the mutiny of the eight 'prentices of the full-rigged ship *Lady Morgan*—a thoroughly serious affair that occurred on the voyage home round Cape Horn.

On the voyage out from England the *Lady Morgan* carried only two apprentices, youngsters of fifteen and sixteen, who endured a very great deal of rough treatment, notably at the hands of William Beeston, the master; Jan Henriksen, the second mate; and Carl Schieffs, the bo'sun.

The indignities and sufferings that these two boys endured go to prove that the harsh treatment of young lads at sea is not so much a matter of the past as one could wish.

The mate, Robert Jenkins, though stern and brusque, treated the two youths with ordinary fairness, and as a result they had very warm feelings for him. His attitude to them was no better and no worse than that of most officers in well-disciplined vessels; but, standing alone for fairness, amid so much petty and brutal treatment, his conduct appears more humane, by the mere force of the contrast, than was probably the case.

The boys' names were Harold Jones and Mercer Kinniks, and among some of their punishments and inflictions I may mention the following: Having to pace the lee side of the poop with a heavy capstan-bar in each hand during the whole of their night watch; having to stay on deck during the afternoon watch below, though the men were allowed to go below as usual; having to go aloft at night and sit on the main-royal yardarm for the whole four hours of the watch; being constantly kept on deck at nights, when it was properly their watch below; being both kicked and rope-ended on a number of occasions; and having many times a bucket of sea-water hove over them, fully dressed as they were, so that often they had no dry clothes to wear.

This kind of thing was common all the way out to 'Frisco, where, as good fortune would have it, Captain Beeston was cabled to by his company to take aboard six apprentices from another of their vessels. This ship had just been sold to a Dutch timber-carrying firm, and the 'prentices out of her were transferred to the *Lady Morgan* so that they might work their passage home in her in the ordinary way.

Now the six new lads were all of them, excepting the youngest, second and third voyagers—powerful, hefty youths, determined not to knuckle down to the kind of treatment which Jones and Kinniks told them they had received.

It may be that, being indignant at what they heard from the two other 'prentices, and anxious to show that they would not be "hazed" likewise, they really displayed what may have appeared to the officers an attitude of almost wanton insubordination, and so actually invited the rough handling they were determined to resist.

That they endured a harder time than ever they had expected is undoubtedly true; for both the master and the second mate were big men, and could use their hands more than a bit, as the saying goes. So that on those occasions when some one of the new 'prentices made an attempt to stand up for himself the results were neither pleasant to the youth nor to those who had to look on.

In justice to the first mate, it must be stated that this kind of thing occurred, in the natural course of the ship's routine, largely in his watch below, during the second's charge of the deck; so that he saw only a part of the rough usage the lads endured. Moreover, when the master ill-treated the 'prentices during the first mate's watch on deck the mate's unspoken disapproval produced a certain amount of restraint on his actions, with the result that he seldom saw the brutal extremes to which things were being carried; for the bo'sun (an animal of a man) soon discovered that the first mate had no especial taste for "hazing," and therefore took care to satisfy his appetite for brutality chiefly in the second mate's watch.

The name of the senior apprentice was Wyckliffe, but he was always called "Jumbo" in the berth, on account of his size, and because of his big, slow, good-humoured way of going about things. He was really an exceptionally powerful young man of nineteen, and had so far escaped any personal experience of rough usage, as had also Bullard, the next oldest lad—a strong and well-made youth.

These two, after a consultation, called a meeting of all the 'prentices in the "Glory Hole" ('prentices' berth) one second dog-watch, and told them that they had decided to stand by the next lad who was badly treated, and that they had all better swear to stand by each other every time anyone was knocked about. "Jumbo" made it plain that he was not proposing they should stand out at any minor act of bullying, such as docking them of their watch below, but only in actual cases of any of them being hit or kicked—a thing that was now becoming of daily occurrence.

As a result of this decision and compact, there was in the morning watch of the very next day a tremendous fight up on the poop between the captain, second mate, and bo'sun on the one side and seven of the 'prentices on the other.

It happened through the second mate catching hold of young Kinniks by the ear and repeatedly kicking him, with his heavy sea-boot, from one end of the poop to the other. Kinniks remembered the compact and shouted for help. Instantly, almost, two of the 'prentices in his watch came flying up on to the poop, having first shouted a warning of what was going on to the four of the watch below, who were just about to turn in. These also followed, just as they were, in their pyjamas, the sleepy "Jumbo" being the first of the lot. Before the second mate well knew what had occurred, Kinniks was pulled from him, and he had to face young "Jumbo" instead.

"We protest, sir," he said, "against this kind of treatment, which is both illegal and brutal."

The second mate almost gasped; then, without a word, he hit the apprentice with all his might, breaking his front teeth and sending him stunned to the deck. He next turned on the others, cursing, and shouting meanwhile for the master, Be-ston, and Schieffs, the bo'sun. The lads all fought doggedly, and Henricksen would have been badly mauled had not Captain Beeston and the bo'sun come quickly to his aid. The bo'un was serving some foot-ropes at the time, and he came running up on to the poop, carrying his heavy teak serving mallet. With this he nearly killed two of the younger boys, named respectively Darkins and Peters, and within a minute the whole seven of the boys were either knocked senseless or being unmercifully kicked by the three men into abject submission.

I had better state here that the opinions of the men (*i.e.*, the A.B.'s for'ard in the fo'c'sle) upon the treatment accorded the 'prentices was divided, some holding that it did boys good to be "handled" a bit, others that it was a shame and ought to be stopped; others, again, thought that the 'prentices were "uppish," and got no more than they deserved.

This, I think, gives very fairly the attitudes of the men, and the reason why there was no attempt to interfere between the after-guard and the lads.

Meanwhile, up on the poop Captain Beeston was shouting to the steward to bring up the irons. When these were brought, "Jumbo," Bullard, and Connaught, the three biggest 'prentices, were trussed up, after which the second mate and the bo'sun carried them down into the pantry and fairly tumbled them into the lazarette. In this way the three most formidable lads were



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disposed of. Of the others, the two who had been hit by the bo'sun's serving mallet were put into their bunks to recover, whilst Kinniks and Jones, the two young *Lady Morgan* apprentices, were sent aloft to grease down.

I have said that the three most formidable 'prentices were down in the lazarette securely in irons; but in this I am hardly correct, for the

most formidable lad of the lot, as events proved, was at that moment down in the fore-peak (away up in the bows of the ship) routing out paint-drums, and sublimely unconscious of what had just happened to his berth-mates.

When he came on deck, however, he very speedily learned.

"Your mates 'ave bin gettin' what-for, my son!" one of the men informed him, grinning.

"Yes," said another; "and from what I saw I shouldn't be surprised to hear that them two young 'uns won't get better. There'll be the deuce to pay then, an' serve them three big brutes

right. It'll mean hangin'; that's what it'll mean!"

Larry Edwards (generally called "Tommy Dodd") waited for nothing more, but raced aft, where he found things quite as bad as the men had pictured to him. Darkins and Peters still lay senseless in their bunks, breathing with queer little gasps. He ran in through the saloon doorway, under the break of the poop, for the steward, and found him in his pantry.

"Steward," he said, "have you been to Darkins and Peters? Those brutes have laid them out while I was down the fore-peak, and they look awful bad."

"Hush!" whispered the steward, holding up his hand. "The 'Old Man's' sittin' in the saloon, an' I darsent come yet. I was goin' to have a look at 'em just now, but he saw me, an' told me to let 'em lie, or he'd put me the same way. He's just rampin', the drunken old brute. But I'll come the minute he goes into his cabin to lie down."

"Steward," said Tommy, very earnestly, "Darkins and Peters are going to die, I believe, unless something's done. You've got to come, or there'll be a murder trial when we get home, and you'll show up pretty bad."

This frightened the steward, and, after much hesitation, he slipped out of his pantry, along the alley-way, out through the doorway under the poop, and there waited until he heard the second mate's footsteps going aft in his continual pacing of the poop overhead; then he literally darted for'ard, round the mizzen hatch, and into the small steel after-deck-house, where the 'prentices lived.

"Shut the door," he whispered to Edwards, "or they'll see us." When this was done he drew aside the curtains of the boys' bunks and looked at the damaged youngsters.

"My word! My word!" he said, drawing in his breath. "They'll die, sure enough. I can't do nothin' for 'em. It's the bo'sun did this. I wouldn't be him for the Mint!"

All the time that he talked he was examining first one boy's head and then the other.

"They've sure had a terrible bashing," he muttered. "I'll watch my chance and bring some stuff along to bathe 'em, an' bind 'em up. If I'm caught, sonny, I shall be massacred." Yet he managed it, and finally tried to force a little brandy down the boys' throats; but the stuff dribbled helplessly away out of the corners of their mouths, and brought a bubbling sound into their breathing that frightened the old steward so that he stopped, declaring that he had done all he could, and dared try no experiments.

