

Billy Budd と *Bartleby* と、他

前 田 禮 子

I. Billy 像

H. Melville による *Billy Budd* には、イメージとして次のような特色がある。Billy は、Handsome Sailor という愛称によって親しまれ、その行くところ熱いまなざしによって囲まれるのであったが、そのカリスマ性は、きわめて美しい青年といったカテゴリーをはるかに逸脱する特異性によるものであった。つまり、Billy は、真黒なアフリカ黒人であったのである。

... so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham. (239)

しかし、不思議なことに、Billy は、青空のような青い目をしていた。

... was welkin-eyed Billy Budd, or Baby Budd. (231)

彼が混血児であることは明らかであって、それには、次のように説明されている。

Cast in a mold peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture, he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules.

北方系のノルマン人やその他の人種の混血の形跡は全くない、純粋なサクソンの血を引くイギリス人の、もっとも完成された容姿をもつ Billy であった。ギリシアの彫刻家が彫るヘラクレス像のような、完成された表情と姿をもつ Billy であった。彼は、天使のように美しい人であったのである。Melville は、イギリス人 (English) を天使のような人 (Angel-like) を暗示する比喻として用いているときがある。*Moby-Dick* の Samuel Enderby 号の船長がそれである。ギリシア・ローマ彫刻に見られる特色も Billy はそなえていることになる。Billy の父系の血統が高貴であることが示されているのであるが、母方もまた、黒人ながら、身分の低からぬものが感じとれる。

But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The

ear, small and shapely, the arch of the foot, the curve in mouth and nostril, even the indulated hand dyed to the orange-tawny of the toucan's bill, a hand telling alike of the halyard and tar bucket, but above all, something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favored by Love and the Graces; (51)

一方の Claggart は、イギリス人のように振るまっているが、イギリス人ではない、と書かれている。

... he was an Englishman; and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalization in early childhood. (65)

Billy は、青い目をもつ Billy (Welkin-eyed Billy) といって、何回となく作品の中で言及されるので、読者は、彼が白人であるかのような錯覚をおこしてしまう。しかし、Billy は、ムーア人のオセロのように、黒人である。禿でたアングロ・サクソンの顔立ちの中に、よく見れば、鼻孔が少しずんぐりしているところとか、くちびるが少し肉厚なのではないか、など、黒人種の血を感じさせるものがあるのである。形のよい頭部、という説明からも、短く刈りこまれた黒人種独特の毛髪をしているのであろう。Billy には、並はずれた人物にのみ授かる、奇瑞ともいふべき身体の特徴 (stigma) をそなえているのである。黒人でありながら青い目をした登場人物がえがかれている作品としては、T. Capote の *Dazzling* などがあるが、Capote のばあいの人物は、きわめて恐ろしい能力をもっていることになっている。

アメリカ文学では、しばしば American Adam や American Christ ともいふべきヒーローが作り出されているのであって、Billy もそういったカテゴリーの、キリストを模したヒーローである。すでに、別稿『白鯨』で、述べたが、*Moby-Dick* 中の “Town-Ho's Story” の Steelkilt も、キリストを模した人物像である。イエスという人物は二人いた、と伝えられており、一人は大工のイエスであり、聖書で語られるイエス・キリストであるが、もう一人は、海賊でイエスという名の人がいたとされている。和辻哲郎著「孔子」の中でも、海賊のイエスがいたことが述べられている。

II. オペラとしての *Billy Budd*

つぎに、オペラに改作された *Billy Budd* の資料を入手したので、紹介したい。それは、現代イギリス屈指の作曲家である Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) によるものである。Britten は、作曲家であると同時に、指揮者、ピアノ演奏家でもある。彼は、日本の能劇、「隅田川」も楽劇に作りかえ、作曲をほどこしている。「隅田川」については、稿を改めることにして、今回は、楽劇としての *Billy Budd* の紹介にとどめたい。もとにな

った物語は、いうまでもなく H. Melville によるものであるが、劇形式の作品に改めたのは、E. M. Forster と Eric Crozier である。Forster は、*A Passage to India* などを書いた著名なイギリスの作家 (1879-1970) であるが、一方の Crozier については、あまり知られていない。

以下の原文は、*The operas of BENJAMIN BRITTEN* という書名のもとに Hamish Hamilton (London) 社により、1979年に出版された版からとったものである。資料は、*The Japan Times Weekly* (Tokyo) の Yoichi Clark Shimatsu 氏から提供を受けたものである。

III. *Billy Budd* の原型

H. Melville の *Billy Budd* は、解釈の難しい作品であるといわれているものの、Billy とイエス・キリスト像が重なり合う、という明白な構図があつて、かならずしも、わかりにくい作品であるというわけではない。しかし、Billy はキリストを原型としている、と単純に割り切ってしまう何かそれ以上に付加的な人物像が Billy の中に透けて見えるといった感じがするのである。Billy の中にある、キリスト以外のもう一人の人物が何であつて、その原型がどこから来たものであるか、について考えてみたい。

Billy-Budd は、Melville の数少ない中篇小説の一つであつて、彼の、長い空白期間をへだったのちの最後の小説である。*Moby-Dick* や *Pierre* にくらべると、筋立てが簡単で、ほんの数日間の出来事が語られているにすぎない。一つの事件の頭末が、一幅の絵に描かれたような趣きがある。言葉が抑制されて、荘重さと、同時に、音楽性が高められて、*Billy-Budd* は、Melville の、頂点を極めた作品であるといことができる。

Melville の作品には、これまでも指摘されてきたことだが、ギリシャ神話と、旧新約聖書とから引かれた比喻が混じり合っている。単なる修辭として引かれている、ということではなく、Melville の世界観、価値観がギリシャ神話や聖書神話を、並列的な二者としてではなく、同じ源流から発生した同質のもの、として認識していたのではないだろうか。その根拠は何か、Melville の価値観は何か、など、テキストの中から拾ってみることにする。

冒頭から、Billy の美しさが人目を引くものであつた、と述べられている。美男子の若者が波止場のあたりを遊歩するとき、牡牛座の一等星のように、ひとときわ輝いて見える。それを讃美する男たちが Billy を取り巻いて、ちょうどひとつの星座の群のようになって、ついてくるのである。若い美しい船乗りが仲間の者たちの間でいかに憧れの^ま的であるか、ということがえがかれているのである。

In certain instances they would flank, or like a bodyguard quite surround, some superior figure of their own class, moving among with them like

Aldebaran among the lesser light of his constellation. That signal object was the “Handsome Sailor” of the less prosaic time alike of the military and merchant navies. (43)

Billy を徴発された商船の船長も同じことをいっている。Billy が存在しているだけで船中に平和がもたらされる、Billy がなにも手を下さなくても Billy を眺めているだけで船内に喜びの気が満ちあふれ平和になる、と船長はいう。彼は、Billy を sweet and pleasant fellow (47)、my best man (46); the jewel of 'em (46) であるという。Billy が仲間たちの心を鎮めるそのさまは見るも快よい in a pleasant way (47) である、と商船の船長はいうのである。

ここでは、Billy は、平和をもたらす者、柔和なる者としてのキリスト像と一致する。しかし、Billy の美しさとそれに魅かれる者たちの姿には、キリスト以外のなにか、肉体の美を賛美するギリシャ的なものが感じられるのである。Billy Budd (Lilly Bud) という名前が暗示するように彼の名には、花のイメージがある。キリスト教では、百合の花が、柔和な者の象徴として尊重されている。それ以外の花の名も、この名前の中には含まれているようであって、それが水辺に咲く水蓮 (Water Lilly) を想いおこさせるのである。Billy は船乗りであったために、最後は水に投げ入れられてしまった、ということから、Billy には、あのギリシャ神話のナルシスとの同一化が感じられる。水仙に生れかわった、あのナルシスとキリスト像とが Billy の中には同時に映し出されているのである。Melville は、ギリシャ的なものに魅かれ続けたが、最後の作品の中でナルシスとキリスト像を一致させてしまっているのである。なぜ Melville はギリシャ神話の中にキリスト像を見たのだろうか。また、そのような同一化は、なぜ可能であるのだろうか。

Billy には同時に、ギリシャ神話のオルフェの姿もうかがえるのである。Billy Budd の最後の章末で、Billy について語った歌が船乗りたちの間で、巷で、歌い^{ちまた}嗣がれた、と書かれている。これには、立琴の上に乘せられ波の上を漂いながら、なおも歌い続けたオルフェの姿があるのである。

この作品の終章のバラードの意味は、はなはだ不可解である。なぜ Billy の歌なのか、その他、細部にも不可解なところがあるが、Melville 自身には明白な意図があつてのことであろう。ギリシャの神話・伝説・宗教などの構図へと Billy Budd を脱構築していくことによって、Melville の意図が浮かび出てくることになるのである。

Billy Budd の導入部には、Prince's Doek の海岸通りを歩く、花の Billy と取巻き連中の姿があつた。これは、この物語の鍵となる場面である。Billy がどれほど優れた容姿をもっているか、ということが、たえず作品の中で語られる。船の中という男性ばかりの社会にあって、男前の Billy は、他の男性たちの熱いまなざしに、たえず追いかけられている。ナルシスを森のニンフ達が追いかけたようにである。あるいは、オルフェを追

いかけた女たちのようにである。Billy は、ナルシスのような自己陶醉者ではない。

Billy は見えるものの表面の意味しか理解できない、単純な人間であるということが、たびたび言及される。この点は、キリストとことなっている。容姿がどうであったか、ということについては、キリストのばあいは、問題にされてはいない。女性の崇拝者たちが何人もいたので、キリストも美しい人であったであろうけれども、この点が Billy と共通するとみるのは当たらない。自分の水に映った姿を自分のものだと理解できなかったナルシスは賢くなかったのだし、Billy が単純であったことと相似ている。

しかし、この素朴さ、純粹さがあったために、ナルシスは、可憐な水仙になって復活することができた。では、Billy はどうか。その可能性は、大いに示唆されている。すでに述べたように Billy Budd という名前が、百合の蕾、あるいは水蓮の蕾、を暗示しており、Prince's Dock の岸辺に咲いた花であるかのように、Billy は、最初の場面で紹介されていた。また、最後の夜に、Billy を訪ねたとき、牧師は、Billy の清純さに打たれ、Billy にキリスト教の教理を説くのを控える。牧師は Billy の魂の行末については安心したからであった。牧師はキリスト教による以外の至福の来世が存在するのではないか、ということを感じとったからだ、と書かれている。

The chaplain, coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarding him for a space, then slipping aside, withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he, the minister of Christ... had no consolation to proffer which could result in peace transcending that which he beheld. (120)

月夜の晩に甲板に眠る Billy には、永遠に命を保って眠っているエンディミオンと同じような救いがあるというのだろうか。キリスト教による以外の救いとは、どのようなものとして示唆されているのだろうか。

Billy が去る日の早朝の4時頃の空の光景。つぎのように描写されている。そこに Melville は、ギリシャ風の、救済あるいは復活というものを示唆しているのではないだろうか。

