

The Sailors Mutiny

The story of the last night on the good ship "A. I. T."

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"Ding-dong, ding-dong."

The ship's bell sounded four bells of the early morning watch. The mighty sloop rode calmy at its permanent anchorage. It was the last night of its use as a vessel of the U. S. Navy. On the morrow its entire crew of 54 hard-boiled "jack-tars" were to pass into the hum-drum realms of civilian life, and the ship itself would become just a prosaic brown stone house.

Mystery pervaded the atmosphere. The old guard, being relieved, wended his way back to his "hammock" for his last night's rest on the ship. The new guard, reeking with mysteriousness, softly made his way to various bunks. He awoke the slumbering occupants thereof with a hissed "Hit the deck, get on your pants, sweater, and watch cap, and go to the aft cabin on the main deck to await orders." The awakened seaman would follow instructions, and some even carried pieces of rope or gunnysack.

By the time five bells had struck there was a fierce looking band of desperadoes awaiting orders in the aft cabin of the main deck. The leader then arose and handed a black mask to every man. He then said, "Well, mates, you know what we are gathered here for. We must purge our petty officers of their sins before they get back to civilian life. To do this we will put them under the cold shower and give them a good rub-down with a ki-yi brush. If you are all with me, we will divide up and start the dirty work."

Everything was in readiness for this horrible mutiny. There was an awful uncanny feeling in the air. Hark! What was that? Who piped up? "What if this fails, and all you birds, instead of going home tomorrow, go to the brig for six months on bread and water, under the care of the terrible Pete Johnson?" Whereupon the unexpected happened. The thoughts of this horrible punishment and dreams of home, mother, and sweethearts dear came to these revengeful "gobs" and tears unbidden flowed. Their resolutions for revenge were gradually fading away, and the thoughts of what might be the consequence gave them all a clear case of cold feet.

However, with many misgivings and little enthusiasm, the expedition "shoved off" for the petty officer's cabin. When they arrived there, only two of the gobs were brave enough to go into the cabin, wherein the five dauntless petty officers were slumbering peacefully and were probably dreaming of what they would do when they were out of "this man's navy." One of them happened to awake, and with his voice choking with terror, faintly whispered, "Guard, turn on the lights." This awoke the other men and two of them leaped from their bunks and huddled over in a corner to await the action of the equally scared mutineers, while another buried his head under the blankets. (One of the mutineers, after the fracas was over, even claimed that he heard this man praying in a tremulous voice.) The last man fought and fought hard. He was hopelessly outnumbered and was dragged from his quarters through the companionway to the aft cabin of the main deck.