"Just leave 'em be is all we can do now," he

said. "If they dies, they dies—an' blow me if it won't serve the bo'sun right!" With that brief sentiment he left them, after having given Larry a brief outline of how the trouble had originated.

It was Edwards's and Kinniks's watch on deck that night. Darkins and Peters still lay unconscious in their bunks, breathing in the same strange, unnatural fashion that Larry had noticed when he first saw them after the fight. Harold Jones, whose watch below it was, sat wearily on a chest, not even trying to undress and turn in. From time to time he whispered to "Tommy Dodd," who had crept quietly into the berth to see how the two in the bunks were getting on.

For a little while they sat and talked, until suddenly the for'ard door of the house was opened a little and Kinniks pushed his head cautiously into the berth. He was the time-keeper for the first two hours of that watch, and had just stolen down off the poop for a moment.

"S—sh!" he whispered, with a gesture of nervous excitement. "They're going to have old 'Jumbo' and Bullard and Connaught up out of the lazarette at seven bells. And they're goin' to tie them up by their thumbs in the mizzen rigging, before the first mate is called, and hammer them till they're sick. I heard the 'Old Man' and the second talking about it on the weather side of the chart-house."

It was then, and at that exact moment, that young Larry Edwards had his inspiration of the plan (the first part of which he actually carried out almost unaided) by which he managed literally to show Captain Beeston that he had met his Waterloo.

He took command from that moment; told Kinniks to get back on to the poop at once, and not to worry whatever he might see. "You'll have to keep my time as well as yours," he told him; and therewith hurried him off. Then he turned to the still-dressed Harold Jones. "Don't ask questions," he said; "but go and get the fresh-water pump shipped, as quiet as you can. If you make a sound they'll hear you, and you'll just get murdered."

As soon as Jones had gone on this errand Edwards turned the lamp a little lower and went out through the for'ard steel door of the little house. He returned in a couple of minutes with one of the boat's empty water-breakers, which he proceeded to wash out. By the time that he had done Jones came in quietly to say that the pump was shipped.

"Right!" said the younger boy. "Now fill this breaker and the berth water-barrel as quick as ever you can; but go slow with the pump, or they'll hear it."

He next went aft himself, as quietly as a shadow, and stole the keys of the lamp-room out of the second mate's room. With these he unlocked the paint-locker and oil-room, away for'ard, and stepped inside. Taking the key out, he closed the door after him, but, as fate would have it, did not snick it properly. As it fell out, whilst he was routing round in the dark for what he wanted, the bo'sun happened to walk for'ard on that side of the main deck, and the door, swinging open with the roll of the ship, caught him a blow on the elbow that set him dancing.

"Curse the door!" he said, and slammed it savagely, without ever thinking to look inside. I suppose he imagined merely that the second mate had forgotten to lock it that evening. A minute or so later it was opened ever so cautiously and Larr's head came out to take a survey. Finally the whole of that astute youth emerged, and lifted out on to the deck a five-gallon drum of paraffin. He locked the door, and then swiftly and with infinite care carried his spoil aft to the 'prentices' berth.

He did not bother to return the keys; but, having seen that Harold Jones was managing all right with the water, slipped out of the berth again and away in through the saloon doorway. Here, after listening awhile, he made his way aft to the steward's room and listened to his snoring; then to the room of Mr. Jenkins, the first mate, and made sure that he was asleep. Finally, after standing a moment at the foot of the companion-way, listening, he did the thing he was planning—walked right into the privacy of the captain's own cabin, opened his desk, and took out the keys of the irons. There was a revolver there, which he grabbed up, but failed, in his hurry, to find the cartridges—perhaps a providential failure. There were two Winchester rifles locked in a rack, and these he quickly put out of action by bashing the hammers, which he did with two sharp steady blows from one of the emergency axes, which lay in their rack below the rifles.

The blows had not made much sound, but he was acutely anxious to make sure no one had heard, and so ran again, first to the mate's door, and then to the steward's; but both appeared to be sleeping quietly, whilst overhead, to wind'ard, he could hear the steady pacing of the master and the second mate; and so he knew that, for the present at any rate, he was safe.

And now came the most desperate part of his scheme. He ran lightly (he was bare-footed, remember) again to the foot of the companion-way, listened a moment, and then stole into the pantry. Here he lifted the hatch that led down into the lazarette and felt for the ladder with his

feet; then down he went, lowering the hatch cautiously back into place over his head.

He felt his way down the ladder, reached the deck of the lazarette, and whispered: "Jumbo! Jumbo!"

"Halloa! Who's there?" said Bullard's voice.

"'S—sh!" whispered Edwards. "It's me—Larry. I've got the keys. We'll beat them yet!"

He struck a light, and a murmur of muttered exclamations of excitement came from out of the darkness. He walked over towards the sounds, striking another match, and so found his three fellow-'prentices, all ironed brutally. Their hands were handcuffed and their feet lashed together; then they had been doubled forward until their elbows were below their knees, and broomsticks had been thrust in over the elbows and under the knees and lashed securely, thus forcing them to remain always in that one constrained position.

"Larry, you're a little brick!" said "Jumbo," and Bullard added another word of praise; Connaught, the third one in irons, said nothing. He just lay silent, partly on his side, where he had fallen. He had been so roughly used that all the spirit seemed to have been knocked out of him.

Edwards drew his sheath-knife and, by the light of several matches, managed to cut "Jumbo's" lashings; he was then able to get at the irons to unlock them. Whilst he worked he told them that Kinniks had overheard that they were going to be brought on deck at seven bells (near midnight—eleven-thirty, to be exact) and tied up by their thumbs in the mizzen rigging and thrashed.

"I'll do murder first," said "Jumbo," quietly. Then he caught young Larry in the dark and hugged him savagely. "I'll never forget, kid, while I live. Come on with the others."

Between them they cut out the other two, and in less than another couple of minutes had their irons off. They shook Connaught and rubbed his hands and knees and elbows until he began to take some notice of them; then they went for the ladder. Edwards felt his way up first, lifted the hatch ever so slightly, and peeped out. He lifted it higher and listened; there was not a sound, save the creak of the woodwork and the steady footsteps of the captain and second mate overhead on deck.

"Come on," he whispered, and lifted the hatch fully. "Jumbo" came first; then Connaught, helped and urged by Bullard from below. "Jumbo" stooped, caught him under the arms, and hove him up bodily. Bullard followed, and Edwards lowered the hatch noise-

lessly into place. They next went quietly out of the pantry into the alley-way, the two bigger lads supporting Connaught. Tommy ran on noiselessly ahead, coming back to report that all was clear. They came out under the break of the poop, waited until the sound of the captain's and second mate's footsteps had gone aft along the poop-deck; then they made a run, half-carrying Connaught, and so got into the berth through the after door.

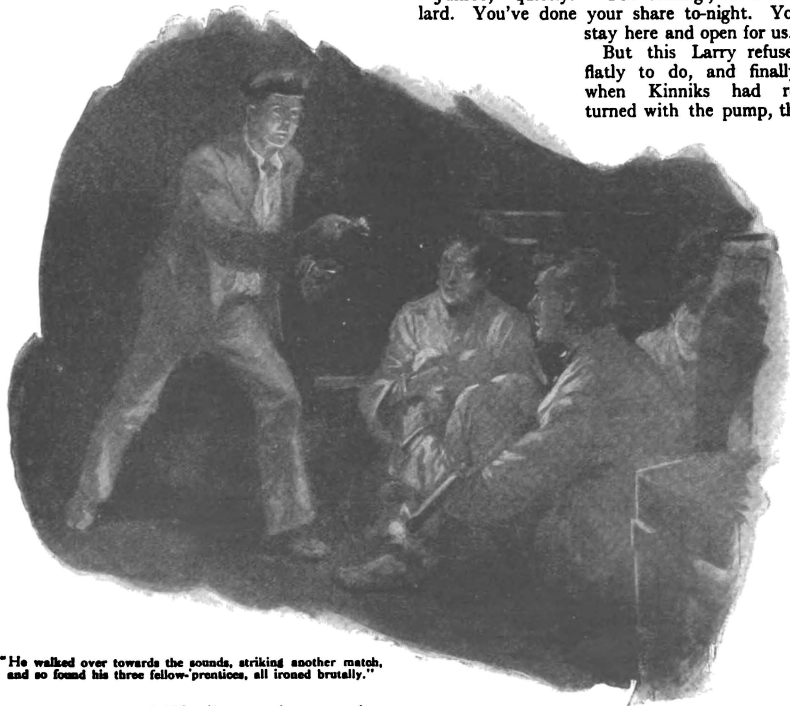
They shut the door and bolted it. The for'ard

Edwards bolted the door. Then he rummaged in his chest and produced two of his pillow-cases.