The night so luminous on the spar deck, but otherwise on the cavernous ones below, ... — the luminous night passed away. But like the prophet in the chariot dissappearing in heaven and clopping his mantle to Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the breaking day. A meek, shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapor. That light slowly waxed. (122)

あのイアソンが追い求めた金羊毛のような透きとおった一条の雲が流れていく。船や魚が水を切って進むときの航跡のように見えるだろうか。Billy が天に帰っていく道筋が

はしご
梯子のように用意された、とでもいうのだろうか。金羊毛というのは、暁を導く白い雲である、ともいわれている。その雲のさまを描写するとき、Melvilleは、予言者エリヤに言及している。エリヤは、天から迎えにきた馬車に乗って昇天する。そのときエリヤは、着ていたマントをエリシャに落していった。そのとき同じように、去っていく夜は、薄明の衣を明けようとする日の光りに譲り渡していく。そのとき突如として、Billyは行かねばならない。エリヤの昇天とBillyが去ることとが、並行に置かれている。Billyも昇天することが可能かもしれないという示唆であるか、それとも、まったくのアイロニーとして対比してあるのか。

第1章の、物語が始まるにさきだって、一人の美しい真黒な黒人の青年の船乗りとそれを取囲む仲間たちの姿が紹介されていた。Billyは金髪のイギリス人である。七月の暑い真昼どきの黒人青年の姿からは、太陽という炉で焼かれた、というイメージがある。Prince's Dockの堀沿いに歩く名も無い黒人青年の姿からは、まるで、炉の石壁に咲いた花のような印象を受ける。Prince's Dockという固有名詞が実在したことがあったかどうか、ということとはともかく、この名をMelvilleが無作為に使ったとは思われない。Princeという語からは、その黒人のもつ、生得の気品がうかがわれる。彼は、雄牛座の一等星に喩えられているが、光り輝く中心人物という点から、惑星を従えた太陽に喩えることもできるだろう。Dockという語は、dry dockあるいはgrave dockをさす、と辞書にある。Aldebaranは、雄牛座Taurusの一等星で、全天中でもっとも光の強い星の一つである。雄牛といえば、祭壇に捧げる動物、という連想がある。同時に、物語の始まりの、この部分には、不死鳥の甦がえった姿が暗示されている。こういった情景を伏線として、Billyの最後の場面を考えてみたい。

Billyの後日譚は、くわしく語られている。公式に処理された経過や書類は、物語の真実とは程遠いものである、ということを示すためのものであろう。世俗の評価は、天上と地上では観点や価値観がことなるので、真実からまったく乖離したものになる、ということを示したかったのだろう。

Billyの最後は、つぎのように成就したものである、として語られている。

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel when the last signal, a preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece hanging low in the East was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned face, Billy ascended; and, ascending, took the full rose of the dawn. (124)

合図があった瞬間、偶然にか、東に低く垂れていた霞のような薄雲が、神秘的の幻となっ

て現われた神の小羊の羊毛のような柔かな栄光の光でもって突き貫かれた。それとともに、Billyは、上昇して行って、暁の光の中で完全な開花を遂げたバラの花になった。ここには十字架上のキリストの姿があるのは、従来いわれているとうりである。キリストが十字架上に咲いたバラである、といわれているのは、茨の冠^{いばらかんむり}をかぶせられたことや、バラが血の色をしているからであるのはいうまでもない。十字架という枯木に咲いた花であるから、バラが復活の象徴であることもいうまでもない。ギリシャ神話の金羊毛と、キリスト教の神の小羊の羊毛、どちらも神秘の力を持ち、復活と永遠の生命の象徴である。MelvilleがBillyの真実として描きたかったものをうかがい知ることができる。ギリシャ的なものとキリスト教的なものが、一つの流れとなって融合している。Melvilleがギリシャ神話や聖書から題材をしばしば転用してきたのは、単なる修辞として以上のものを彼がそこに読み取っていたからであろう。Melvilleは永遠の生命を信じていたのだろうか。

Billy Budd

An opera in four acts

by E. M. Forster and Eric Crozier

adapted from the story by Herman Melville

CHARACTERS

Captain Vere of the Indomitable	TENOR
Mr Redburn the First Lieutenant	BARITONE
Mr Ratcliffe the Second Lieutenant	BASS
Mr Flint the Sailing Master	BASS-BARITONE
John Claggart the Master-at Arms	BASS
Billy Budd able seaman	BARITONE
Dansker an old seaman	BASS
Red Whiskers an impressed man	TENOR
Arthur Jones another impressed man	BARITONE
Donald a sailor	BARITONE
Squeak a ship's corporal	TENOR
The Captain's Cabin boy	SPOKEN
A Novice	TENOR
Novice's Friend	BARITONE
Seamen, Officers, Midshipmen, Petty Officers, Marines, Powder-monkeys, Drummers	

FIRST PERFORMANCE

1 December 1951 London, Covent Garden

Captain Vere	Peter Pears
Billy Budd	Theodor Uppman
Claggart	Frederick Dalberg
Mr Redburn	Herver Alan
Mr Flint Geraint Evans	
Lieutenant Ratcliffe	Michael Langdon
Red Whiskers	Anthony Marlowe
Donald	Bryan Drake
Dansker	Inia Te Wiata
Novice	William McAlpine
Squeak	David Tree
Bosun	Ronald Lewis
First Mate	Rydderch Davies
Second Mate	Hubert Littlewood
Maintop	Emlyn Jones
Novice's Friend	John Cameron

Arthur Jones	Alan Hobson
Four Midshipmen Brian Ettridge, Kenneth Nash, Peter Spencer, Colin Waller	
Cabin Boy	Peter Flynn

Conducted by Benjamin Britten

Produced by Basil Coleman

Designed by John Piper

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act one

Prologue Vere

Scene one
The main-deck and quarter-deck of the
Indomitable

Scene two The Captain's cabin

Scene three The berth-deck

Act two

Scene one The main-deck and quarter-deck

Scene two The Captain's cabin

Scene three A bay of the upper gun-deck

Scene four The main-deck and quarter-deck

Epilogue Vere

The action takes place on board the *Indomitable*,
a seventy-four, during the French wars of 1797.

Act one

Prologue

[Captain Vere is revealed as an old man]

VERE

I am an old man who has experienced much. I have been a man of action and have fought for my King and country at sea.

I have also read books and studied and pondered and tried to fathom eternal truth.

Much good has been shown me and much evil, and the good has never been perfect. There is always some flaw in it, some defect, some imperfection in the divine image, some fault in the angelic song, some stammer in the divine speech. So that the Devil still has something to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth.

Oh what have I done? Confusion, so much is confusion! I have tried to guide others rightly, but I have been lost on the infinite sea. Who has blessed me? Who saved me? In the summer of seventeen hundred and ninety-seven, in the French wars, in the difficult and dangerous days after the Mutiny at the Nore, in the days when I, Edward Fairfax Vere, commanded the *Indomitable* ...

[The lights go up on the main-deck and quarter-deck of H. M. S. Indomitable]

Scene one

[Early morning. A cutter has gone to board passing merchantman. An area of the main-deck is being holystoned by some sailors (the First Party), in the charge of the First Mate]

FIRST MATE

Pull, my bantams! Pull, my sparrow-legs! That's right! Pull with a will! Bend to it, damn you! [He hits one man a crack with a rope's end]

CHORUS [First Party]

O heave! O heave away, heave! O heave! [A second party of men, including Donald, arrives downstage, dragging holystones. It is led by the Second Mate]

SECOND MATE

Here is the spot, men! Look at this main-deck! Stains on the deck of a seventy-four. Get 'em off! Get 'em off, you idle brutes!

[His men set to work. The First Mate gives orders to his Party]

FIRST MATE

Belay! Belay! You bantams, belay! Up your anchors and forrard a fathom! Move! Move!

[The men move painfully to a new patch of deck]

CHORUS [First and Second Party together]

O heave! O heave away, heave! O heave! [The Sailing Master comes along the quarter-deck]

SAILING MASTER

Hi there! You, you're faking your pull!

SAILOR

I'm sorry, sir - hurt me arm.

SAILING MASTER

Can't help that, my man. Can't help that. Life's not all play upon a man-of-war.

CHORUS [First Party]

O heave! O heave away, heave! O heave!

SAILING MASTER

Mr Bosun! Mr Bosun!

[Enter Bosun]

BOSUN

Yes, sir!

SAILING MASTER

Hands to braces! Man the yards!

BOSUN

Ay, ay, sir!

[Exit Bosun]

[Four young Midshipmen cross the deck, hands on dirks. Some of the men holystoning lift their heads to see what is happening]

MIDSHIPMEN

Toplights down there, and scrub! Scrub!

FIRST MATE

Toplights down, you swabs! Eyes on deck!

MIDSHIPMEN

can't idle you know, men. Life's not all play
upon a man-of-war.

[The Midshipmen go off jauntily]

DONALD

Cocky young bastards! Send 'em back to
mammy. I'll mammy 'em! Teach 'em to 'play
upon a man-of-war'!

FIRST MATE

Pull, my sparrowlegs! Pull! Bend to it, damn
you!

SECOND MATE

Toplights down, you bantams! Toplights
down! Pull with a will!

CHORUS *[Both Parties]*

O heave! O heave away, heave! O heave!
*[The Bosun's whistle shrills off stage. Two
parties of men hurry on stage pulling halyards
with them. The Novice is among them]*

MAINTOP *[off]*

All manned above! Yards manned!

BOSUN

Lead those halyards aft - at the double!

DECK

Halyards aft!
*[As the downstage party reaches its position, one
of the men, the Novice, accidentally collides
with the Bosun]*

BOSUN

Who did that!

NOVICE

I did. I'm sorry.

BOSUN

Damned impertinence, and can't you say 'sir'?

NOVICE

All right, I'm sorry, sir.

BOSUN

Don't you answer an officer back. You take
care, I've me eye on you. You need a taste of
the cat.

MAINTOP *[off]*

Ahoy there, deck! Lively there!

SAILING MASTER

Stop belly-aching and hoist that yard.

BOSUN

Ay, ay, sir! Take your purchase: and sway!
*[Under the direction of the Bosun, who signals
the rhythm with his whistle, the men pull on
their lines hand over hand to hoist the yard]*

MEN *[pulling]*

... and sway! ... and sway! ... and sway!

MAINTOP *[off]*

Belay hoisting, deck!

SAILING MASTER

Belay there. Don't lose!

*[The men stop hoisting. Squeak, a ship's corpo-
ral, enters]*

BOSUN

Make fast to braces! Don't lose.
*[The Bosun signals 'Make fast' on his pipe.
The two parties of men move to the braces and
make off their lines]*

BOSUN

Fall in forrard!
*[The hoisting crews run swiftly off stage. The
Novice slips as he runs, and falls]*

BOSUN

You again, you novice! That's done for you!
I'll teach you!

NOVICE

I didn't mean to slip, sir. Seems I can't do any
thing right here.

BOSUN

Squeak!
[Squeak crosses to them]

SQUEAK

Yessir.

BOSUN

Take this man away, and list him for twenty strokes. See it's done at once.

