

themselves to submit to it; that it will be of no use to appeal to the captain or first-lieutenant, as they will not interfere; that it is not likely to make them ill for more than a few days; and so on. Then, if possible, a box of surgical instruments is borrowed, and displayed with razors, towels, sponges, and a basin of water. Then the youngsters are admitted one at a time, and the smallest possible scratch made on the end of the nose with a penknife, just enough to draw blood, which is made the most of on a towel for the benefit of the next customer. But I believe this innocent and playful initiation is now seldom practised; let us hope the midshipmen of the period are not the less manly or gentleman-like for its disuse.

Part of my midshipman's life was spent in a fifty-gun frigate, one of the crack ships of her day; the captain was a sailor, every inch of him; as the saying runs, every hair of his head was a rope-yarn, and every drop of blood the best Stockholm tar. But he was a taut hand; if the other ships of the squadron beat us reefing topsails or shifting spars, he would pretty well make the men jump out of their skins, and the officers too. I've seen mates aloft in that ship exercising in their cocked hats and epaulettes.

Our first-lieutenant had no sinecure; of course he was expected to know all about everything, and was held responsible for the discipline of the ship. Why, only to look after the midshipmen was enough to make him prematurely old! On board a man-of-war there is a court held on the main deck every morning at half-past eleven, where the first-lieutenant is judge and jury; very serious offences are reserved to be dealt with by the captain. Now we had a particularly good band, and an affected bandmaster who used to talk in a languid way about "the gentlemen of the band;" and it came to pass that one day the sergeant of the band got drunk, and came to blows with one of "the gentlemen of the band:" of course he was placed in confinement by the master-at-arms, and brought up before the first-lieutenant the next morning. Maudlin and seedy, he urged this remarkable defence: "Please, sir, he've a-seized me by the 'air of the 'ed, and he've a-dragged me three times round the lower deck; now I astes you, sir, is that treatment for a gen'lleman?"

Sometimes even more difficult cases, with

conflicting evidence, come before the first-lieutenant for solution. One day at the usual hour, seven bells, two men were brought for fighting on the lower deck the previous evening, just after the hammocks had been piped down. "Well," said the first-lieutenant to one of them, a sleek mutton-faced man, "what have you to say about this?"

"Please, sir," he replied, "Bill were a-sittin' under my billet when I cum down with my 'ammick, and I says to him, says I, 'Bill,' says I, 'will you be so kind as to be so good as to be so obliging as to move a little a one side while I 'angs my 'ammick up?' Them, sir, is the werry words I spock; and with that, sir, he ups with his fist and 'its me right in the heye."

"And you," said the first-lieutenant to the other man, "what have you to say?"

"If you please, sir, it worn't a-nothink o' the sort; he come up to me where I were a-sittin', and he says to me, 'Hout, you beggar, hout, or I'll knock your eye out!'"

So curiously does the same thing strike different people from different points of view.

You landmen have little idea of the change steam has made in the navy. When there were only a few steamers attached to the fleet, we could generally tell the officers, the men, or the boats of a smoke-jack, wherever we might see them; we used to declare they were smutty and unclean, and smelt of melted tallow. It had not then been found out that a steamer could be and ought to be kept as clean as a sailing-ship. We were lying in Besika Bay, the French and English fleets together, when we first saw a screw line-of-battle ship; and I think every officer and man in both fleets crowded on deck to see the *Napoléon* steam in to the anchorage. The first English screw-liner to join the fleet was the *Sanspareil*, a miserable tub; and then came Sir Edmund Lyons in his flag-ship the *Agamemnon*: she was a magnificent two-decker, and right well did she maintain the glory of her name, formerly that of Nelson's ship. Now, alas! we are building ships with no masts at all, and heavy iron plates fastened to a timber backing; but still our hearts of oak are the only backing that will support our country's honour.

And with this sentiment I wind up my yarn.