"I'm going down into the lazarette for some tins of corned beef and some ship's bread," he announced. "Then we'll have to get some lime-juice, and we'll want some sugar. We've got to have enough grub to enable us to hang on in here until the 'Old Man' makes terms and agrees to treat us with ordinary decency, and not like a lot of dogs."

"You're not going alone, my son," said "Jumbo," quietly. "I'm coming; so's Bullard. You've done your share to-night. You stay here and open for us."

But this Larry refused flatly to do, and finally, when Kinniks had returned with the pump, the



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one was open, and Kinniks was just entering with the last bucketful of water for the breaker.

"Good for you, Larry!" said "Jumbo." "You seem to have enough for a siege."

"Yes," said Larry; "I've brought in five gallons of lamp-oil, too, for our stove and the berth lamp. Unship the fresh-water pump, Kinniks, and bring it into the berth; that'll give them beans. We'll bolt the door after you; scratch three times when you're back again."

Kinniks went out into the darkness and

three of them, each with a couple of pillow-cases, stole out of the berth. They waited until the captain and the mate had turned to go aft in their constant pacing, then bolted in under the break of the poop and ran silently down the alley-way to the pantry. Here Tommy listened, first at the steward's door and afterwards at the mate's, and, finding them fast asleep, signed to the others to open the hatch.

Tommy went last, and lowered the hatch

silently into place above his head ; then groped down the ladder after the two big lads.

"We'll have to be quick," he whispered, as "Jumbo" struck a match. "It's twenty past eleven ; they'll be down here in ten minutes—perhaps before."

They rummaged round with all speed, striking matches constantly, and it was a mercy that they did not set the ship on fire. At the end of three or four minutes "Jumbo" had secured six full-sized tins of corned beef and a pillow-slip full of hard biscuit. He took off his knife-belt and strapped the tins together, and so was ready. Meanwhile, Tommy had filled one of his slips with ship's biscuit and the other with sugar, a tin of Kiel salt butter, and several handfuls of loose tea, scooped up bodily out of an opened tea-chest. Bullard had filled his slips with biscuit and an assortment consisting of a tin of molasses, a bottle of lime-juice, and a second tin of salt butter.

With this bulky collection they fumbled their way up the ladder and pushed up the hatch a little way to listen. Tommy was first ; and as he paused there at the top of the ladder, clear and sharp up in the night came seven bells.

"Goodness !" whispered Tommy, heaving up the hatch. "The bell's gone. We must just scoot. My gracious, they're coming !"

As he said the last word Bullard and "Jumbo" stood beside him, and he lowered the trap into place swiftly but silently. Then all three of them ran quietly, barefooted as they were, up the alley-way, just as they heard the captain's foot on the bottom step of the companion-way. Another fraction of a second and they would have been caught. They heard the master call up to the second mate to send aft a couple of the hands, and to call the bo'sun and tell him to bring aft a couple of fathoms of ratlin-line—a thinnish tarred rope, from a third to half an inch in circumference.

The three lads vanished out on deck and reached the berth, where they scratched on the door for Kinniks to open to them.

"That was for you !" whispered Edwards, as they entered. "Those brutes would have just cut you to pieces with that ratlin-line !"

"Stop," said Tommy, as Bullard made to bolt the door again. "There's Jones going for'ard for the bo'sun. We must get him in ! I've a notion," he added, quaintly, "that Mr. Bo'sun won't be needed after all."

He put his head out of the doorway.

"Jones !" he called, quietly. "Jones !" But Harold Jones needed no calling, for he was already at the door, trembling with excitement.

"Larry," he said, "those brutes are going to

do it *now* ; they've sent me for the bo'sun, and he's to bring some ratlin-line. They're——"

"Come inside," interrupted Edwards, catching him by the shoulder. "They're just going to do nothing at all. Come in !" And he hauled him in over the wash-board and bolted the door.

"My goodness !" cried Jones, in astonishment. "Jumbo !" and Bullard ! Where's Connaught ? How did you manage ? What are you going to do ? Good Lord ! Don't you know they're going to lash you up in the rigging and baste you ?"

"Were going to, you mean," replied "Jumbo," calmly, yet with a curious grim gritting of his teeth together. "Connaught's in his bunk. Larry got us out. I guess there'll be murder done before they touch us now." He went to his bunk and, lifting the coir mattress, brought out a Winchester saloon rifle. "On my honour," he said, in a tense voice, "I'll pot the skipper if he tries to touch me—or that brute of a second mate or the bo'sun either !"

"I've something, too," said Tommy, and threw down the captain's revolver on the berth table. "Only I couldn't find the cartridges. But I've a good old muzzle-loader in my chest, and heaps of powder and shot."

He proceeded to rummage for the weapon and its adjuncts of death and destruction. He produced the weapon and exhibited it with pride—a big, old-fashioned flint-lock pistol, such as might well have been carried in Dick Turpin's holster. "I got it in that gun-shop on the right-hand side of Market Street," he explained. "They wanted a dollar for it, but I only had seventy-five cents, so they let it go for that, and seemed to think it a good joke. The boss of the shop made me a present of the shot and the powder, and said he'd come and read the burial service any time for nothing."

Tommy grinned cheerfully and began to load the ponderous weapon. "I'd like to——"

But he never finished his remark, for away aft there suddenly arose a loud shouting.

"They've discovered we're missing !" said Bullard, going to first one door and then the other to examine the bolts. "Hark to the 'Old Man' ! He's hammering the steward !"

"Iron covers over the ports—smart, you chaps !" cried Larry, quickly, at this moment, leaving his pistol and springing to the nearest. "There's the second mate ! Screw 'em up hard !"

As each lad jumped to do this job there came a loud shout outside the after door, and immediately it was shaken and kicked. Then came a roar from the second mate.

"Open at once, you young devils," he shouted, "or it'll be all the worse for you !"

(To be continued.)

The 'Prentices' Mutiny.

BY WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON,

Author of "The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig,'" etc.

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Mr. Hodgson is well known as a writer of fiction, but in this remarkable story he has drawn his material from actual facts that occurred within his own experience. It is the history of what is perhaps the most amazing mutiny that ever happened—the revolt of eight mercantile marine apprentices against brutal officers. Every imaginable device was used to subdue them, even to firing a cannon against their stronghold; but they won out triumphantly in the end. For obvious reasons, seeing that many of the participants in this extraordinary affair are still serving in various capacities afloat, Mr. Hodgson has carefully disguised the identity of the ship and all concerned. In the first instalment Mr. Hodgson related some of the brutalities to which the apprentices were subjected by the skipper, the second mate, and the bo'sun, and how they finally armed and provisioned themselves, barricaded themselves in their steel bunk-house, and prepared to stand a siege. The second mate approaches their stronghold and orders them to come out.

II.



The second mate shouted, "Jumbo" held up his finger for absolute silence, and the officer bawled the order again, with foul language, and punctuated by heavy kicks. Abruptly he was silent, listening, as they supposed; for directly afterwards he shouted: "I hear you in there, you —! Just wait five minutes, and we'll murder you!" Then, to some man near him, "Bring the blacksmith's sled out of the bo'sun's locker. We'll soon have 'em out, sir." Evidently he was now speaking to Captain Beeston. "I'll make 'em wish they'd never been born!" In a lower tone he added: "I'm blowed, sir, if I can understand how they got loose out of the lazarette!"

"Stand clear, sir," was his next remark, after a few seconds' quietness. Then came a tremendous blow upon the steel door, making the whole of the interior of the little steel-house ring like a monstrous drum. But, though the furious officer struck blow on blow, until he was exhausted, he produced no effect upon the strong steel door beyond slightly denting it.

He stopped and hove the hammer on to the deck, swearing breathlessly. Immediately afterwards he gave an order to some of the men: "Bring the hose aft—smartly, now! Shove it on the nearest nozzle, and two of you man the pump."

"What's he going to do now?" whispered Edwards, staring round and round the berth.

He could not conceive just what was going to be done; how the attack was to be made. "Jumbo" and Bullard tip-toed silently to the after door and listened. Kinniks and Harold Jones stared at each other, with a queer mixture of terror and nervous excitement. The silence was unbearable.

Suddenly Larry felt something touch his head; he jumped back and stared up. Something was coming down the little ventilator in the decked roof—the brass-coupled end of the hose was being pushed quietly down it into the berth.

"Look!" called Edwards, breathlessly. As he spoke the pump on the fo'c'sle head was manned, and a great jet of water came pulsing down into the place.

"Great Scot!" cried "Jumbo"; "they mean to flood the place!" And he whipped out his sheath-knife, with some vague intention of cutting the hose, which, of course, would have done no good at all.

"No!" shouted Tommy; "twist it up, put a turn in it; that'll stop the water." Which it did at once, the canvas pipe swelling up, above the twist, to bursting point, with the strain of the checked water in it, for the pump-men were working furiously. "Now pull for all you're worth," said Larry; and they tailed on to the hanging length of twisted canvas and pulled.

