

The peacemaker sighed, and, turning, led his charges gently away. The crowd watched them as far as the "Three Fishers," and observing that they detached themselves by force from their guide and friend, crossed the road and followed them in.

FALSE COLOURS

"O F course, there is a deal of bullying done at sea at times," said the night-watchman, thoughtfully. "The men call it bullying an' the officers call it discipline, but it's the same thing under another name. Still, it's fair in a way. It gets passed on from one to another. Everybody aboard a'most has got somebody to bully, except, perhaps, the boy; he 'as the worst of it, unless he can manage to get the ship's cat by itself occasionally.

"I don't think sailor-men mind being bullied. I never 'eard of its putting one off 'is feed yet, and that's the main thing, arter all's said and done.

"Fust officers are often worse than skippers. In the fust place, they know they ain't skippers, an' that alone is enough to put 'em in a bad temper, especially if they've 'ad their certifikit a good many years and can't get a vacancy.

"I remember, a good many years ago now, I was lying at Calcutta one time in the *Peewit*, as

fine a barque as you'd wish to see, an' we 'ad a fust mate there as was a disgrace to 'is sects. A nasty, bullying, violent man, who used to call the hands names as they didn't know the meanings of and what was no use looking in the dictionary for.

"There was one chap aboard, Bill Cousins, as he used to make a partickler mark of. Bill 'ad the misfortin to 'ave red 'air, and the way the mate used to throw that in 'is face was disgraceful. Fortunately for us all, the skipper was a very decent sort of man, so that the mate was only at 'is worst when he wasn't by.

"We was sitting in the fo'c's'le at tea one arternoon, when Bill Cousins came down, an' we see at once 'e'd 'ad a turn with the mate. He sat all by hisself for some time simmering, an' then he broke out. 'One o' these days I'll swing for 'im; mark my words.'

"Don't be a fool, Bill,' ses Joe Smith.

"If I could on'y mark 'im,' ses Bill, catching his breath. 'Just mark 'im fair an' square. If I could on'y 'ave 'im alone for ten minutes, with nobody standing by to see fair play. But, o' course, if I 'it 'im it's mutiny.'

"You couldn't do it if it wasn't, Bill,' ses Joe Smith again.

"He walks about the town as though the place

belongs to 'im,' said Ted Hill. 'Most of us is satisfied to shove the niggers out o' the way, but he ups fist and 'its 'em if they comes within a yard of 'im.'

"Why don't they 'it 'im back?' ses Bill. 'I would if I was them.'

"Joe Smith grunted. 'Well, why don't you?' he asked.

"Cos I ain't a nigger,' ses Bill.

"Well, but you might be,' ses Joe, very earnest. 'Black your face an' 'ands an' legs, and dress up in them cotton things, and go ashore and get in 'is way.'

"If you will, I will, Bill,' ses a chap called Bob Pullin.

"Well, they talked it over and over, and at last Joe, who seemed to take a great interest in it, went ashore and got the duds for 'em. They was a tight fit for Bill, Hindoos not being as wide as they might be, but Joe said if 'e didn't bend about he'd be all right, and Pullin, who was a smaller man, said his was fust class.

"After they were dressed, the next question was wot to use to colour them with; coal was too scratchy, an' ink Bill didn't like. Then Ted Hill burnt a cork and started on Bill's nose with it afore it was cool, an' Bill didn't like that.

"Look 'ere,' ses the carpenter, 'nothin' seems

to please you, Bill—it's my opinion you're backing out of it.'

"'You're a liar,' ses Bill.

"'Well, I've got some stuff in a can as might be boiled-down Hindoo for all you could tell to the difference,' ses the carpenter; 'and if you'll keep that ugly mouth of yours shut, I'll paint you myself.'

"Well, Bill was a bit flattered, the carpenter being a very superior sort of a man, and quite an artist in 'is way, an' Bill sat down an' let 'im do 'im with some stuff out of a can that made 'im look like a Hindoo what 'ad been polished. Then Bob Pullin was done too, an' when they'd got their turbins on, the change in their appearance was wonderful.

"'Feels a bit stiff,' ses Bill, working 'is mouth.