SQUEAK

Yessir! Yessir!
[*He seizes the Novice*]

NOVICE

Sir, no!-not me!

SQUEAK

Yes-you.

NOVICE

Don't have me flogged - I can't bear it - not flogging!

SQUEAK

Forrard, you.

NOVICE

Not flogging! Not that!

[*Squeak pulls the Novice out. The Bosun follows them*]

FIRST MATE

Toplights down there! If anyone else wants the cat, he can go slipping. Get forrard!

SECOND MATE

Pay attention, you! Take your Bibles and get forrard!

CHORUS [*both parties*]

O heave! O heave away, heave! O heave!
[*The two parties go out slowly, dragging their halystones. The stage is empty except for the Sailing Master on the quarter-deck*]

MAINTOP [*off*]

Boat ahoy!

VOICE [*off, answering from the distant boat*]

Guard boat! *Indomitable*!

MAINTOP [*off*]

Ahoy, deck! Boarding-party boat to larboard.
[*Four Midshipmen run across the deck and up to the quarter-deck to the Sailing Master*]

MIDSHIPMEN

Sir! *Boarding-party boat to larboard.*

SAILING MASTER

Ay, ay!
[*The First Lieutenant enters along the quarter-deck*]

Mr Redburn! Boarding-party boat returning.
I see we've three recruits.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Very good, Mr Flint. We'll go on deck.
[*They descend to the main-deck*]

SAILING MASTER

Bosun! Clear gangway! Jump to it.
[*Bosun re-enters with men*]

BOSUN

Gangway, lads, gangway!
[*His men set to work clearing the gangway-rail*]

SAILING MASTER [*to a Sailor*]

Bring table and chairs and muster-book.

MAINTOP [*off*]

Cutter alongside!
[*A Sailor sets a table and chairs for the Officers*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT [*to the Sailor*]

Send for John Claggart! Send for the Master-at-Arms!
[*The Sailor goes. The First Lieutenant and Sailing Master seat themselves at the table on the main-deck*]

Well, what have we got this time?

SAILING MASTER

We seem to have the devil's own luck. Nothing worth having these days. Diseased, hungry grumblers, sweepings of the stews and jails, lackeys and pimps, mechanics and lickspittles, - Ah! [*He thumps the table*] it's wearisome! But it's war, we must be content.
[*Lieutenant Ratcliffe appears at the head of the gangway and salutes. He is followed by three impressed men, Red Whiskers, Arthur Jones and Billy Budd, under guard. They fall in on deck*]

RATCLIFFE

To report having boarded the British merchant-man *Rights o' Man*, homeward bound to Bristol. Three men impressed. No resistance.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Very good, Mr Ratcliffe. We shall proceed at once to question them.

[*John Claggart, the Master-at-Arms, comes on deck, salutes and crosses behind the table*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Master-at-Arms, we have three recruits. We require your assistance.

CLAGGART

Your honour, I am at your disposal. First man forward!

[*Red Whiskers is pushed forward*]

CLAGGART

Your name?

RED WHISKERS

I object, I object! You've no right to press me.

CLAGGART

Your name?

RED WHISKERS

I'm a decent tradesman, I've a wife and family ...

CLAGGART

Your name? [*He leans forward and threatens him with his rattan*]

RED WHISKERS

No! No! Joseph Higgins. I protest. I Protest. I object.

CLAGGART

Your age?

RED WHISKERS

I won't give it - I refuse ...

CLAGGART

Your age?

[*Claggart threatens him again*]

RED WHISKERS

Forty-eight. It's not fair. I'm too old. It's

against the law.

CLAGGART

Your trade?

RED WHISKERS

I'm a butcher.

CLAGGART

Your home?

RED WHISKERS

Bristol, and I wish I'd never left it. I'm no sailor.

CLAGGART

Silence! I believe that is all you require, your honour.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Forepeak, I think, Mr Flint?

SAILING MASTER

Little use to us, but we must keep him. We seem to have the devil's own luck. Take him away.

CLAGGART

Next man.

RED WHISKERS

I protest. I object. I only went to oblige. I'm no sailor.

[*Red Whiskers is hustled away protesting. The second pressed man, Arthur Jones, is pushed forward*]

CLAGGART

Your name?

JONES

Arthur Jones.

CLAGGART

Your age?

JONES

Thirty-four.

CLAGGART

Your trade?

JONES

Weaver.

CLAGGART

Your home?

JONES

Spitalfields.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Forepeak again, I think, Mr Flint?

SAILING MASTER

Nothing special, but we must be content. Oh, it's wearisome! Next man.

[Jones is marched away]

CLAGGART

Next man forward. *[He calls to Billy]* Now you. Come here! Your name?

[Billy Budd comes forward]

BILLY

Billy Budd, sir.

CLAGGART

Your age?

BILLY

Don't know, sir.

CLAGGART

'Don't know?' Your trade?

BILLY

Able seaman.

CLAGGART

Can you read?

BILLY

No - but I can sing!

CLAGGART

Never mind the singing.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

This looks better. It'll hearten us.

SAILING MASTER

Better fortune at last, and it's welcome.

CLAGGART

Sound in wind and limb?

BILLY

O yes, sir, yes indeed!

CLAGGART

Where's your home?

BILLY

Haven't any. They say I was a ... a ... a ...

FIRST LIEUTENANT

He stammers! That's a pity. Fine recruit otherwise. Fine recruit all the same.

SAILING MASTER

He stammers. That's a pity. Fine recruit otherwise.

There is always some flaw in them. Always something.

BILLY

a ... a ... foundling! Ay, it comes and it goes ... or so the chaps tell me. Don't you worry. Foundling, that's the word. I'm a fou-ou-ou-ou-oundling. found in a basket tied to a good man's door, the poor old man.

FIRST LIEUTENANT *[to the Sailing Master]*

A pretty good find.

BILLY

That's all right, sir.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

What d'you say, Master-at-Arms?

CLAGGART

A find in a thousand, your honour. A beauty.

A jewel.

The pearl of great price.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

We need many more like him.

CLAGGART

Your honour, there are no more like him. I have seen many men, many years have I given to the King, sailed many seas. He is a King's bargain.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Now where shall we place him?

SAILING MASTER

Billy BuddとBartlebyと、他

Foretop, I think.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Foretopman, be off and good luck to you.

Mind you behave yourself and do as you're told.

BILLY

Thank you, sir. Foretopman! Thank you!

[*Exultant*]

Billy Budd, king of the birds!

Billy Budd, king of the world!

Up among the sea-hawks, up against the storms.

Looking down on the deck, looking down on the waves.

Working aloft with my mates. Working aloft in the foretop.

Working and helping, working and sharing.

Goodbye to the old life. Don't want it no more.

[*He shouts seawards*]

Farewell to you, old comrades! Farewell to for ever.

Farewell, *Rights o' Man*.

Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*.

Farewell to you for ever, old *Rights o' Man*.

[*The Chorus echoes Billy off stage*]

SAILING MASTER, FIRST LIEUTENANT AND RATCLIFFE

What's that? 'Rights o' man'? Down, sir! How dare you?

Clear the decks!

CLAGGART

Clear the decks!

[*The deck is cleared of Sailors*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Dangerous! 'The rights of man' indeed!

SAILING MASTER

Always something, always some defect.

[*Exit Sailing Master*]

RATCLIFFE

Fine young chap, but we must keep a watch.

[*Exit Ratcliffe*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Master-at Arms, instruct your police. You heard what he called out.

CLAGGART

I heard, your honour.

[*The First Lieutenant goes out*]

I heard, your honour! Yes, I heard. Do they think I'm deaf? Was I born yesterday? Have I never studied man and men's weaknesses? Have I not apprenticed myself to this hateful world, to this accursed ship? And oh, the fools! These officers!- they are naught but dust in the wind.

Squeak!

[*Squeak pops on to the main-deck*]

SQUEAK

Yessir.

CLAGGART

Keep an eye on that man.

SQUEAK

Yessir! The one who grumbles.

CLAGGART [*rounding on him*]

Let me finish. Grumblers aren't dangerous.

SQUEAK

No, sir.

CLAGGART

Keep an eye on the big lad with the stammer - Billy Budd.

SQUEAK

Yessir, yessir!

CLAGGART [*bullying*]

'Yessir, yessir.' And how? You hadn't thought, you wouldn't think, you can't think. Now listen! Go and play all your little tricks on this Budd, - tangle up his hammock, mess his kit, spill his grog, splash his soup, sneak about him. And if you see anything of his you fancy-I'll make no trouble.

SQUEAK

Thank you, sir, thank you. Grand!

CLAGGART [*malevolent*]

Look out for his temper. Look out for those

fists. You're playing with fire, Squeak, with fire ...

SQUEAK

Oh, dear!

CLAGGART

He'll kill you if he catches you. Be off!

[Squeak goes, leaving Claggart alone]

Yes, be off! and be damned! Oh, what a ship! One piece of dirt after another.

[A Sailor (the Novice's friend) enters and salutes]

What now?

SAILOR

The flogging, sir. All duly over and King's Regulations observed. But the offender took it badly. He's only a boy and he cannot walk.

CLAGGART

Let him crawl.

[Claggart goes out along the deck. The Novice comes in half-supported by a small group of Sailors. His Friend goes forward to help him]

FRIEND

Come along, kid!

NOVICE

I'm done for, I'm done for.

CHORUS

Yes, lost for ever on the endless sea.

FRIEND

The pain'll soon pass.

NOVICE

The shame'll never pass.

CHORUS

Ay, he's lost for ever on the endless sea.

FRIEND

Yer bruises'll heal up, kid.

NOVICE

But my heart's broken!

CHORUS

Ay, he's heart-broken.

We're all broken.

FRIEND

I'll look after you!

NOVICE

They've caught me, my home's gone.

CHORUS

Ay, his home's gone.

They've caught us, they've caught all of us.

FRIEND, NOVICE AND CHORUS

We're all of us lost, lost for ever on the endless sea.

[The Novice is slowly helped away by his companions. Billy and Dansker, an old seaman, come quickly out of the shadown]

BILLY

Christ! The poor chap, the poor little runt!

DANSKER

Never seen blood, Baby?

BILLY

I've never seen it shed for no reason.

[Red Whiskers and Donald follow Billy and Dansker]

RED WHISKERS

I protest! Let them try it on me!

DONALD

They will, chum, be sure. Wallop!

RED WHISKERS

I'm a respectable tradesman. They dursn't

DONALD

Wallop! Wallop, wallop!

DANSKER AND DONALD

Only twenty. Fifty ... hundred sometimes. Hurts!

BILLY AND RED WHISKERS

I'll give no offence, I'll get no punishment.

DONALD

You'll see, Whiskers.

DANSKER

You'll see, Baby.

BILLY

No I won't, and my name ain't Baby, asking your pardon.

RED WHISKERS

No I won't, and my name ain't Whiskers, asking your pardon.

DANSKER AND DONALD

Object to it?

BILLY

Nay.

RED WHISKERS

Yes.

DANSKER

Object to Beauty? Not a bad word, beauty.