Abruptly something gave, and they went down in a muddle on the deck of the berth, whilst a confused shouting and cursing sounded out on deck. "Pull! Oh, pull!" shouted "Jumbo," getting to his feet with a jump. The hose came in hand-over-hand, as the sailormen say, and in a few moments the end came switching down on them, slapping water in all directions.

"It's bust clean away from the lashing on the other coupling," said "Jumbo," picking up the final part and examining it. "We've done 'em proper; we've got the whole lot. Good boy, Larry! There's no spare hose; the other's rotten; an' Sails will take half a week to make another."

Outside on deck there was loud, angry talking between the second mate and Captain

Beeston. "I'll match them! I'll match them!" the 'prentices could hear the second mate saying, time after time, in an excited, furious voice. They heard him go aft into the saloon at a run, and then the sounds of his footsteps returning. He ran to the little house, and they heard him spring up the small steel ladder, and so to the decked roof. Then his voice sounded at the ventilator:—

"Open the doors at once, you young —, or I'll shoot you down for mutiny on the high seas!"

"Don't talk rot," replied "Jumbo," staring quietly at the ventilator, but reaching out his right hand until he held his rifle; for there was no saying what the man would do. He was brutal and ferocious enough for anything. "Will you promise to stop treating us all like a lot of dogs? That's the first thing to settle."

"Open that door!" was all the second mate's reply. "We're going to take the flesh off your backs and see if that won't learn you. Open that——"

"Oh," said "Jumbo," angrily, "go to the deuce!"

There was a burst of nervous laughter from the other lads, and this seemed to set the second mate off like a light to powder. He literally *screamed* something, and his great hand and arm came down the ventilator. "Flash-bang! flash-bang! flash-bang!" He was shooting madly and indiscriminately among the lads! Three shots he fired. There was a fourth; but it was from "Jumbo's" saloon rifle. The second mate dropped his revolver and ripped his hand out of the ventilator, screaming and cursing as only a man shot in the hand can.

"Anyone hurt?" shouted "Jumbo," through the smoke that filled the place. There was a general instinctive feeling-over, to make sure, whilst overhead the second mate's feet beat a mad tattoo of pain upon the decked roof of the house; and from the main deck there was loud shouting in the skipper's voice, and, finally, the first mate singing out something.

"Turn up the lamp more," said Larry. "No one's hurt, thank goodness! That's what I call a rank attempt to murder, if you like. We ought to block up the ventilator right away."

This was done, by screwing one of the bottom boards out of a bunk over the opening. Whilst they were doing this they could hear a loud and excited talking under the break of the poop, and presently the first mate's voice: "No, sir," he was saying; "you can do what you like in your own ship, of course; but I'll have nothing to do with any of it. You mark my words, sir, an' you, too, mister, you'll have sad cause to rue, if you don't ease up on them boys. You'll

have a police-court case, an' there's going to be some hangin' done, if you don't drop it. It's confounded silliness, that's what it is. There. I've had my say. Please yourselves; but I'm out of it!"

"Good old mate!" said Larry, enthusiastically. "I'll bet we find him useful. We may be able to slip out for things at night in his watch. I'll bet he'll take good care never to see us."

At this moment there came the captain's voice:—

"Take your watch, Mr. Henricksen, and rig a gantline. Take the old mizzen-royal yard; sling it in by the parral, and bash the door in. Use it as a battering-ram. The for'ard door'll be best. I'll teach the young beggars!" and he swore horribly.

"Well," said "Jumbo," "we've got to stop that. They'll just murder some of us if they get in now. Get that big pistol of yours finished loadin' up, Tommy. Don't use those bb's; fill her with some of that broken-up rock-salt instead, and mind you don't shoot at their faces, or you'll blind them for life. Aim at their legs. They'll be close enough, goodness knows."

"Now," he continued, standing up and looking rather pale but very determined, "out with the lamp. You take the other port; I'll take the one in the starboard end of the house. Don't you shoot unless there's a rush that I can't stop. And, for Heaven's sake, aim low. You'll be glad afterwards. It makes a horrible mess, that saltpetre." (I had better explain here that the rock-salt had come out of a beef-barrel which the steward had been emptying.)

The lamp was turned out, and then, very silently, the two of them unscrewed the iron covers of the two forward ports and peered out. They saw that the gantline was already rigged and the men were bending it on round the yard, near the parral. This was done, and the second mate gave orders to hoist away until the yard was about half a fathom off the deck and about level with the middle of the berth door.

"Make fast, there!" he shouted. "Come here, all of you, and get hold; on both sides, lads—on both sides. Steady her!"

It was at this moment that "Jumbo" unscrewed the glass port-light itself and put his head out.

"Mr. Henricksen," he said, speaking as calmly as he could, "you've got to stop that, or we shall shoot."

The second mate stooped swiftly, caught up an iron-bound snatch-block with his uninjured left hand, and hove it at "Jumbo's" unprotected head. It would have killed the lad, probably, had it struck; but he drew back in time, and the great heavy block crashed against

the brass circle about the port-hole and fell with a thud to the deck.

"Back with it, lads!" shouted the second mate. "In with the door!" He caught the far end of the big spar, so as to steer it, for it swayed clumsily with the rolling of the vessel.

"I give you one more warning," shouted "Jumbo," from within the house.

"All together, lads! All together!" roared Henricksen, steadying the yard with his left hand. "Now!"

At the same instant "Jumbo" levelled his rifle and fired. The second mate gave a shout, loosed the end of the yard, and caught at his left thigh.

"Now, then, you chaps," cried "Jumbo," to the hesitating men; "you clear off and be sensible.

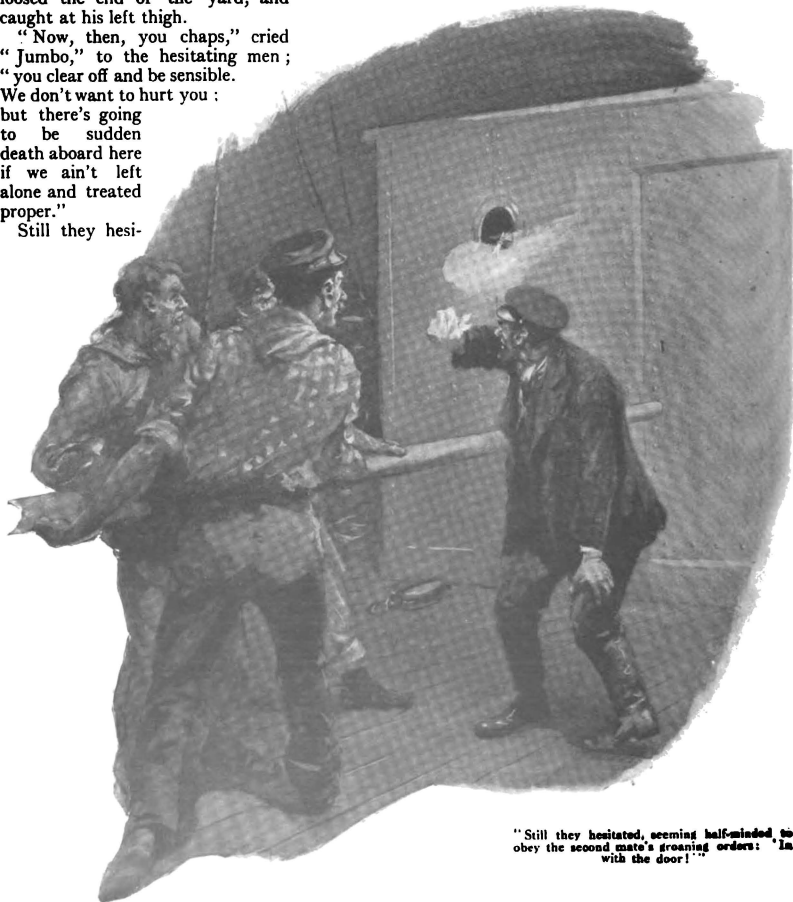
We don't want to hurt you: but there's going to be sudden death aboard here if we ain't left alone and treated proper."

Still they hesi-

tated, seeming half-minded to obey the second mate's groaning orders: "In with the door!"

"Now, Larry!" said "Jumbo," quickly, drawing back into the dark half-deck, "shove out your pistol. If they don't move, let 'em have it in the legs, and Heaven help them!"

Edwards pushed his great pistol out through the other port. "Now," he said, "run!" And as one man they loosed the hanging spar and ran, leaving it there to bash and clatter and sway about. Behind them Larry's great weapon roared; for he had fired over their heads to



"Still they hesitated, seeming half-minded to obey the second mate's groaning orders: 'In with the door!'"

hasten them. In ten seconds not a man was visible, even the groaning and cursing officer having thought it advisable to remove himself to a safer place.

"That's done it!" said Edwards. "Let's screw everything up tight again. They'll not touch us again to-night. Have you seen poor old Darkins and Peters?" He drew back their bunk-curtains, and the five boys stood round solemnly in a semicircle, staring rather helplessly. "How queer Peters is breathing!" said "Jumbo." "Where's he hurt? Who's banged their heads up?"