"'That'll wear off,' ses the carpenter; 'it wouldn't be you if you didn't 'ave a grumble, Bill.'

"'And mind and don't spare 'im, Bill,' ses Joe. 'There's two of you, an' if you only do wot's expected of you, the mate ought to 'ave a easy time abed this v'y'ge.'

"'Let the mate start fust,' ses Ted Hill. 'He's sure to start on you if you only get in 'is way. Lord, I'd like to see his face when you start on 'im!'

"Well, the two of 'em went ashore arter dark

with the best wishes o' all on board, an' the rest of us sat down in the fo'c's'le spekerlating as to what sort o' time the mate was goin' to 'ave. He went ashore all right, because Ted Hill see 'im go, an' he noticed with partickler pleasure as 'ow he was dressed very careful.

"It must ha' been near eleven o'clock. I was sitting with Smith on the port side o' the galley, when we heard a 'ubub approaching the ship. It was the mate just coming aboard. He was without 'is 'at; 'is necktie was twisted round 'is ear, and 'is shirt and 'is collar was all torn to shreds. The second and third officers ran up to him to see what was the matter, and while he was telling them, up comes the skipper.

"'You don't mean to tell me, Mr. Fingall,' ses the skipper, in surprise, 'that you've been knocked about like that by them mild and meek Hindoos?'
 "'Hindoos, sir?' roared the mate. 'Cert'nly not, sir. I've been assaulted like this by five German sailor-men. And I licked 'em all.'

"'I'm glad to hear that,' ses the skipper; and the second and third pats the mate on the back—just like you pat a dog you don't know.

"'Big fellows they was,' ses he, 'an' they give me some trouble. Look at my eye!'

"The second officer struck a match and looked at it, and it cert'n'y was a beauty.

"I hope you reported this at the police-station?' ses the skipper.

"'No, sir,' ses the mate, holding up 'is 'ead. 'I don't want no p'lice to protect me. Five's a large number, but I drove 'em off, and I don't think they'll meddle with any British fust-officers again.'

"'You'd better turn in,' ses the second, leading him off by the arm.

"The mate limped off with him, and as soon as the coast was clear we put our 'eads together and tried to make out how it was that Bill Cousins and Bob 'ad changed themselves into five German sailor-men.

"'It's the mate's pride,' ses the carpenter. 'He didn't like being knocked about by Hindoos.'

"We thought it was that, but we had to wait nearly another hour afore the two came aboard, to make sure. There was a difference in the way they came aboard, too, from that of the mate. *They* didn't make no noise, and the fust thing we knew of their coming aboard was seeing a bare, black foot waving feebly at the top of the fo'c's'le ladder feelin' for the step below.

"That was Bob. He came down without a word, and then we see 'e was holding another black foot and guiding it to where it should go. That was Bill, an' of all the 'orrid, limp-looking

blacks that you ever see, Bill was the worst when he got below. He just sat on a locker all of a heap and held 'is 'ead, which was swollen up, in 'is hands. Bob went and sat beside 'im, and there they sat, for all the world like two wax figgers instead o' human beings.

"'Well, you done it, Bill,' ses Joe, after waiting a long time for them to speak. 'Tell us all about it.'

"'Nothin' to tell,' ses Bill, very surly. 'We knocked 'im about.'

"'And he knocked us about,' ses Bob, with a groan. 'I'm sore all over, and as for my feet—'

"'Wot's the matter with them?' ses Joe.

"'Trod on,' ses Bob, very short. 'If my bare feet was trod on once they was a dozen times. I've never 'ad such a doing in all my life. He fought like a devil. I thought he'd ha' murdered Bill.'

"'I wish 'e 'ad,' ses Bill, with a groan; 'my face is bruised and cut about cruel. I can't bear to touch it.'

"'Do you mean to say the two of you couldn't settle 'im?' ses Joe, staring.

"'I mean to say we got a hiding,' ses Bill. 'We got close to him fust start off and got our feet trod on. Arter that it was like fighting a wind-mill, with sledge-hammers for sails.'

"He gave a groan and turned over in his bunk, and when we asked him some more about it, he swore at us. They both seemed quite done up, and at last they dropped off to sleep just as they was, without even stopping to wash the black off or to undress themselves.