BILLY

Me a beauty? There's a name for me. Call me what you like, chum! I don't mind.

DONALD

Whiskers! Pull his bloody whiskers!

RED WHISKERS

Oh! Oh! Lemme go! I won't be pulled around; and I won't be called out of my name.

[Whistles are heard off. Claggart enters with the Bosun and two Mates and some Sailors]

BILLY

What's that? What's those whistles?

DONALD

That's changing the watch.

CLAGGART

Come on, get up aloft!

MATES

Come on!

BOSUN

Get up aloft!

CLAGGART [*approaching Billy*]

Foretopman!

BILLY

Me, sir?

CLAGGART

This is a man-o'-war. Take off that fancy neckerchief!

[*He pulls off Billy's scarf*]

BILLY

Very good, sir.

CLAGGART

And... Look after your dress. Take pride in yourself, Beauty, and you'll come to no harm.

[*Claggart turns to the Mate*]

Get those men aloft!

[*Claggart, the Bosun and Mates go off. The Sailors begin climbing the shrouds, and the off-duty men descend to the deck*]

BILLY [*to Donald*]

D'you hear that?

DONALD

Ssh! That's the one to study if you want to dodge punishment. That's Jemmy Legs.

BILLY

He seems all right.

DANSKER

Billy, be warned. Keep clear of him.

BILLY

What's the rast like? What's the Captain like?

DONALD

Starry Vere we call him. Starry Vere!

BILLY

Starry Vere you call him?

[*Some sailors gather around Billy and the others*]

CHORUS OF SAILORS

Starry Vere!

RED WHISKERS

That's his name?

DANSKER

He's the best of them all.

DONALD

He's a triumph, and a giant in battle - the one to lead us against the French.

CHORUS

The French, the French!

DONALD

They killed their king, and they'll kill ours.

CHORUS

Ay, ay! Down with them or they'll down us!

BILLY

But Starry Vere'll stop them?

DONALD

Ay, he'll destroy them. He knows all their tricks. He's brave, and he's good.

CHORUS

He cares for us, he wishes us well, he cares for us like we are his sons.

BILLY

He's good is he? and goodness is best, and I'm for it, Starry Vere, and I'm for you.

CHORUS [*and the others*]

Starry, Starry Vere! He's the salt of the earth.
We'll follow Vere, right thro' the gates of Hell.
Starry, Starry Vere! Starry, show us the way.

BILLY

Star of the morning, star of the morning ...
Leading from night, leading to light ...
Starry I'll follow you ...
I'd die to save you, ask for to die ...
I'll follow you all can, follow you for ever!

BOSUN [*entering*]

Hi! What do you think you're doing there?
Get below decks! Get below there!

[*The Sailors disperse quickly*]
[*Quick Curtain*]

Scene two

[*Captain Vere's cabin. Evening, a week later.*
Vere is sitting reading]

VERE

Boy!

[*The Boy enters*]

My compliments to Mr Redburn and Mr Flint, and will they take a glass of wine with me.

[*The Boy goes out. Vere resumes his reading*]

[*He lays down the book*]

Plutarch - the Greeks and the Romans - their troubles and ours are the same. May their virtues be ours, and their courage! O God, grant me light to guide us, to guide us all!

[*The Boy opens the door to admit the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master*]

BOY [*speaking*]

Mr Redburn and Mr Flint, sir.

[*The Boy sets a bottle and glasses on the table and goes out*]

VERE

Gentlemen, I am glad to see you. Be seated.

[*They sit*]

Gentlemen, the King!

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

The King!

ALL

God bless him!

[*They drink*]

VERE

Well, my friends, here we are - nearing.
Finisterre - approaching enemy waters. We may be in action of any time.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Glad when we are, sir, very glad!

SAILING MASTER

Any moment now, sir, we may sight a French sail and chase her. For show her heels she will to a certainty.

VERE

You are right, Mr Flint, she'll fly from us. We've hard times before us, but there'll be victory in the end.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

May we soon be at 'em. Glad for a crack at the French.

SAILING MASTER

Yes, action's coming. The whole ship's wanting it to start.

SAILING MASTER

Don't like the French. Don't like their frenchified ways.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Don't like the French. Their notions don't suit us, nor their ideas.

SAILING MASTER

Don't like the French. Don't like their bowing and scraping.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Don't like their hoppity-skippety ways.

SAILING MASTER

Don't like the French.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Don't like their lingo.

SAILING MASTER AND FIRST LIEUTENANT

Those damned mounseers!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

England for me. British brawn and beef.

SAILING MASTER

England for me. Home and beauty.

SAILING MASTER

Beg pardon, sir. We ought to express ourselves differently.

VERE

No, gentlemen? I feel as you do. Fill your glasses.

Another toast. The French!...

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

The French!...

ALL

Down with them!

[*They drink*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Any danger of French notions spreading this side, sir?

VERE

Great danger, great danger. There is a word which we scarcely dare speak, yet at moments it has to be spoken. Mutiny.

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

Mutiny.

SAILING MASTER

Spithead, the Nore, the floating republic.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Oh, the Nore! The shame of it! I remember. I served there, those days are clear in my mind. I saw the disgrace and the sorrow. I saw wickedness and its merited punishment. O God preserve us from the Nore!

SAILING MASTER

The Nore!

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

The floating republic!

VERE

Ay, at Spithead the men may have had their grievances, but the Nore—what had we there? Revolution, sedition, the Jacobins, the infamous spirit of France... France who has killed her king and denied her God, France the tyrant who wears the cap of liberty, France who pretends to love mankind and is at war with the world, France the eternal enemy of righteousness. That was the Nore. Ay, we must be vigilant. We must be on our guard.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

We are, sir. Claggart is an able one.

VERE

He is indeed a veritable Argus.

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

Beg pardon, sir?

VERE

He has a hundred eyes.

SAILING MASTER

Need of him with that young chap who shouted out 'Rights o'man'.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Yes - 'Rights o' man'! He needs watching. 'The rights o' man' indeed!

SAILING MASTER

Dangerous one. We must be vigilant. 'The rights o'man' indeed!

[The sound of a shanty is heard from below decks]

VERE

Oh, that's nothing. I've noted the fellow in question - Budd, Billy Budd, foretopman. Nothing - just youthful high spirits. Don't let that worry us. No danger there, gentlemen. And listen to them singing below decks. Where there is happiness there cannot be harm. We owe so much to them - some torn from their homes.

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND SAILING MASTER

More reason we should watch them.

[There is a knock at the door. Lieutenant Ratcliffe enters]

RATCLIFFE

Land on the port bow, sir. Cape Finisterre. Enemy waters!

[All rise]

VERE

Gentlemen, you'll be wanting to leave me. Work for us all before long. Good night, my friends.

OFFICERS

Good night, sir.

[The Officers go out. Vere sits again and takes his book]

VERE [reading]

'At the battle of Salamis the Athenians, with vastly inferior numbers against the power of Xerxes... the Athenians ...

[He lays down his book and listens to the men

singing between decks]

[The curtain falls slowly]

Scene three

[The berth-deck, showing a vista of gun-bays, in each of which a group of seamen stores its kitbags and slings its hammocks. The same evening]

[The watch below is ending a shanty. Billy, Donald, Red Whiskers and Dansker are in the nearest gun-bay]

ALL

Blow her away. Blow her to Hilo, Riley.

Say farewell, we've a long way to go!

SEMI-CHORUS

Blow her away! Blow her to Hilo, blow her away.

[The shanty slowly dies out]

DONALD [briskly]

Here, lads! Here, lads! Here! Remember this one?

[The Semi-Chorus from the other bays crowds round and joins in the chorus of the new shanty]

We're off to Samoa

By way of Genoa,

Roll on Shenandoah

And up with the line and away,

Up with the line and away. [With Chorus]

RED WHISKERS

We're towing to Malta

The rock of Gibraltar

With only a halter

And Davy Jones lying below,

[With Chorus]

So pray to the Devil below.

BILLY

We're off to Savannah,

O sing Polly Anna,

My lovely Susannah,

A bird flying high in the sky.

She's only a bird in the sky. [With Chorus]

Oh, Anna Susannah!

I'll find you a bed by and by.

DONALD

Billy Budd と Bartleby と、他

We're off to Nantucket,
Kick over the bucket,
So muck it and chuck it
A dunducket look in the eye.
[*With Chorus*]

RED WHISKERS
We're riding the ocean,
A dippetty motion,
O give me a potion,
No fish in the locker for me!
[*With Chorus*]

BILLY
We're off to Bermuda,
The Sultan of Judah
Can eat barracuda,
Including the weevils and all.
[*With Chorus*]

DONALD
We're anchored off Scilly,
My aunt willy nilly,
Was winking at Billy,
She'll cut up her Billy for pie.

RED WHISKERS, BILLY, DONALD AND CHORUS
She'll cut up her Billy for pie,
For all he's a catch on the eye.
[*The Semi-Chorus go back to their own bays in the distance and intersperse the following dialogue with snatches of the shanty*]

BILLY
Come along, Dansker, and sing!

RED WHISKERS
Come along, Dansker, join the fun!

DANSKER
Na, na, too old for fun, too old for dancing, too old for women. I know how fun ends.

RED WHISKERS
That's no proper thing to say. Don't spoil the sport.

DANSKER
Na, leave me alone. I'm finished. There's only one thing in the world that I want and I ain't got it.

BILLY
What is it, friend?

DANSKER
Bacca, Baby Budd, plug o' bacca.

BILLY
That's easy put right. I'll lend you a chew. I'll give you the whole bar. It's in my kitty. Back in a moment.
[*He goes over to a corner-bay to hunt in his kitbag*]

DONALD
He's a good cuss is Billy.

DANSKER
He's too good. There's his whole trouble.

BILLY
Hi! You ... a ... a ...! [*He stammers*]

DANSKER
What did I tell you?

RED WHISKERS AND DONALD
He's a-stammer! He's upset!

CHORUS
He's a-stammer!
What's up?

SQUEAK
No ... Ah!

DANSKER
What did I tell you?

RED WHISKERS, DONALD AND CHORUS
Billy's a-stammer!

BILLY
Come out of that!

SQUEAK
No!
[*Billy pulls Squeak forward*]

BILLY
What you meddling there for?

SQUEAK
I warn't.

BILLY

You liar! I caught you.

SQUEAK

Don't, Billy, you're throttling me.

BILLY

Yer stinking little vermin.

[*Billy marches Squeak out into the light*]

CHORUS

Squeak!

Got him at last. He took them ear-rings of
mise.

Always at it!

Sneaking swine. Look out!-He's got a knife!

BILLY

So that's it! Very well!

[*Billy and Squeak fight*]

CHORUS

Go it, Beauty! Look out! Careful. Get his
knife arm.

[*Billy catches Squeak by the knife arm and
struggles to disarm him*]

CHORUS

Oh be careful, Billy! Get him down. Go it,
Beauty! O Baby, get him down! Careful!
Look out, Baby!

[*Billy chases Squeak round the deck and knocks
him down as Claggart appears with his Corporals.
Whistles shrill loudly*]

CLAGGART

Avast there!