"The steward," said Tommy. "The 'Old Man' wouldn't let him come, but I got him to sneak in and fix them up. Look at the colour of Darkins's face! There's going to be an awful row about all this when we get home. Anyway, I'm glad we didn't start the shooting first."

"Jove!" said "Jumbo," "I wish it was all over!" He was old enough to realize the hopeless, dreadful piteousness of it all, and to see something of the awful complications that might lie ahead.

They drew back the curtains of Connaught's bunk and had a look at him, but found him still in a kind of heavy, dull sleep, or stupor.

They drew the curtains again before the three unconscious lads, held a council, and finally decided to turn in.

Edwards proved to be right in supposing that no further attempt would be made on them that night. They were left absolutely unmolested for three days—the work of the ship going on about the closed steel-house as though it held nothing more unusual or tragic than its accustomed set of light-hearted, healthy, careless crowd of 'prentices, instead of two lads near death, and a third who was still in a kind of heavy stupor, and all of the others under threat of most brutal reprisal, once they should open the doors of the little house.

Within the berth the lads cleaned up, cooked, ate, and tried crudely and ineffectually to feed their unconscious mates with sips of a kind of mawkish beef-tea which they made on their little oil-stove with water and corned beef. Fortunately they did no harm with these well-meant efforts; and presently they desisted, for fear that they should.

At times during those three days they would catch snatches of the talk that went on between the men—talk that came plain to them as odd men happened to pass near the house. In this way they gathered bits of news, there behind their steel barrier. They learned that the second mate was very bad in his bunk; that one of the men had actually received a portion of the charge from Edwards's pistol in the back of his

neck, and was feeling very sore about it, in more ways than one. Also, the lads learned that they were considered by some of the men to be "plucky young devils," and by others as needing something to "break 'em in"; these latter having evidently, from their remarks, a strong relish in the picture of all the 'prentices being tied up in the rigging and the bo'sun "easing 'em of their bucko with a fathom of ratlin-line."

In the second dog-watch of the third day, when it was growing dusk, a little before eight bells, the 'prentices had a pleasant little "heart-ener," for they heard one of the men speaking to them cautiously through the keyhole of the forward door. "Good on you, mates!" he said. "Stick to it! There's a lot of us is bettin' you'll win yet. Curse 'em! I says." Which, though no more than an expression of sympathy from a half-developed mentality, was yet a cheering thing to the imprisoned five, upon whom the anxiety and confinement of their position were beginning to tell, as they sat there in the lamplight, playing cards most of the day, and talking in whispers; for they had always the feeling that some spy of the "afterguard" might be near one of the doors listening.

Then, on the night of that same third day, about three bells in the middle watch (half-past one in the morning), something happened. Larry Edwards woke with a sudden feeling that something was wrong. He sat up very quietly in his bunk and looked, first at one closed door and then the other. Both were safely shut. He let his glance wander all round the berth and saw nothing unusual. Keeping absolutely still, he listened intently. As he did so he became aware of a faint, curious sound that he could not locate. It began, continued a little, paused, and then began again—a faint grinding sound, slow and stealthy.

The slight, curious noise, distinct above the faint natural creakings of the bunks and fittings, as the vessel rolled, troubled Larry more than anything that had happened yet. He knew in his heart that the enemy were attacking their security in some way; but he could not imagine how or where. Again and again he let his gaze go slowly round the berth.

Suddenly he looked upwards, and saw something that made him tingle with excitement and apprehension. The end of a big auger was coming slowly through the decked-roof of the berth!

He sat up silently, and let his feet down over the edge of the bunk; then took a closer look. The auger was slowly withdrawn, and Tommy Dodd saw that it left an inch hole that was one of about a score of others, all bored to follow round what would make (when completed) a circle some eighteen inches in diameter.

The lad saw the plan in a moment. When the person on the roof of the house had completed his series of holes, all that would be necessary to finish his work would be a little quiet manipulation of a narrow-bladed saw; then, hey! a blow or two with the carpenter's heavy maul, and a circle of the roof-planks would be driven clean in, to be followed instantly by Captain Beeston, Schieffs, the bo'sun, and some of the more brutal of the men, who would thus be upon them before they had fully comprehended the meaning of the noise that had wakened them. A good plan it was, too, and one that would certainly have left them at the mercy of the brutes in authority, but for young Edwards's providential awakening.

As he slid cautiously from his bunk to the chest that lay beneath him he heard the slow grinding of the tool commence again, very gently, and knew that the man above them was continuing his work, all unconscious that he had waked anyone.

Larry reached behind him under his pillow, and brought out his big old flint-lock; then he stepped from his chest to the next, and stooped down to wake big "Jumbo," who preferred, for some incomprehensible reason, to sleep in a bottom bunk (hence the reason that Larry, a young 'prentice, was allowed to have a top bunk—a luxury above the heads of first-voyagers, in every sense of the word). He shook the senior 'prentice gently, and the young man heaved himself up instantly, muttering: "What's up? What's up?"

"Hush!" whispered Larry. "They're boring through the roof. Look!"

He pointed, and even as "Jumbo" looked, with anxious, startled eyes, he saw the end of the auger come through, whilst a few tiny chips and shavings came fluttering down to the deck of the house.

"My goodness!" growled the big lad; and was out of his bunk in a moment, rifle in hand and ready to fire. When, however, he saw that there would have to be bored at least another twenty holes before any immediate danger need be apprehended, he eased the tenseness of his attitude and beckoned Tommy close to him.

"Plenty of time, Larry," he said. "It's lucky you woke up, though, or they'd have been through on us, and I believe that would mean right-down murder, in the spirit they'll be in now."

"Yes," agreed young Larry Edwards. "I've got a notion, too—pepper! Put pepper in my pistol, instead of bb's. Fire it up one of the holes. That'll give 'em snuff!"

"Jumbo" laughed silently, and held out his hand for the big weapon. Then, with a strand

of steel-hawser wire, he raked out the paper wad that Tommy had pushed down the barrel to hold in the shot. Next he poured out the shot—a big handful. "My word, Larry!" he said, "you meant to make sure of hitting something!" Afterwards he drew the second wad of paper, that held the powder down, and so was able to empty away about three-quarters of the explosive.

"The pepper-tin!" "Jumbo" whispered, and found Larry ready with it at his elbow.

"Thanks!" he said, and poured a couple of ounces of the stuff down upon the powder, having first rewadded it very loosely.

"Now," he whispered, "I guess we'll just shift whoever's on the roof, my son."

He stepped forward under the holes and listened to the noise of the auger, trying to decide the position of the man who was boring. At that instant, however, the auger ceased to work, and in the succeeding silence he caught Larry's voice, whispering urgently:—

"Quick, 'Jumbo'! Fire! They've spotted you! Get from under the holes! Get from under the holes!"

But the warning was too late, for at the same moment there came a spurt of fire down through the last hole bored, and something seemed to scald "Jumbo's" left shoulder horribly, while the bang of the revolver sounded tremendous. "Jumbo" raised the big pistol, but there came two more shots from above and he was wounded again, one bullet ripping along the whole length of his right arm and the other just taking the skin and flesh off his middle knuckle.

"Come back!" shouted Larry, and caught him by his wounded arm and dragged him out of range. "'Jumbo,' he continued, "are you hurt much? Tell me quick!" For big "Jumbo" looked ghastly, and the blood was running down both sleeves, whilst the big pistol lay unfired upon the deck of the berth.

"Hey! hey! hey!" they heard the wounded second mate laughing, brutally, through the auger-holes. "We're going to shoot you down like rats! Go ahead with the auger, Chips. You needn't bother to be quiet now. The bo'sun and I will keep them away."

"My gracious!" said Bullard, who, with Kinniks and Jones, had jumped out of his bunk when the second mate fired. "What has he done to you, 'Jumbo'? What has he done? Get him on to a chest, Larry!" He took the big 'prentice in his arms and steadied him to the chest, for the young man had grown utterly sick and dizzy.

"Oh, you brute!" he shouted, fiercely, up to the second mate. "You vile brute! You've killed 'Jumbo'!"

The only reply was a blind succession of shots into the berth, which hit no one, as no one was in view from the auger-holes. The result, however on Bullard was to make him stoop swiftly for the big horse-pistol upon the floor. Then, in a kind of mad rage, he made one spring right under the holes and, thrusting the muzzle of the big weapon up against one of them, he fired. It was all done in an instant of time, with the quickness of a wild cat leaping.

From the top of the house there came a terrible scream in the second mate's voice: "I'm blinded! I'm blinded! Oh, good heavens, I'm blinded!"