"I was awake rather early in the morning by the sounds of somebody talking to themselves, and a little splashing of water. It seemed to go on a long while, and at last I leaned out of my bunk and see Bill bending over a bucket and washing himself and using bad langwidge.

"'Wot's the matter, Bill?' ses Joe, yawning and sitting up in bed.

"'My skin's that tender, I can hardly touch it,' ses Bill, bending down and rinsing 'is face. 'Is it all orf?'

"'Orf?' ses Joe; 'no, o' course it ain't. Why don't you use some soap?'

"'Soap,' answers Bill, mad-like; 'why, I've used more soap than I've used for six months in the ordinary way.'

"'That's no good,' ses Joe; 'give yourself a good wash.'

"Bill put down the soap then very careful, and went over to 'im and told him all the dreadful things he'd do to him when he got strong agin, and then Bob Pullin got out of his bunk an' 'ad

a try on *his* face. Him an' Bill kept washing, and then taking each other to the light and trying to believe it was coming off until they got sick of it, and then Bill, 'e up with his foot and capsized the bucket, and walked up and down the fo'c's'le raving.

"'Well, the carpenter put it on,' ses a voice, 'make 'im take it orf.'

"You wouldn't believe the job we 'ad to wake that man up. He wasn't fairly woke till he was hauled out of 'is bunk an' set down opposite them two pore black fellers an' told to make 'em white again.

"'I don't believe as there's anything will touch it,' he says, at last. 'I forgot all about that.'

"'Do you mean to say,' bawls Bill, 'that we've got to be black all the rest of our life?'

"'Cert'nly not,' ses the carpenter, indignantly, 'it'll wear off in time; shaving every morning 'll 'elp it, I should say.'

"'I'll get my razor now,' ses Bill, in a awful voice; 'don't let 'im go, Bob. I'll 'ack 'is head orf.'

"He actually went off an' got his razor, but, o' course, we jumped out of our bunks and got between 'em and told him plainly that it was not to be, and then we set 'em down and tried every-

thing we could think of, from butter and linseed oil to cold tea-leaves used as a poultice, and all it did was to make 'em shinier an' shinier.

"'It's no good, I tell you,' ses the carpenter, 'it's the most lasting black I know. If I told you how much that stuff is a can, you wouldn't believe me.'

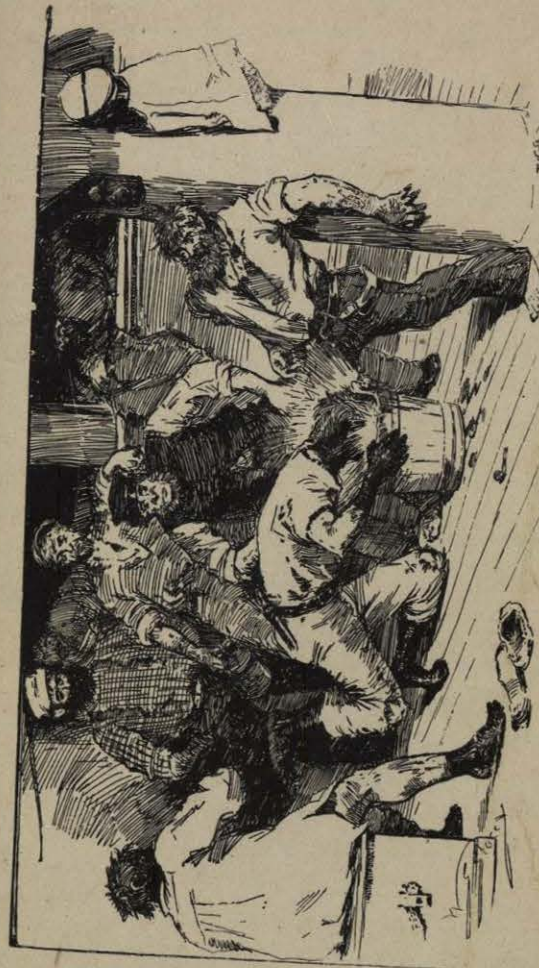
"'Well, you're in it,' ses Bill, his voice all of a tremble; 'you done it so as we could knock the mate about. Whatever's done to us'll be done to you too.'