CHORUS

Look out! Look out! Well done.

CLAGGART

How did this start? Silence! Get back there.
Dansker, you speak.

DANSKER

Billy went to his bag. Squeak there. Billy
lugged him here. Squeak drew a knife. Billy
floored him. That's all.

CLAGGART [*to the Corporals*]

Seize him.

[*They pull Squeak to his feet and hold him*]

SQUEAK

I wasn't ...

CLAGGART

Put him in irons.

SQUEAK

Sir, it was you told me ...

CLAGGART

Gag him!

[*Claggart turns on Billy*]

As for you ...! [*He smiles*] Handsomely done,
my lad.

And handsome is as handsome did it, too.

[*Distant whistles are heard*]

Sling hammocks and turn in. Lights out.

[*Claggart turns away. A Boy stumbles against
him. He lashes savagely at him with his rat-
tan*]

BOY [*crying out*]

Ah ...!

CLAGGART [*furious*]

Look where you go!

[*The men sling hammocks in the bays and the
battle-lanterns are turned low except for one by
the companion-way. Claggart walks slowly
along the deck and slowly back again.*]

CHORUS [*off*]-TENOR SOLO

Over the water,

Over the ocean,

Into the harbour

Carry me home.

CLAGGART

Handsomely done, my lad. Handsome indeed ...

CHORUS [*a few voices*]

Over the water,

Over the ocean,

Into the harbour

Lying at anchor,

Carry me home.

[*The deck is silent and dark. Claggart stands
alone in the small pool of light by the*]

companion-way]

CLAGGART

O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness! Would that I never encountered you! Would that I lived in my own world always, in that depravity to which I was born.

There I found peace of a sort, there I established an order such as reigns in Hell. But alas, alas! the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it and suffers. O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness! would that I had never seen you!

Having seen you, what choice remains to me? None, none! I am doomed to annihilate you, I am vowed to your destruction. I will wipe you off the face of the earth, off this tiny floating fragment of earth, off this ship where fortune has led you. First I will trouble your happiness. I will mutilate and silence the body where you dwell. It shall hang from the yard-arm, it shall fall into the depths of the sea, and all shall be as if nothing had been. No, you cannot escape! With hate and envy I am stronger than love.

So may it be! O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness! you are surely in my power tonight. Nothing can defend you. Nothing! So may it be! For what hope remains if love can escape?

If love still lives and grows strong where I cannot enter, what hope is there in my own dark world for me? No! I cannot believe it! That were torment keen.

I, John Claggart, Master-at-arms upon the *Indomitable*, have you in my power, and I will destroy you.

[*The Novice comes slowly down the companion-way and salutes*]

CLAGGART

Come here. Remember your promise. Are you ready?

NOVICE

Yes, sir.

CLAGGART

Tonight - this night - this very minute I've

work for you.

Will you do it?

NOVICE

Yes, sir, yes, I'll do anything - anything! Oh, the flogging and the misery! and you've said you'll protect me, spoke so fatherly to me when you found me crying. I can't stand any more. I'll do anything you want. Yes, yes.

CLAGGART

Come here. Come nearer. I'll protect you if you don't fail. Squeak has failed.

NOVICE

I shan't fail. I'm not like Squeak. I'm clever. They all said so at home - and then the press-gang caught me. I'll do anything to serve you, anything.

CLAGGART

Would you betray a shipmate?

NOVICE [*immediately*]

Yes.

CLAGGART

Get evidence against him?

NOVICE [*immediately*]

I'll get it.

CLAGGART

Come closer. A shipmate who's disloyal - go and talk to him and tempt him. Pretend you're disloyal too, tempt him to join you with this, [*he shows some coins*] compromise him. Then come and tell me.

NOVICE

I'll do it, trust me. I'll do my best. Who is he?

CLAGGART

Billy Budd. [*After a pause*] Billy Budd. Why do you hesitate?

NOVICE

Not that one.

CLAGGART

Why?

NOVICE

He's good.

CLAGGART [*striking him*]

'Good'? What is goodness to you?

NOVICE

No, sir! Don't - don't hurt me again, sir, I can't bear it. No!

CLAGGART

You've had twenty strokes. Do you want worse? Will you - or will you not work for me?

NOVICE [*blubbing*]

Yes, I'll work for you. I've no choice. Give me the money.

[*Claggart hands him the coins and goes*]

Why had it to be Billy, the one we all love? Why am I in this cruel hateful ship instead of safe at home? Oh, why was I ever born? Why? It's fate, it's fate. I've no choice. Everything's fate. There's no end to it, and may God forgive me.

[*He pulls himself together and goes to the bay where Billy is sleeping in his hammock*]

Billy!... Hist! Billy Budd!

BILLY [*asleep*]

Dreaming, drowsing ...

NOVICE

Hist! Billy, wake up!

BILLY

It's a-dreaming that I am - fathoms down, fathoms ...

Who is it? Can't see your face, and dark, isn't it? Christ, I dreamt I was under the sea!

Who are you? Whatever's in the wind?

NOVICE

Speak quietly! Don't wake the others. It's a friend. I've got something to say.

BILLY

Nay, I'm asleep again - I feel it stealing on me now ... dreaming ...

NOVICE

Billy, listen! Come over here.

[*Billy climbs from his hammock, aided by the Novice, and they move into an empty gun-bay*]

NOVICE [*hurriedly whispering*]

It's unjust, it's unfair! These press-gangs are unfair. I was taken from my home, and you were pressed too - pressed on a homeward-bound. It isn't fair, it isn't fair, Billy.

BILLY

Never gave it a thought. Still, you're right in a manner of speaking. Doesn't seem fair - and you're only a boy.

NOVICE

But you were pressed too, Billy, and there's others like us too. A whole gang. We can't stand it any more. The dirt and the stinking food, the floggings and the lashings ... It's gone too far. We talk and plan together, and I thought I'd talk to you, Billy. Couldn't you help us at a pinch? There's twenty, thirty in our gang, and we're wanting a leader.

BILLY [*fully awake at last*]

What do you mean?

NOVICE

Look at this! Guineas! [*He holds them up*]

BILLY

They twinkle pretty - ay, they twinkle lovely.

NOVICE

Look at them! Touch them! They're for you.

BILLY

Why for me?

NOVICE

Hist, quietly! See the pretty pair ... Don't they twinkle lovely in the night-light, shining all gold in the moonlight. See, they're yours, Billy, and more like them if you'll lead us.

BILLY

Why, d'ye think I'd ... a ... a ... a ...

NOVICE

[Billy!

[Billy clenches his fist with rage as the stammer chokes his utterance. The Novice flies in terror. Dansker comes forward from the hammocks]

BILLY

a ... a ... Dansker, old friend, glad to see you!

DANSKER

What's the matter, Beauty? Heard you stammer, saw that novice slipping away ...

BILLY

Novice, was he? Thought he might be a sper-rit the queer things he said. Oh, Dansker, keep me company, stay here a bit!

[Dansker turns up the lantern in the gun-bay and sits]

BILLY

I was dreaming in my hammock - fathoms down, fathoms ... and didn't rightly wake until he offered me them guineas.

DANSKER

Ah!

BILLY

Mutiny, that's what they were for, to make me mutiny - mutiny! Still I have sent him back where he belonged ... (dreaming, drop me deep) ... Anything wrong, Dansker? You're so silent. Want anything of mine? Shall I fetch you another plug?

DANSKER

I want nothing of yours, Baby, no, nothing - not your youth, no, nor your strength, no, nor your looks nor your goodness, for Jemmy Legs is down on you.

BILLY

Jemmy Legs? - The Master-at-Arms?

DANSKER

Ay, he's down on you.

BILLY

But Jemmy Legs likes me. He calls me that sweet pleasant fellow. He gives me the smile and easy order when we meet. And when I

gave Squeak that drubbing, 'Handsomely done' was all he said and he smiled. No, he likes me. They all like me.

DANSKER

No use - he's down on you.

BILLY

This life suits me. I couldn't wish for better mates. Ay! and the wind and the sails and being aloft and the deck below so small and the sea so wide and the stars seeming all to sway.

DANSKER

Beauty, you'd better go back.

BILLY

I wouldn't go back where I was for nothing. It suits me and I'm suited. And Dansker, old friend, I've heard a tale. I'm to get promotion - captain of the mizzen top. Think of that - near Captain Vere himself, God bless him! Billy Budd, late of the *Rights o' Man*, and soon to be captain of the mizzen!

BILLY

Oh, I'm content, I'm content. Everyone loves me, Jemmy Legs and all. Here's my life, my own world. Here's my friends, and here's you, Dansker, old friend, here's you!

DANSKER

Beauty, you're a fool, and I've told you before. Jemmy Legs is down on you.

[The curtain falls]

END OF ACT ONE

Act two

Scene one

[The main-deck and quarter-deck some days later.

A few men are at work. Vere stands on the quarter-deck with the First Lieutenant and other Officers. He is looking out to sea. The air is grey with mist]

VERE

I don't like the look of the mist, Mr Redburn.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

No more do I, sir. It may lift, but not for long.

VERE

Time we came to action. Time indeed.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

The men are getting impatient with this long waiting.

VERE

That I well understand.

[Claggart enters slowly along the main-deck. He stops and removes his cap as a sign that he wishes to speak to the Captain]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

The Master-at-Arms is here to see you, sir.

VERE

No, I don't like the look of the mist! Send Mr Claggart up.

FIRST LIEUTENANT [calling]

The Captain will see you.

[Claggart ascends to the quarter-deck, cap in hand. The Officers withdraw, but remain in sight]

VERE

Well, what is it, Master-at-Arms?

CLAGGART

With great regret I must disturb your honour. Duty compels me. I would be failing in my trust unless I came to you at once.

VERE

Speak freely. What is it?

CLAGGART

Your honour, I have served my country long, and have striven in all ways to serve you here upon the Indomitable.

VERE

Master-at-Arms, your work is satisfactory. What do you want to say?

CLAGGART

Would that I need not say it, Would I could keep silent, but there is danger, sir, there is danger aboard. Danger from one who ...

[He is interrupted by a cry from the maintop]

MAINTOP [off]

Deck ahoy! Enemy sail on starboard bow!

[The mist begins to lift; the scene brightens]

BOSUN [pointing]

Enemy sail on starboard bow!

[The Officers hurry forward to where Vere is standing. The Sailing Master and Lieutenant Ratcliffe join them. Claggart descends to the main-deck, looks for a moment in the direction of the sail, then goes quickly forward]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

The French! The French! And the mist is gone!

SAILING MASTER

Enemy sail! The French! The mist is gone.

RATCLIFFE

By God, the French! And the mist is gone!

CHORUS ON QUARTER-DECK

Enemy sail! The French!

By God, the French! And the mist is gone!

CHORUS ON MAIN-DECK

The French at last!

RATCLIFFE

It's a Frenchman, sure enough.

SAILING MASTER

A frigate fully-rigged!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

She's four miles at least.

SAILING MASTER

No, three.

FIRST LIEUTENANT AND RATCLIFFE

No, four!