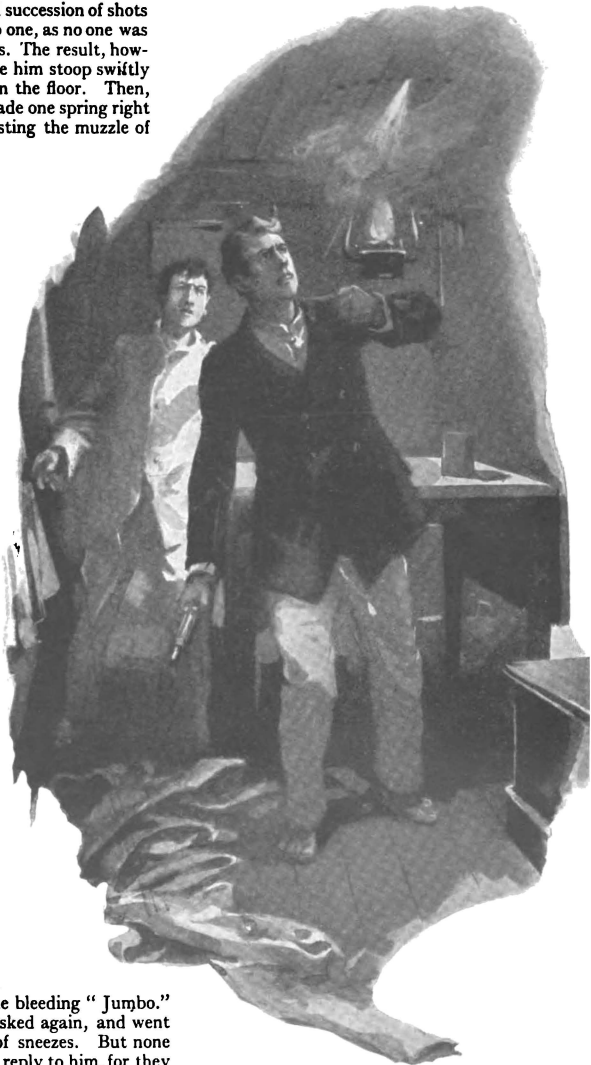
They heard nothing further for a number of seconds; for every one of the lads was taken with tremendous paroxysms of sneezing, owing to an enormous quantity of pepper being in the air of the berth; for some had spurted out at the sides, at the juncture of the hole and muzzle.

Abruptly, as the effect of the pepper was easing from them, there came a gigantic sneeze from behind the curtains of Connaught's bunk, and the next instant his curtains were violently switched aside and he sat up—waked out of his long lethargy, sneezing and sane.

Above them, on the roof of the little house, they caught the moaning of the second mate, intermingled with violent sneezings from the bo'sun and Chips.

"What's happened?" asked Connaught, utterly bewildered, and staring at the group of lads about the bleeding "Jumbo."
 "What's happened?" he asked again, and went off once more into a burst of sneezes. But none of the lads had any time to reply to him, for they were all busy with the senior, Larry and Bullard cutting off his coat, and Kinniks and Harold Jones getting water in the berth basin and tearing up shore-going handkerchiefs for bandages.

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"The warning war too late, for at the same moment there came a spout of fire down through the hole."

Presently they had him bound up as well as they could, and so lifted him into his bunk.

Above them they heard the staggering, limping steps of the second mate and his constant groaning, as the bo'sun and Chips helped him across the roof-deck of the house and down the little steel ladder to the main deck. They heard them go staggering aft.

"Now!" said Larry. And they took the teak washboard and, having bored holes in it with a brace and bit which Bullard had in his chest, they screwed it up over the auger-holes, and so felt safe once more.

They got Connaught something to eat and drink, for he was ravenous, and explained things to him as well as they could. Afterwards they settled down round the table to talk, anxiously and nervously; for the realization of serious injuries received and given was weighing upon them, with a dread of consequences. From time to time one of them would tip-toe quietly to "Jumbo's" bunk, to see how he felt. Fortunately, his wounds were not in any way vitally serious. They were, literally, furrows, or gouges. Yet poor old "Jumbo" lost a tremendous lot of blood, and was some time before he felt quite his old self again.

It was arranged now, between Bullard, Tommy Dodd, Connaught, Harold Jones, and Mercer Kinniks, that there should be a regular watch kept every night in future, so as to preclude any further chance of a successful surprise. And so, having performed their nightly task of dumping anything not required in the berth through one of the ports out on to the main deck, they had a final look at their three invalids, and so turned in, all except the watchman.

At times, as can be imagined, the berth got fearfully oppressive and stuffy, with doors, ports, and ventilator all closed; so that, sometimes at night, having turned out the lamp, the lad who was acting as watchman would open one or two of the ports very cautiously and give the berth a blow through.

It was on the following night when Bullard, the watchman at the time, was doing this very same thing, that he discovered there was some new plan "in the wind" for breaking into the berth. For, instead of the quietness of the decks at night, with the wind steady and only the odd noises of the sea and the gear to make the silence apparent, he heard, away forward, a constant subdued bustle and the murmur of voices speaking in low tones.

He listened a long while, trying also to stare through the gloom; and eventually heard the bo'sun speaking, evidently busy with some of the watch. A little later he heard and saw Captain Beeston go forward, tip-toeing past the

house, and later on there came a loud crash and a hoarse shout of pain in the fore-part of the ship, as if something very heavy had fallen on to the deck and hurt one of the men. That this was to some extent a correct surmise, Bullard discovered soon; for one of the men came limping aft, supported by two others, and moaning and groaning with every step.

Bullard began to think it time to call the other 'prentices, which he did, and after telling all that he had seen, the lads were stationed at various ports to keep watch about the decks and report anything unusual that they might see, without a moment's loss of time; for it was impossible to say what form this new attack might take, or from what quarter it might come, or when.

It must have been just after four bells (ten o'clock) when Bullard first discovered that something was afoot; and the five boys stood watching and listening at their ports until seven bells had struck before anything definite was reported. Then it was young Larry Edwards who gave the word, in an excited whisper.

"Look!" he said. "On the port side! Don't you see? They've got bare feet; they're sneaking aft! They're dragging something. Listen!"

There was an absolute silence in the berth whilst the lads listened with all their might. Then they heard what young Larry meant—a dull, vague, heavy rumbling sound that came and went intermittently.

"My goodness!" said Bullard. "What is it?"

No one answered. The three other lads had left their stations, and were crowded now round the two forward ports, where Bullard and Tommy Dodd were watching. Very slowly the black, indistinct huddle of figures on the port side of the deck came nearer; and all the time the strange, heavy sound grew more ominous.

"What is it? What is it?" Bullard asked again, in complete and frightened bewilderment. "What can it be?"

"Gracious!" said Larry Edwards, suddenly, and burst away from his port, through the 'prentices at his back, and darted to his bunk. He was back in a moment with a pair of good night-glasses, which he possessed.

"What a fool I was! What a fool I was!" he kept muttering, as he adjusted them hastily.

He put them to his eyes and stared along the port side of the main deck.

"Great Scot!" he cried. "It's the cannon! They're bringing the signal-gun aft! They're going to blow the door in! The brutes mean to kill us! They're mad! They're absolutely mad!"

(To be concluded.)

The 'Prentices' Mutiny.

BY WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON,

Author of "The Boats of the 'Glen Carrig,'" etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ARCH WEBB.

Mr. Hodgson is well known as a writer of fiction, but in this remarkable story he has drawn his material from actual facts that occurred within his own experience. It is the history of what is perhaps the most amazing mutiny that ever happened—the revolt of eight mercantile marine apprentices against brutal officers. Every imaginable device was used to subdue them, even to firing a cannon against their stronghold; but they won out triumphantly in the end. For obvious reasons, seeing that many of the participants in this extraordinary affair are still serving in various capacities afloat, Mr. Hodgson has carefully disguised the identity of the ship and all concerned. The author has already related some of the brutalities to which the apprentices were subjected by the skipper, the second mate, and the bo'sun, and how they finally armed and provisioned themselves, barricaded themselves in their steel bunk-house, and prepared to stand a siege. Several attacks have been made upon the lads' stronghold without success, and at last the infuriated skipper prepares to fire the signal-gun at the door.

III.



SHORT but awful silence fell upon the lads on hearing the news concerning the cannon; then Larry's voice broke in again:—

"They're sluing it round, muzzle this way." He tailed off into silence, staring. The others could make out no more than a vague muddle of moving shadows for'ard, under the lee of the fore deck-house.

"Jumbo's rifle!" said Bullard, suddenly, and ran from his port into the darkness of the berth, groping where the weapon lay in beackets along the inside of "Jumbo's" bunk.

"Jumbo," who was in a sort of feverish sleep, groaned uneasily and gave a little cry of pain; for Bullard must have touched one of his wounds as he leant into the bunk. Then Bullard had the rifle, and was dodging round the table, back to his port, cocking the weapon as he went.

He reached the port just as a general burst of frightened exclamations came from the others. A little flame had spurted out suddenly in the darkness on the port side of the deck.