"'I don't think turps'll touch it,' ses the carpenter, getting up, 'but we'll 'ave a try.'

"He went and fetched the can and poured some out on a bit o' rag and told Bill to dab his face with it. Bill give a dab, and the next moment he rushed over with a scream and buried his head in a shirt wot Simmons was wearing at the time and began to wipe his face with it. Then he left the flustered Simmons an' shoved another chap away from the bucket and buried his face in it and kicked and carried on like a madman. Then 'e jumped into his bunk again and buried 'is face in the clothes and rocked hisself and moaned as if he was dying.

"'Don't you use it, Bob,' he ses, at last.

"'Tain't likely,' ses Bob. 'It's a good thing you tried it fust, Bill.'



HE BURIED HIS FACE IN IT

“‘Ave they tried holy-stone?’ ses a voice from a bunk.

“‘No, they ain’t,’ ses Bob, snappishly, ‘and, what’s more, they ain’t goin’ to.’

“Both o’ their tempers was so bad that we let the subject drop while we was at breakfast. The orkard persition of affairs could no longer be disregarded. Fust one chap threw out a ‘int and then another, gradually getting a little stronger and stronger, until Bill turned round in a uncomfortable way and requested of us to leave off talking with our mouths full and speak up like Englishmen wot we meant.

“‘You see, it’s this way, Bill,’ ses Joe, soft-like. ‘As soon as the mate sees you there’ll be trouble for all of us.’

“‘For all of us,’ repeats Bill, nodding.

“‘Whereas,’ ses Joe, looking round for support, ‘if we gets up a little collection for you and you should find it convenient to desart—’

“‘Ear, ‘ear,’ ses a lot o’ voices. ‘Bravo, Joe.’

“‘Oh, desart is it?’ ses Bill; ‘an’ where are we goin’ to desart to?’

“‘Well, that we leave to you,’ ses Joe; ‘there’s many a ship short-‘anded as would be glad to pick up sich a couple of prime sailor-men as you an’ Bob.’

“‘Ah, an’ wot about our black faces?’ ses

Bill, still in the same sneering, ungrateful sort o' voice.

"That can be got over,' ses Joe.

"'Ow?' ses Bill and Bob together.

"Ship as nigger-cooks,' ses Joe, slapping his knee and looking round triumphant.

"It's no good trying to do some people a kindness. Joe was perfectly sincere, and nobody could say but wot it wasn't a good idea, but o' course Mr. Bill Cousins must consider hisself insulted, and I can only suppose that the trouble he'd gone through 'ad affected his brain. Likewise Bob Pullin's. Anyway, that's the only excuse I can make for 'em. To cut a long story short, nobody 'ad any more breakfast, and no time to do anything until them two men was scrouged up in a corner an' 'eld there unable to move.

"I'd never 'ave done 'em,' ses the carpenter, arter it was all over, 'if I'd known they was goin' to carry on like this. They wanted to be done.'

"The mate'll half murder 'em,' ses Ted Hill.

"He'll 'ave 'em sent to gaol, that's wot he'll do,' ses Smith. 'It's a serious matter to go ashore and commit assault and battery on the mate.'

"You're all in it,' ses the voice o' Bill from the

floor. 'I'm going to make a clean breast of it. Joe Smith put us up to it, the carpenter blacked us, and the others encouraged us.'

"Joe got the clothes for us,' ses Bob. 'I know the place he got 'em from, too.'

"The ingratitude o' these two men was sich that at first we decided to have no more to do with them, but better feelings prevailed, and we held a sort o' meeting to consider what was best to be done. An' everything that was suggested one o' them two voices from the floor found fault with and wouldn't 'ave, and at last we 'ad to go up on deck with nothing decided upon, except to swear 'ard and fast as we knew nothing about it.

"The only advice we can give you,' ses Joe, looking back at 'em, 'is to stay down 'ere as long as you can.'

"A'most the fust person we see on deck was the mate, an' a pretty sight he was. He'd got a bandage round 'is left eye, and a black ring round the other. His nose was swelled and his lip cut, but the other officers were making sich a fuss over 'im, that I think he rather gloried in it than otherwise.

"Where's them other two 'ands?' he ses by and by, glaring out of 'is black eye.