[Vere seizes a telescope from the Sailing Master and sights it]

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

We'll blow her from the water! She's a Frenchman, sure enough.

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

She'll outsail us She's a fifty-gunner.

VERE [putting down the telescope]

A Frenchman, seventy-four and new rigged.
Three miles off. Course Nor'-nor'-east. Man the braces, Mr Flint.

[Whistles sound off stage]

SAILING MASTER [Shouting through a megaphone]

Man the braces! At the double!

BOSUN

Ay, ay, sir.

[A team of haulers rushes in and takes ropes, and hauls with the Bosun]

BOSUS

Come on, you lubbers!... and sway!

HAULING PARTY

... and sway!... and sway!... and sway!

CHORUS (TUTTI)

This is our moment,
The moment we've been waiting for,
These long weeks.

VERE

Make all sail!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Make all sail!

SAILING MASTER

Make all sail - set royals and sky-rakers!

VERE, FIRST LIEUTENANT, RATCLIFFE AND SAILING MASTER

O God, keep the mist away and the breeze fresh!

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

A Frenchman at last! A Froggy! Our first fight. We'll blow her from the water.

ALL VOICES

Hooray!

VERE

Action, Mr Redburn. Beat to quarters.

ALL ON QUARTER-DECK

Beat to quarters. Beat to quarters!

ALL VOICES

Hooray!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS AND CHORUS

This is our moment,

The moment we've been waiting for these long weeks.

[The Gunners run to their guns and start loading]

GUNNERS

Come on, boys! Here she is! Grab the breechings! Back with the guns! Give 'em a taste of good English shot, lads!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Gunners! Ready for loading! Stand by to your guns!

[Seamen run to the nettings with lashed hammocks and stow them as a rough screen against shot]

SEAMEN

Quick, lads, there's a battle in the wind! Fetch your hammocks, stow 'em tight. Quick, lads!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Bring those hammocks forrard! Stow 'em tight!

[After guardsmen drag water-tubs amidships and lay matches across their brims. Some scatter sand on deck and bring buckets on ropes for dousing fires]

AFTERGUARDSMEN

Tubs ahoy! Sand the decks! We'll put out
the fires!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Monkeys! Where's those monkeys? Double
up! Double up! Bring the powder and
charges.

*[A crowd of powder-monkeys run in with cases
of powder over their shoulders]*

POWDER-MONKEYS [*chattering*]

Look out! Look out! Make way for the
powder-monkeys!

ALL ON MAIN-DECK

Now we'll see action.

We're through with waiting.

Now for the deeds.

*[Marines march along the main-deck and up to
the quarter-deck]*

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Hey, Marines!

MARINES

Left right, left right, left right. Marines!

Make way for Marines!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Fore-and-afters! Staysails and jibs! Strain
by the starboard. Sheet 'em home.

Billy Budd と Bartleby と、他

37



37, 38, 39 Costume designs
Designer Fohn Piper

38

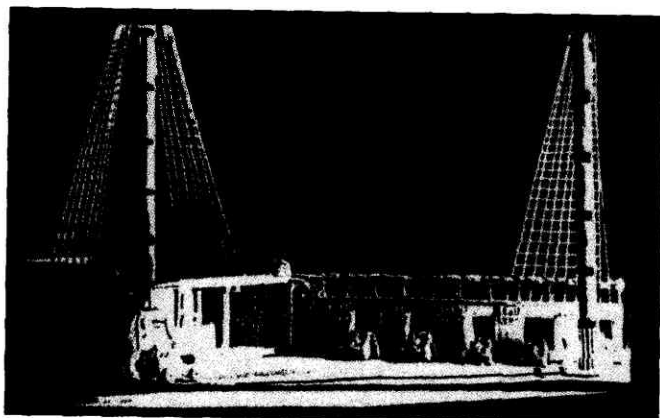


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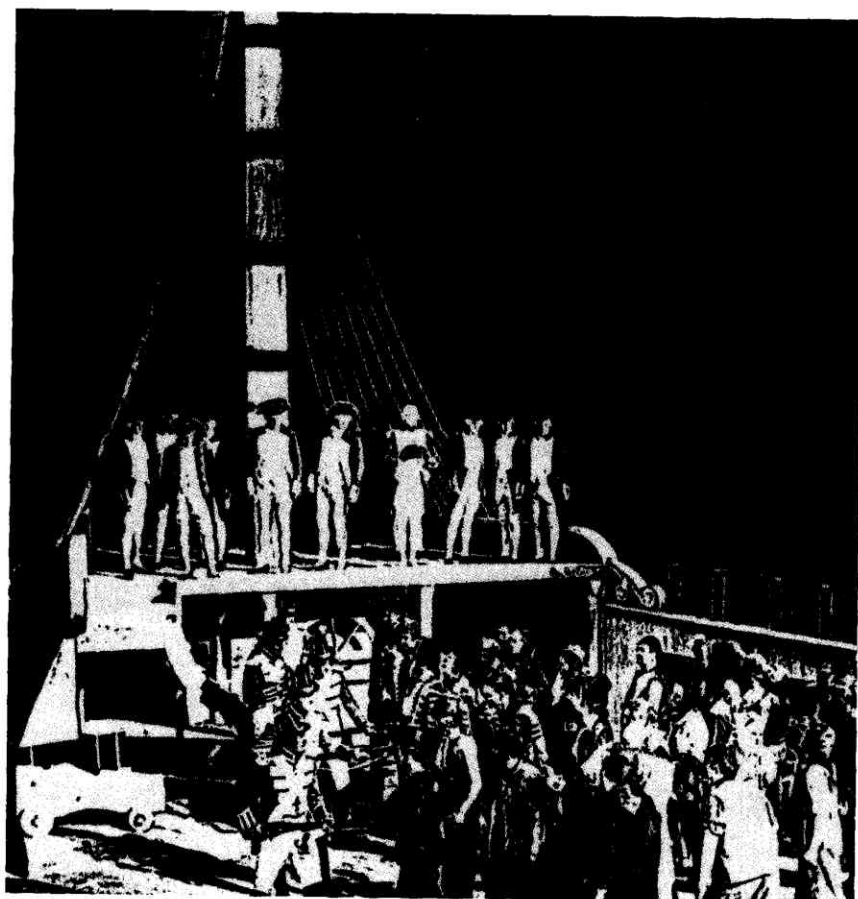




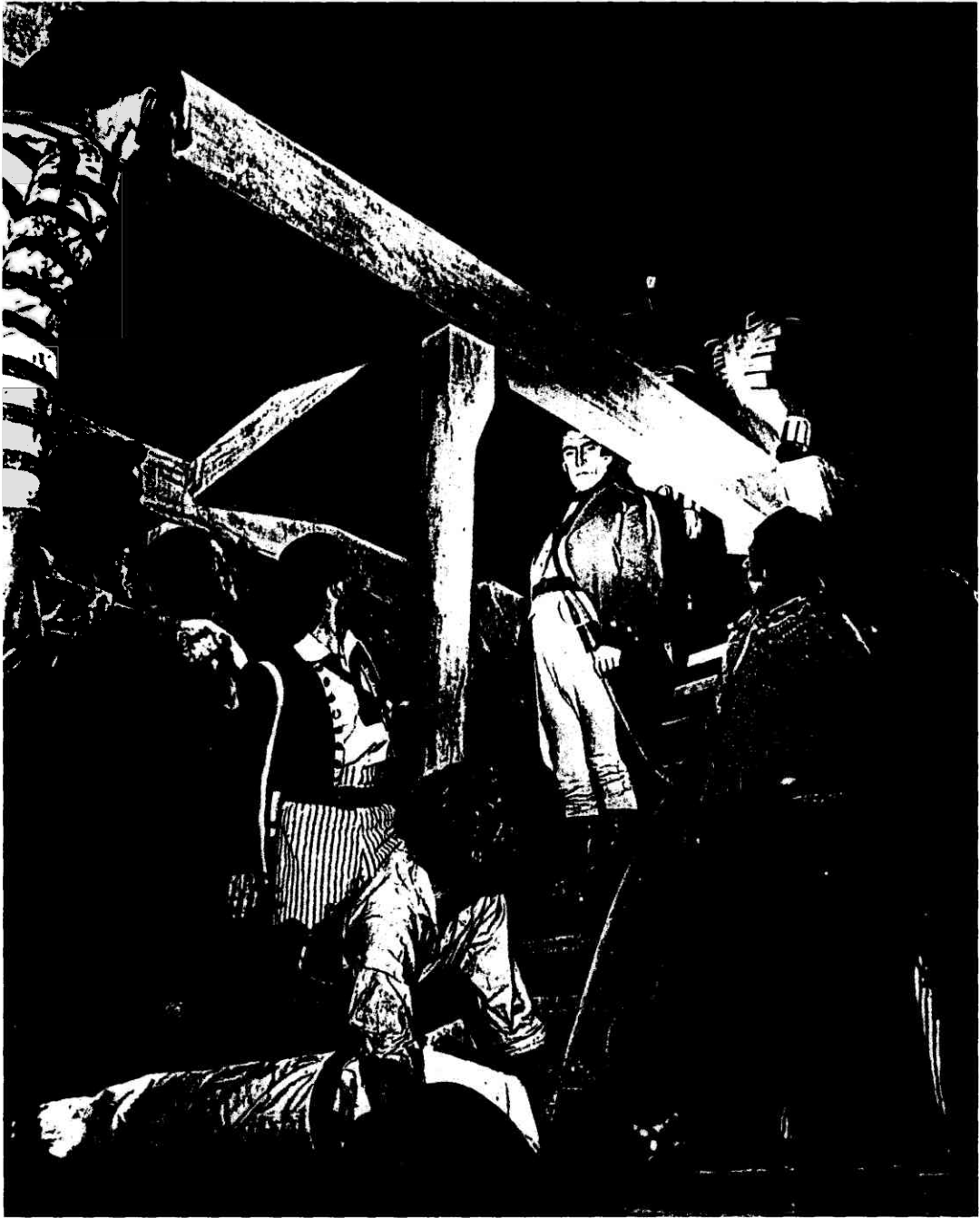
40 Model for Between Decks
John Piper



41 Model for Main Deck and
Quarter Deck
John Piper



42
The final scene
on deck



43 Claggart interrupts the fight between Billy and Squeak, Act I scene iii
(Act II scene ii in the original version)



John Piper
1951



44 Sailors

John Piper
1951

John Piper

Billy BuddとBartlebyと、他

VERE

Volunteers! Call for boarding volunteers!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Men! Who'll volunteer to board 'em in the smoke?

Who'll be the first on board the Frenchie ship?

Sing out your names! Good men and hearty!

Brave men and true!

DONALD

Take me, sir! Donald! I don't mind.

RED WHISKERS

Very well, I'll go too!

DANSKER

Take an old salt. I'll go.

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

Red Whiskers - good for him! And good old Dansker!

Board 'em in the smoke.

DONALD

Good old Dansker! Board 'em in the smoke.

DANSKER

Board 'em in the smoke!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

One more! Four to be the first to board 'em.