"Stop that!" shouted Larry, shrilly, out of his port; for the light was that of a match in the bo'sun's hand, and was being extended to the primed touch-hole of the cannon. "Stop!" he shouted again, and in the same second there came the crack of the rook-rifle; for Bullard had aimed at the light, heedless as to whether his shot brought actual death to any among the attacking crowd or not. He realized that the war between them and orthodox authority had reached such a pitch of bitterness that the captain and the second mate had really lost their heads for the time being, and would literally stick at nothing to have them at their mercy.

As for the bo'sun, the man was a brute, and capable of anything, so long as he was countenanced in his actions by those in charge.

The crack of the light rifle was followed by a queer, half-gasping cry; and the light went out on the instant.

"We'll shoot again if you try to fire that gun!" Larry shouted, shrilly, out of his port.

For'ard, to leeward of the other house, there was a curious, disagreeable gasping, and a queer sound of quick thudding on the deck, that came plainly to them in the succeeding moments of utter silence that followed the shot.

Bullard whitened suddenly in the darkness, as he realized what the sound meant; one of the men was lying on the deck, probably kicking his life out there in the darkness by the side of the fore-house. Beyond the broken gasps and the queer drumming there was, as I have said, no sound from the group of men, away in the darkness at the back of the cannon.

Then, abruptly, there came Captain Beeston's voice, mad with half-drunken rage: "Blow the young fiends to blazes!"

There was the flash of another match in the darkness, followed by the sudden scampering for'ard of bare feet, as if some of the watch were running, in fear of another shot. Then, in the berth, the sharp click of the lock of the rifle and a frightened curse from Bullard. "It's empty! It's empty!" he cried, apprehension in his voice.

In the same instant Kinniks fumbled the big, old-fashioned horse-pistol into Larry's hand. Larry saw the flame of the match being shielded down to the dark, low bulk on the deck that he knew to be the cannon. He thrust the heavy



"There was a great flash for'ard and a bang that seemed to shake the ship."

weapon at arm's length through the open port and pulled the trigger. There was a burst of fire and a huge report, followed almost in the same moment of time by a great flash for'ard and a bang that seemed to shake the ship. With

the report something roared over their heads with a vast whooping noise, and there was a crash far away aft and a hoarse screaming.

"They've hit the man at the wheel!" shouted Kinniks, in a voice shrill with excitement and fright. "They've hit the man at the wheel!"

For'ard, there was a riot of shouts of pain, curses, and the noise of a man actually crying, "O-hoo! O-hoo! O-hoo!" and sobbing hoarsely, in a horrible fashion. In addition there was a constant noise of footsteps, as if somebody were running round and round in a circle.

"Good heavens!" said Bullard, in the utter silence of the dark berth. "We've fixed them!" He broke off in a dumb blank.

"They asked for it! They asked for it! We had to do it to save ourselves!" Larry managed to get out. "Serve them right!" he added in a strange voice, trying to get his courage and nerves under control again. And therewith he broke down hopelessly into a dry sobbing; and curiously enough it was the somewhat nervous Kinniks who attempted to console him, and ease him of his sudden burden of dread responsibility, by preaching vehement justification aloud into the darkness of the berth.

"Shut up, all of you," said Bullard, a little later. "It's done now, and we had to do it. They're mad, and we're being forced to do horrible things to save ourselves. And, anyway, if anyone's killed I've done it with 'Jumbo's' rifle. Those bb's that Larry fired wouldn't be so likely to kill. But they won't try anything more on to-night. They've all gone for'ard into the fo'c'sle."

They spent a time further, listening at the ports; but hearing nothing more, beyond the hum of voices coming vaguely aft from within the fo'c'sle, they shut and fastened both the ports and the iron doors that covered them. Then they lit the lamp, sat round the table, and talked. After a while, Harold Jones lit the little Ripplingill and made some tea; and so, with tea and talk, they managed to get themselves back again into a more normal state.

Later—a long time after midnight—someone struck eight bells, and then corrected it by striking four. It was two o'clock in the morning. At times the whispering lads heard odd footsteps pass the little house very quietly. And once, towards four in the morning, they heard Mr. Jenkins, the first mate, arguing something in a loud, angry voice. They caught his final words: "I shall have nothing to do with it, mister. This is going to be a jailing job. I'd have you to mind that I've stood out of it all along!"

This seemed to be followed by sounds as of a scuffle or fight; but, though Bullard opened the after port-cover to have a look, he could see no one at all on the fore part of the poop, which was all that the angle of sight allowed them to see,

on account of the port being so much lower than the poop.

As he stood staring he saw the captain's face come into sight as he came for'ard along the poop-deck. The man saw him in the same moment, and shouted out an obscene oath as to what he meant to do. Then, before Bullard could get away from the port, Captain Beeston had whipped a revolver from his coat-pocket and fired at him. The bullet struck the side of the house, making it ring; and Bullard dodged quickly. In the same instant the drink-unbalanced master fired again, and hit the glass of the port at the edge, making a perfectly clean hole through it. The bullet passed right under the lad's chin (at least, so they judged afterwards) and struck the other side of the berth, where it flattened in among some rivets in the steel side.

Bullard dropped completely out of sight, and reached up a hand to the iron cover, which he slammed and proceeded hastily to screw up.

"You're not hurt!" whispered Tommy, anxiously. "The old man must be mad drunk. You're sure you're not hurt?"

"No," said Bullard, and finished screwing up the metal cover; yet, when he turned away and came towards the lamp, all the lads exclaimed, for blood was running down his face. An examination showed that the whole of his left cheek, from the corner of his mouth to his temple, was raw with the finely-pulverized glass which had been driven in a shower over him by the entrance of the bullet. The wound was not in any way deep or apparently dangerous; but it took an extraordinarily long time to heal; and it was a mercy that his left eye was untouched.

All the early part of that day the lads sat about in the berth, listless and upset, and taking very little notice of the sounds that went on around them about the decks. At four bells, however, in the eight-to-twelve watch in the morning, they heard a rustle at the for'ard door of the berth, and a piece of old cardboard was pushed in, between the edge of the door and the side of the house. On picking it up, they found a roughly-pencilled message, which—although, of course, I cannot pretend to give it exactly—ran like this: "Look out the old devils goin' to blow the door in they bust the wheel last night and carried away 3 of Jock's fingers here's luck us for'ard ain't havin' no more."

This does not, as I have said, pretend to be an exact duplicate of the extraordinary note; but as far as my memory goes, it gives the true sense and spirit of it, and something of its legal sublimity of punctuation.

As may be thought, the lads in the berth were tremendously excited, and grew sullenly fierce, as they realized how indifferent and callous the

master had grown as to the risk to their lives and limbs, in his attempts to force the berth.

The rifle was reloaded from a box of 22's, which "Jumbo" had in his chest, and Larry's monstrosity of a pistol was heavily charged with powder and several brass rollers out of patent sheave-blocks; for he had fired away his supply of bb's. Then the port-covers were cautiously opened a little, here and there, from time to time around the house, and a constant watch kept about the decks. Yet never a sign could the lads see of anything unusual on hand. One thing only at last struck Edwards as being curious: there was not a man in sight anywhere about the main-decks.

The thing for which they were watching so blindly came, as might be thought, all unexpected. Larry had just opened the iron cover of the starboard for'ard port, and peeped out along the decks, when he started back, crying: "Great Scot! Look out!" He slammed the cover fiercely and screwed it home with might and main, shouting, "They've lowered a shell thing from aloft. It's burning just outside the door! The——" There came a tremendous stunning thud of sound and force, just without, and a blinding reek of smoke poured into the berth through the interstices about the for'ard door. Many of the lads shouted aloud with fright and shock, and there was a stampede to the after end of the little house, where they clustered for a few moments, waiting, unreasoning.

Eventually Bullard walked for'ard to the other door, and Larry came out from the bunk into which he had jumped. The others followed, and they examined the fore part of the house, to see what damage had been done. They found that the explosion had applied its force most curiously. What I might call the coaming or bottom of the house had been cracked clean through, from the port bottom corner of the door right down to the deck, while the bottom section of the iron or steel had been bowed in several inches, as if it had been hit by a gigantic hammer. Beyond these two evidences there was nothing more to show for the explosion—that is, from the inside of the house; though afterwards the boys learned that quite considerable damage had been done out on deck, one of the skid-supports having been blown away, and the bows of the starboard lifeboat lifted bodily out of the chocks, ripping through two of the lower planks. In addition, one of the iron water-doors in the bulwarks had been punched right out into the sea, leaving a very ugly gap in the bulwarks. Two of the sheep in the sheep-pen, fore side of the house, had been killed, and the pen itself wrecked badly; whilst, most serious of all, a portion of the main deck in front of the

door had been rather severely crushed and shaken.