"Down below, sir, I b'lieve,' ses the carpenter, all of a tremble.

“Go an’ send ’em up,’ ses the mate to Smith.

“Yessir,’ ses Joe, without moving.

“Well, go on then,’ roars the mate.

“They ain’t over and above well, sir, this morning,’ ses Joe.

“Send ’em up, confound you,’ ses the mate, limping towards ’im.

“Well, Joe give ’is shoulders a ’elpless sort o’ shrug and walked forward and bawled down the fo’c’s’le.

“They’re coming, sir,’ he ses, walking back to the mate just as the skipper came out of ’is cabin.

“We all went on with our work as ’ard as we knew ’ow. The skipper was talking to the mate about ’is injuries, and saying unkind things about Germans, when he give a sort of a shout and staggered back staring. We just looked round, and there was them two blackamoors coming slowly towards us.

“Good heavens, Mr. Fingall,’ ses the old man. ‘What’s this?’

“I never see sich a look on any man’s face as I saw on the mate’s then. Three times ’e opened ’is mouth to speak, and shut it agin without saying anything. The veins on ’is forehead sweiled up tremendous and ’is cheeks was all blown out purple.

“That’s Bill Cousins’ hair,’ ses the skipper to himself. ‘It’s Bill Cousins’ hair. It’s Bill Cous—’

“Bob walked up to him, with Bill lagging a little way behind, and then he stops just in front of ’im and fetches up a sort o’ little smile.

“Don’t you make those faces at me, sir,’ roars the skipper. ‘What do you mean by it? What have you been doing to yourselves?’

“Nothin’, sir,’ ses Bill, ’umbly; ‘it was done to us.’

“The carpenter, who was just going to cooper up a cask which ’ad started a bit, shook like a leaf, and gave Bill a look that would ha’ melted a stone.

“Who did it?’ ses the skipper.

“We’ve been the wictims of a cruel outrage, sir,’ ses Bill, doing all ’e could to avoid the mate’s eye, which wouldn’t be avoided.

“So I should think,’ ses the skipper. ‘You’ve been knocked about, too.’

“Yessir,’ ses Bill, very respectful; ‘me and Bob was ashore last night, sir, just for a quiet look round, when we was set on to by five furriners.

“What?’ ses the skipper; and I won’t repeat what the mate said.

“‘We fought ’em as long as we could, sir,’ ses Bill, ‘then we was both knocked senseless, and when we came to ourselves we was messed up like this ’ere.’

“‘What sort o’ men were they?’ asked the skipper, getting excited.

“‘Sailor-men, sir,’ ses Bob, putting in his spoke. ‘Dutchies or Germans, or something o’ that sort.’

“‘Was there one tall man, with a fair beard,’ ses the skipper, getting more and more excited.

“‘Yessir,’ ses Bill, in a surprised sort o’ voice.

“‘Same gang,’ ses the skipper. ‘Same gang as knocked Mr. Fingall about, you may depend upon it. Mr. Fingall, it’s a mercy for you you didn’t get your face blacked too.’

“‘I thought the mate would ha’ burst. I can’t understand how any man could swell as he swelled without bursting.

“‘I don’t believe a word of it,’ he ses, at last.

“‘Why not?’ ses the skipper, sharply.

“‘Well, I don’t,’ ses the mate, his voice trembling with passion. ‘I ’ave my reasons.’

“‘I s’pose you don’t think these two poor fellows went and blacked themselves for fun, do you?’ ses the skipper.

“‘The mate couldn’t answer.

“‘And then went and knocked themselves

about for more fun?’ ses the skipper, very sarcastic.

“‘The mate didn’t answer. He looked round helpless like, and see the third officer swopping glances with the second, and all the men looking sly and amused, and I think if ever a man saw ’e was done ’e did at that moment.

“‘He turned away and went below, and the skipper arter reading us all a little lecture on getting into fights without reason, sent the two chaps below agin and told ’em to turn in and rest. He was so good to ’em all the way ’ome, and took sich a interest in seeing ’em change from black to brown and from light brown to spotted lemon, that the mate daren’t do nothing to them, but gave us their share of what he owed them as well as an extra dose of our own.”