BILLY [*off*]

Here's another. I'm coming down to you.
Billy Budd!

I'll come down from the birds.

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

Billy! Billy Budd! He's the one! He's with us! He'll come down to us!

[*Billy climbs down the rigging to the main-deck*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Fall in there! Budd! Donald! Red Whiskers! Dansker!

Report for arms.

BILLY, DONALD, RED WHISKERS AND DANSKER

Now we'll see action.

We're through with waiting.

Now for deeds!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Report hammocks set, seamen!

SEAMEN

Ay, ay, sir! Ay, ay, sir!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Report tubs and sand, afterguardsmen!

AFTERGUARDSMEN

Ay, ay, sir! Ay, ay, sir!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Report powder ready!

POWDER-MONKEYS

Ay, ay, sir!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Marines! Report muskets loaded!

MARINES

Ay, ay, sir!

ALL VOICES

This is our moment,
The moment we've been waiting for
These long weeks!
Now we'll see action.
We're through with waiting.
Now for deeds!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Report guns ready, gunners!

GUNNERS

Ay, ay, sir!

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

Hooray!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

All guns ready, sir! We wait to fire.

VERE

Wait yet! We're out of range.

SAILING MASTER

Report all canvas set, maintop!

MAINTOP [*off*]

Ay, ay! All sails set.

SAILING MASTER
All canvas set, sir!

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Wind, wind, fill our sails! Help our fight!

VERE
Too little for this breeze, I'm afraid. Are we making, Mr Redburn?

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Barely, sir.

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Wind, wind fill our sails! Follow us fast!

SAILING MASTER
Maintop! Do you reckon we're making?

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Bring us victory, now, now, our victory!

MAINTOP [*off*]
We're making slowly.

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Wind, wind fill our sails! Help our fight!

VERE
We must be patient.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
We're making, sir!

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Bring us victory, now, now, our victory!

VERE
Mr Redburn, sight the long eighteens. We'll try a shot.

FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER, RATCLIFFE
AND QUARTER-DECK CHORUS
Stand by, forepeak! Matches ready!

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
We'll send a brace of flying shot to sink the swelling bastards in their pride!

VERE

Mr Redburn, fire!

FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER, RATCLIFFE
AND
QUARTER-DECK CHORUS
By the long eighteens! Are you ready? Fire!

[*There is a tremendous explosion off stage. Smoke drifts aft*]

ALL VOICES
Hurrah!

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
This is our moment!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS
That's got 'em! There's a dumpling for Froggy! Hot from the oven!

MAINTOP [*off*]
Short, deck! Short by half a mile!

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Short, sir! Out of range.

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]
Ah! Back to our waiting!

VERE
Out of range - and the wind dies.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Ay! She's dropping.

SAILING MASTER AND RATCLIFFE
Curse the breeze!
[*Slowly the mist closes in round the ship. The scene darkens*]

MAIN-DECK CHORUS
Wind, wind fill our sails! Help our fight!

MAINTOP [*off*]
She's making! The Frenchie's making fast.

GUNNER'S MATE
Carronades ready to fire, sir!

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Wait for orders, deck!

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

└ Wind, wind, fill our sails!

FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER, RATCLIFFE
AND

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

The mist!

MAIN-DECK [*all voices*]

The mist!

VERE

*Ay, the mist is back to foil us. The mist creeps
in to blind us. Our chase is foolish, gentlemen.
Give orders to dismiss.*

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Abandon chase, all hands! Down one watch!

SAILING MASTER AND RATCLIFFE

Down one watch!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Down one watch!

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

Ah!

*[The men slowly and gloomily leave action posts
and dismiss]*

MAIN-DECK CHORUS

Gone is our moment.
The moment we've been waiting for
These long weeks!
Now we'll see trouble.
Back, back to waiting.
Nothing's done.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

The mist won't break again to-day. We've lost
her for good.

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Ay, we've lost her!

SAILING MASTER AND RATCLIFFE

It's bad for the men.

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

They're taking it badly.

RATCLIFFE, SAILING MASTER AND FIRST LIEUTENANT

Day by day things move to the worse.

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

We must keep a watch.

*[All Officers leave the quarter-deck except the
First Lieutenant, Sailing Master and Ratcliffe,
who remain in the background, and Vere, who
stands thoughtfully in the foreground]*

*[Claggart comes along the emptying main-deck
and stands cap in hand as before. Vere sees
him]*

VERE

There you are again, Master-at-arms. Come
up if the matter's urgent.

*[Claggart climbs the companion-way to the
quarter-deck and stands before Vere]*

Now be brief, man, for God's sake.

CLAGGART

As brief, your honour, as my theme allows.

I dare not cut it short. And I must ask your
patience.

There's a man on board who's dangerous. I
say again - who's dangerous.

VERE

Dangerous? What mean you?

CLAGGART

Disaffected, sir,
Ripe for the crimes of Spithead and the Nore.
A common seaman, but a subtle schemer,
Plotting between decks, sapping loyalties,
Corrupting messmates: yes - even in this fight
When all hearts should promote our common
purpose:
Fomenting - pardon me the foul word! -
mutiny.

VERE

Mutiny? Mutiny? I'm not to be scared by
words. Your evidence for this?

CLAGGART

Perhaps your honour would inspect these
guineas.
He crept and offered them at dead of night
To a young novice. You will understand
How their bright wonder and pretty twinkling
Would tempt a simple boy. But he held firm

And came at once and handed them to me.

VERE

How came the man by gold? - a common seaman?

Strange story, What's his name?

CLAGGART

His name -

is William Budd.

VERE

Budd, Billy Budd, foretopman?

CLAGGART

The same.

VERE

Nay! you're mistaken. Your police have deceived you.

Don't come to me with so foggy a tale. That's the young fellow I get good reports of.

CLAGGART

Ah. pleasant looks, good temper - they are but a mask.

He is deep, deep.

VERE

Master-at-Arms, I cannot agree. I have seen many men in my time, and I trust him.

CLAGGART

You do but note his outwards, the flower of masculine beauty and strength. A man-trap lurks under those ruddy-tipped daisies.

VERE

Claggart! take heed what you speak. There's a yard-arm for a false witness.

CLAGGART

Sir! Sir! Your honour!

VERE

No more. I'll see the fellow at once. [*He calls*] Boy!

[*The Boy enters*]

BOY [*speaking*]

Yes, sir?

VERE

You know William Budd, foretopman?

BOY [*speaking*]

Oh yes, Billy Budd, sir!

VERE

Find him, bring aft to my cabin. Do you understand?

BOY [*speaking*]

Yes, sir. [*He goes*]

VERE

You, Master-at-Arms, when you have seen Budd enter, follow him quietly. I have heard you speak; I wish to speak with him. In a few minutes you will be admitted and confront him.

CLAGGART

Thank you, your honour. I trust that nothing I have done ...

VERE

Be so good as to leave me!

[*Claggart salutes and goes*]

VERE

Oh, this cursed mist!

[*The First Lieutenant, Sailing Master and Ratcliffe come forward to Vere*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Yes, sir, it's got us! It's lost us the Frenchie. The Frenchie's escaped us.

SAILING MASTER

It may lift later, sir, but too late for our purpose.

RATCLIFFE

Sadly disappointing, sir. It's here for good.

VERE

Disappointment, vexation everywhere - creeping over everything, confusing everyone. Confusion without and within.

Oh, for the light, the light of clear Heaven, to separate evil from good!

[*The curtain falls*]

Scene two

[The Captain's cabin. A few minutes later.
Vere is alone]

VERE

Claggart, John Claggart, beware! I'm not so easily deceived. The boy whom you would destroy, he is good; you are evil. You have reckoned without me. I have studied men and their ways. The mists are vanishing - and you shall fail!

[He goes to the door and opens it. Billy enters]

BILLY [*radiant*]

You wanted to see me. I knew it, I knew I'd be called.

Captain of the mizzen! Oh, the honour! - and you telling me! I shouldn't speak so quick, but the talk's got around.

VERE [*watching him*]

Would you like to be captain of the mizzen, Billy Budd?

BILLY

Yes, or to be your coxswain. I'd like that too.

VERE

Why?

BILLY

To be near you. I'd serve you. well, indeed I would.

You'd be safe with me. You could trust your boat to me.

Couldn't find a better coxswain-that's to say, I'll look after you my best.

I'd die for you - so would they all.

Aren't I glad to be here! Didn't know what life was before now, and O for a fight! Wish we'd got that Frenchie I do, but we'll catch her another day. Sir! let me be your coxswain! I'd look after you well. You could trust your boat to me, you'd be safe with me. Please, sir!

VERE [*aside*]

And this is the man I'm told is dangerous - the

schemer, the plotter, the artful mutineer! This is the trap concealed in the daisies! Claggart, John Claggart, beware!

[To Billy]

You must forget all that for the present. I do not want to see you about promotion.

BILLY [*good humoured*]

That's all right, sir. I'm content.

VERE

Very well, but now listen to me, Budd. We want to question you - I and the Master-at-Arms.

BILLY

Yes, sir!

VERE

Answer us frankly and show all proper respect. Now stand to attention. [*He calls*] Boy! Admit Mr Claggart.

[The door opens. Claggart enters]

VERE

Master-at-arms and foretopman, I speak to you both.

You stand before your Commander as accuser and accused under the Articles of War. Remember both of you the penalties of falsehood. Master-at arms, stand there. Tell this man to his face what you have already told me.

CLAGGART [*staring at Billy*]

William Budd, I accuse you of insubordination and disaffection.

William Budd, I accuse you of aiding our enemies and spreading their infamous creed of 'The Rights of Man'.

William Budd, I accuse you of bringing French gold on board to bribe your comrades and lure them from their duty.

William Budd, you are a traitor to your country and to your King.

I accuse you of mutiny!

VERE

William Budd, answer. Defend yourself!

BILLY [*unable to speak*]

.. a .. a .. a .. a .. a.

VERE

Speak, man, speak.

BILLY

.. a .. a .. a .. a .. a.

VERE

Take your time, my boy, take your time.

[Vere lays his hand on Billy's shoulder. Billy's right fist shoots out, striking Claggart on the forehead]

BILLY

.. a .. a .. a ... DEVIL!

[Claggart falls and, after a couple of gasps, lies motionless]

VERE

God o' mercy! [He kneels by the corpse] Here, help me!

[Billy does not move. Vere raises the body. It falls back]

He's dead. Fated boy, what have you done? Go in there.

Go! God help us! help us all.

[Billy obeys Vere and goes into a small state-room at the back of the cabin. Vere goes to the door and calls to the Boy]

Boy! fetch my officers at once.

The mists have cleared. O terror! what do I see? Scylla and Charybdis, the straits of Hell. I sight them too late - I see all the mists concealed. Beauty, handsomeness. goodness coming to trial. How can I condemn him?

How can I save him? My heart's broken, my life's broken. It is not his trial, it is mine, mine. It is I whom the devil awaits.

[The First Lieutenant, Sailing Master and Ratcliffe enter the cabin hurriedly]

Gentlemen, William Budd here has killed the Master-at-Arms.

FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER AND RATCLIFFE

Great God! for what reason?

FIRST LIEUTENANT

We must keep our heads.

SAILING MASTER

Oh! what unheard-of brutality.

RATCLIFFE

The boy has been provoked.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Why did he do it? What is the truth?

SAILING MASTER

Claggart is lost to us - we must revenge him.

RATCLIFFE

There's no harm in the boy. I cannot believe it.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Justice is our duty, justice our hope.

SAILING MASTER

Claggart, he's dead - give the murderer the rope.

RATCLIFFE

Mercy on his youth - there's no harm in the lad.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Here and now we'll judge the case.

SAILING MASTER

Neither Heaven nor Hell suffer villainy to rest.

RATCLIFFE

Heaven is merciful - let us be merciful.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Call him to trial!

SAILING MASTER

We must have revenge, revenge!

RATCLIFFE

Let us show pity, show pity?

VERE

Struck by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Sir, command us.

SAILING MASTER
Unheard-of in naval annals.

RATCLIFFE
What's to be done?

VERE
Justice must be done. I summon a drum-head court.
The enemy is near. The prisoner must be tried at once.
Mr Redburn presides. I myself am present as witness - the sole earthly witness. Gentlemen, the court sits.
[The officers prepare the cabin for the court-martial. Vere stands rigidly at the side. They carry the body into another stateroom, set table and chairs, and then summon Billy before them]

FIRST LIEUTENANT
William Budd, you are accused by Captain Vere of striking your superior officer, John Claggart, Master-at-Arms, and thus causing his death.
[Billy is silent]

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Captain Vere?

VERE
The Master-at-Arms... denounced the prisoner to me... for spreading disaffection... sympathy with our enemies... and trying to start a mutiny ...

BILLY
No, no!

VERE
...having French gold for bribes. I asked the prisoner to reply. He stammered, then struck out, stuck John Claggart on the forehead, and the rest you know.

FIRST LIEUTENANT [to Billy]
Captain Vere has spoken. Is it as he has said?

BILLY
Yes.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
You know the Articles of War?

BILLY
Yes.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
And the penalty?

BILLY
Yes.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Why did you do it?

BILLY
Sir, I am loyal to my country and my King. It is true I am a nobody, who don't know where he was born, and I've had to live rough, but never, never could I do those foul things. It's a lie.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Did you bear any malice against the Master-at-Arms?

BILLY
No, no I tried to answer him back. My tongue wouldn't work, so I had to say it with a blow, and it killed him.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
You stammered then?

BILLY
Ay, it comes and goes.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Why should the Master-at-Arms accuse you wrongfully? Why?

BILLY
Don't know, don't know such things. Ask Captain Vere.
Ask him.

FIRST LIEUTENANT
Do you, sir, know any reason?

VERE
I have told you all I have seen. I have no more to say.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Prisoner, have you any more to say?

BILLY

Captain Vere, save me!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Go in and wait.

BILLY

Captain, save me!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Go in.

BILLY

I'd have died for you, save me!

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Go in.

BILLY

Save me!

[*The other officers lead Billy back to the small stateroom*]

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Poor fellow, who could save him?

SAILING MASTER

Ay, he must swing.

RATCLIFFE

Ay, there's naught to discuss.

TOGETHER

We've no choice.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

There's the Mutiny Act.

SAILING MASTER

There are the Articles of War.

RATCLIFFE

There are the King's Regulations.

TOGETHER

We've no choice.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Claggart I never liked. Still, he did his duty.

SAILING MASTER

No one liked Claggart. Still, he's been murdered.

RATCLIFFE

Claggart was hard on them all. How they hated him.

TOGETHER

We've no choice.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Baby Budd the men called him. They loved him.

SAILING MASTER

Billy Budd! He might have been a leader.

RATCLIFFE

Billy Budd - I impressed him - a King's bargain.

TOGETHER

But we've no choice.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

What, then, is our verdict?

OFFICERS [*to Vere*]

Sir, before we decide, join us, help us with your knowledge and wisdom. Grant us your guidance.

VERE

No. Do not ask me. I cannot.

OFFICERS

Sir, we need you as always.

VERE

No. Pronounce your verdict.

OFFICERS

Guilty.

VERE

And the penalty?

OFFICERS

Death.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Hanging from the yard-arm.

VERE

I accept your verdict. Let the Master-at Arms be buried with full naval honours. All hands to witness punishment at one bell in the morning watch. I will myself tell the prisoner.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Gentlemen, the court rises.

[The Officers salute and leave quietly]

VERE

I accept their verdict. Death is the penalty for those who break the laws of earth. And I who am king of this fragment of earth, of this floating monarchy, have enacted death. But I have seen the divine judgment of Heaven, I've seen iniquity overthrown. Cooped in this narrow cabin I have beheld the mystery of goodness - and I am afraid.

Before what tribunal do I stand if destroy goodness? The angel of God has struck and the angel must hang - through me. Beauty, handsomeness, goodness, it is for me to destroy you. I, Edward Fairfax Vere, Captain of the *Indomitable*, lost with all hands on the infinite sea. *[He goes towards the door of Billy's stateroom]* I am the messenger of death! How can he pardon? How receive me?

[He goes towards the small stateroom and enters it. The curtain remains up until the end of the music, and then slowly falls]

Scene there

[A bay of the gun-deck, shortly before dawn next morning. Billy is in irons between two cannons]

BILLY

Look!

Through the port comes the moon-shine astray!
It tips the guard's cutlass and silvers this nook;
But 'twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day.
Ay, ay, all is up; and I must up too
Early in the morning, aloft from below.
On an empty stomach, now, never would it do.
They'll give me a nibble-bit of biscuit ere I go.
Sure a messmate will reach me the last parting

cup;

But turning heads away from the hoist and the belay,

Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!

No pipe to those halyards - but ain't it all sham?

A blur's in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am.
But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank.

So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink.

But no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think.
They'll lash me in hammocks, drop me in deep.
Fathoms down, fathoms - how I'll dream fast asleep.

I feel it stealing now ...

Roll me over fair.

I am sleepy, and the oozy weeds about me twist.
[Dansker steals in with a mug of grog]

DANSKER *[whispering]*

Here! Baby!

BILLY

Dansker, old friend! that's kind. *[He drinks]*
That's kind.

Gimme a biscuit too - *[He eats]* - I feel better.
But you shouldn't have risked coming to see me. You'll get into trouble.

DANSKER

All's trouble. The whole ship's trouble... and upside-down.

BILLY

What for?

DANSKER

Some reckon to rescue you, Billy Boy. How they hated that Jemmy Legs! They swear you shan't swing. They love you.

BILLY

I'll swing and they'll swing.

Tell 'em that and stop them. *[He puts the mug down]*

Christ! I feel better. Done me a lot of good - a drink and seeing a friend. Stopped me from thinking on what's no use and dreaming what

needn't be dreamt, and woken me up to face what must be. What's the day to be?

DANSKER

A fair day.

BILLY

We'd have caught that Frenchie on a fair day. O that cursèd mist! Maybe you'll still catch her. You better be going now.

DANSKER

Goodbye, Baby.

BILLY [*holding up his wrists*]

Can't shake hands. Chaplain's been here before you - kind and good - his story, of the good boy hung and gone to glory, hung for the likes of me. But I had to strike down that Jemmy Legs - it's fate. And Captain Vere has had to strike me down - Fate. We are both in sore trouble, him and me, with great need for strength, and my trouble's soon ending, so I can't help him - and the clouds darker than night for us both. Dansker of the *Indomitable*, help him all of you. Dansker, goodbye!

[*Dansker goes*]

And farewell to ye, old *Rights o' Man*! Never you joys no more. Farewell to this grand rough world! Never more shipmates, no more sea, no looking down from the heights to the depths! But I've sighted a sail in the storm, the far-shining sail that's not Fate, and I'm contented. I've seen where she's bound for. She has a land of her own where she'll anchor for ever. Oh, I'm contented. Don't matter now being hanged, or being forgotten and caught in the weeds. Don't matter now. I'm strong, and I know it, and I'll stay strong, and that's all, and that's enough.

[*The curtain falls*]

Scene four

[*The main-deck and quarter-deck. Four o'clock the same morning, and first daylight is appearing.*]

When the curtain rises the decks are empty, save for a few of the watch on duty and the Marine sentry. The whole crew assembles in silence

and in perfect order. They arrive in the following groups:

Gunners.

Seamen.

Afterguardsmen.

Powder-monkeys (who run in and clamber up the rigging, and on to boats and booms).

Marines (who march across to the quarter-deck).

Officers and Midshipmen-on the quarter-deck. Vere, preceded by the First Lieutenant, Sailing Master and Lieutenant Ratcliffe.

When all are in position, Billy enters, preceded and followed by Marine sentries]

FIRST LIEUTENANT [*reading*]

'According to the Articles of War, it is provided as follows:

If any officer, mariner, soldier or other person in the fleet shall strike any of his superior officers, he shall suffer death.

It is further provided that if any in the fleet commits murder, he shall be punished by death.

William Budd, you have been found by the court-martial guilty of striking your superior officer. You have further been found guilty of murder. In accordance with the aforesaid Articles of War, you are condemned to death by hanging from the yard-arm.

BILLY [*suddenly*]

Starry Vere? God bless you!

ALL VOICES [*except Vere and Billy*]

Starry Vere, God bless you!

[*The First Lieutenant closes his book. At this signal, the Marine sentries and Billy turn about and march off towards the main-mast.*]

All watch the scene off stage. The light of dawn has grown to a fresh pink.

Captain Vere removes his hat. As he does so, all faces turn slowly upward to follow the body of Billy to the main-yard.

Then begins the sound described by Melville as like the freshet wave of a torrent roaring distantly through the woods, expressing a capricious revul-

sion of feeling in the crew.

The sound grows and grows, and the whole wedged mass of faces slowly turns in rebellion to the quarter-deck.

There is a growing agitation among the officers on the quarter-deck, but Vere stands motionless]

FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER AND RATCLIFFE

Down all hands! And see that they go!

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Down all hands! Down!

[The men slowly obey the commands from force of habit and begin to disperse]

QUARTER-DECK CHORUS

Down all hands! See that they go! Down!

[The deck empties by degrees and the light slowly fades]

Epilogue

[The light grows and reveals Vere as an old man, as in the prologue]

VERE

We committed his body to the deep. The sea-fowl enshadowed him with their wings, their harsh cries were his requiem. But the ship passed on under light airs towards the rose of dawn, and soon it was full day in its clearness and strength.

... For I could have saved him. He knew it, even his shipmates knew it, though earthly laws silenced them.

O what have I done? But he has saved me, and blessed me, and the love that passes understanding has come to me. I was lost on the infinite sea, but I've sighted a sail in the storm, the far-shining sail, and I'm content. I've seen where she's bound for. There's a land where she'll anchor for ever. I am an old man now, and my mind can go back in peace to that far-away summer of seventeen hundred and ninety-seven, long ago now, years ago, centuries ago, when I, Edward Fairfax Vere, commanded the *Indomitable* ...

[The curtain slowly falls]