It was as the lads all stood about the inside of the door, staring in a dumb, frightened sort of way, and feeling that things had indeed got far beyond anything they had ever intended or dreamed of, that Bullard took sudden action. He stepped to the door and tried to wrench back the lower bolt, which held the lower half of the door shut (the door was in two pieces, divided across halfway up, like most galley doors). However, the explosion had so bent the lower half of the door that he could not move the jammed bolt. He then pulled back the upper bolt, and swung the upper half of the door boldly open. He leant well out over the bent half-door and stared up aloft. The next instant he drew back and made one jump to the table, where "Jumbo's" saloon rifle lay, ready loaded. He caught up the rifle, sprang back to the door, and leant himself out backwards over the edge, aiming upwards with the rifle. In the berth all the lads stood silent, nervous, and excited; they could not see what Bullard was aiming at. They saw his finger crook suddenly upon the trigger, and the little rifle cracked sharply. On the instant there was a loud scream of pain aloft, and the rope with which the amateur powder-bomb had been lowered before the door shook violently.

"Got him!" said Bullard, coming forward again into the berth, very white and grim-looking. "If the skipper's going to murder us all in here, we've got to save ourselves."

He would say nothing more; and immediately closed the door and sat down and was silent for some hours in a tense, moody way on his seaghest; but all the 'prentices knew that he had shot Captain Beeston aloft. Once, as voices were heard near the main-mast, Bullard picked up the rifle and walked across to the door again; but Edwards ran before him.

"Don't; oh, don't, Bullard! It'll do no good; and oh, we're in such a mess! Don't, unless they attack us again. Don't, Bullard, don't!"

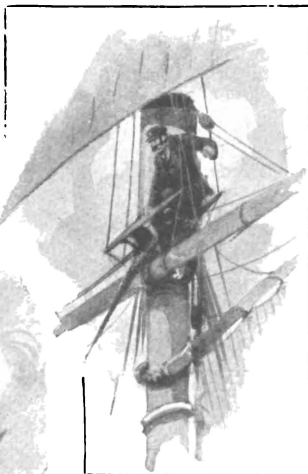
Bullard looked at the young apprentice for a little, in a strange way, then turned abruptly and laid the rifle on the table; and so went back again to his tense moodiness on his sea-back.

From time to time the other lads attended to various matters about the berth. Kinniks, who was acting as cook for the day, made a sort of cracker-hash of biscuits and corned beef—the biscuits pounded fine in a canvas bag. But no one seemed to want any. Edwards and Connaught spent part of their time attending on "Jumbo," who was muttering feverishly; and two or three times during the day they had a

look at Darkins and Peters. To their utter delight—and, indeed, it quite heartened all of them in the berth, except Bullard—Peters was found towards evening, lying quietly with his eyes open, but most extraordinarily weak; so that they fed him with a thin soup which they made with water and boiled corned beef. Yet he never said a word to them; but merely took a few spoonfuls of the soup, and went gently off into a natural-seeming sleep. Darkins, however, seemed to the lads to



"The little rifle cracked sharply."



be no better; but, again, he certainly seemed no worse; so that, as I have said, an atmosphere of comparative brightness seemed to steal into the berth for a time. It did not last, however, for they felt utterly lost and frightened as to what the outcome of their defiance was going to be.

It was as if everything was to culminate on that one day; for, suddenly, just after eight bells (mid-day), though no bell had been

struck, there came a knock on the after door of the berth and the first mate's voice speaking.

"For goodness' sake, lads, come out of it!" he said; and they all (except Bullard and the three in the bunks) crowded excitedly aft to speak to the mate.

"Is it all right, sir?" asked Edwards, speaking for the others. "Will the captain promise to treat us properly, sir? We're not coming out to be half killed. I don't mean to be cheeky to you, Mr. Jenkins, but I think the 'Old Man' and the second mate have gone mad. They wouldn't mind if they killed us—"

"That'll do, Edwards!" said Mr. Jenkins. "I can promise you that you will none of you come to any harm." He paused a moment, then continued: "Captain Beeston is in his bunk with a bullet in his shoulder."

"Will he live, sir?" almost shouted Bullard's voice at this instant. "Will he live, sir?"

"Yes," replied the mate. "Unless," he added, grimly, "he drinks himself to death. Come out now. I can't stop arguing with you. For Heaven's sake come out of it; and be smart. I'm sick to death of this awful business!"

"The second mate, sir?" asked Connaught, with a kind of stolid fierceness in his voice; for he was in the second mate's watch.

"The second mate's in his berth, stone blind, and it's odds he'll never take another watch!" rapped out the first mate, tersely.

"The bo'sun, sir?" said Bullard, in a new voice.

"I tell you," said the mate, almost angrily,

"that you will none of you come to harm. You keep clear of the bo'sun, and he'll keep clear of you, or I'll have him into irons in two shakes. Anyway, he's laid up at present. Come out of that, and don't keep me here talking. Do you hear me, Bullard? Open the door at once."

"Yes, sir," said Bullard, instantly, and opened the door forthwith. And thus it was, and exactly in this fashion, that authority once more resumed her interrupted sway aboard the *Lady Morgan*.

"How are those two that were hurt?" the mate said, and stepped into the berth. "Anyone else hurt?"

They told him as he drew back the bunk-curtains. He looked at the lads, one after another, and proceeded to issue orders:—

"Get those other ports uncovered and opened. Open that for'ard door. Whoever's turn it is, get a bucket and broom and clean the place out. Kinniks, go aft to the steward and tell him I want him here at once. Move now, or I shall be losing my ticket over this job, along with those two fools aft there!" This latter was gritted out in an undertone; but the lads heard, and comprehended how the situation might appear to the "Afterguard" in their sane moments. Also that the first mate, whom they all liked, might suffer seriously in the general clearing-up that lay ahead of them all, both the 'prentices and the officers.

Now, it was out of these conditions—plus the second mate's blindness and damages, and the master's still more fortunate wound (for, as it chanced, Bullard had shot better than he knew when he fired aloft in such blind anger at Captain Beeston)—that an amicable settlement eventually came about. The master, who had been drinking heavily all the voyage, was thoroughly frightened by his bullet-wound, which certainly proved more serious than the mate had anticipated, possibly on account of his drunken habits. As a result, he grew presently to a frame of mind—aided thereto by an enforced and strict sobriety due to the mate's dumping all the liquor aboard—in which he was exceedingly eager to find some quiet way out of the dreadful muddle which had arisen. The 'prentices, on their part, were equally eager to have the matter hushed up, for they could not conceive how they might fare if ever the business entered a criminal court. The second mate simply did not count, in the circumstances; and as for the men, none of them had been seriously damaged, except Jock, whose fingers had been crushed by the cannon-shot, which had been a piece of timber rounded by the carpenter to fit the signal-gun. Jock received a handsome present of tobacco; and as his fingers eventually regained something of their previous shape and usage, he ceased—

sailor-like, I suppose—to think over-much about the matter.

Jan Henriksen, the half-Dutch second mate, recovered the sight of his right eye, and was thereafter a very much quieter man, and well pleased, after a certain talk with Captain Beeston and the mate, to go delicately, like Agag. I suppose, until he dies, a limp of a very pronounced type will remain a much untreasured possession. I have little pity for him; he was an unmitigated bully.

It was Carl Schieffs, the bo'sun, who came worst off in the whole transaction. Bullard's shot cut away his right middle finger and nicked the bone of his shin on the inside of the right leg, for he was in a stooping position when the 'prentice fired. The man was undoubtedly in agony for a little while; it was his feet they had heard drumming on the deck: Then, when Captain Beeston fired the cannon, part of the breech blew clean away in tiny fragments, cutting the bo'sun frightfully about the face and neck, as he lay there on the deck just behind it. Extraordinarily enough, neither the bursting of the breech of the signal-gun nor the handful of bb's from Tommy's pistol touched Captain Beeston, though three of the crew received trifling flesh wounds from the small shot.

"Jumbo," under proper treatment, was about in ten or twelve days, and Peters considerably before this time. Darkins, however, was several weeks before he became anything like himself; and it is possible that his share of the business was the worst. I say possible because I cannot pretend to prove a connection between the blow he had from the bo'sun and the fact that within a week of reaching home the lad fell from aloft and smashed up on the skids. I have often wondered whether he turned giddy and thus met his death as an indirect result of the blow.

The bo'sun recovered; and I heard some time later that he was killed in one of those cellars which formed underground Chinatown in San Francisco. I am not surprised.

It may interest readers who like the last ounce of detail, in an account of facts, to learn that the securing of the fresh-water pump in the 'prentices' berth caused no inconvenience, as the ship proved to possess a spare one.

And now, I think, I have told you everything; certainly everything vital. I cannot help something of a smile, as I think of people I have met who will tell you that nothing ever happens at sea nowadays. Possibly this is true concerning the "tame-cat" life of the liners, which is the only sea-life that most of them have any acquaintance with; but the sea is a wide place, and a lonesome place, and I have seen it, in my time, breed some extraordinary conditions.