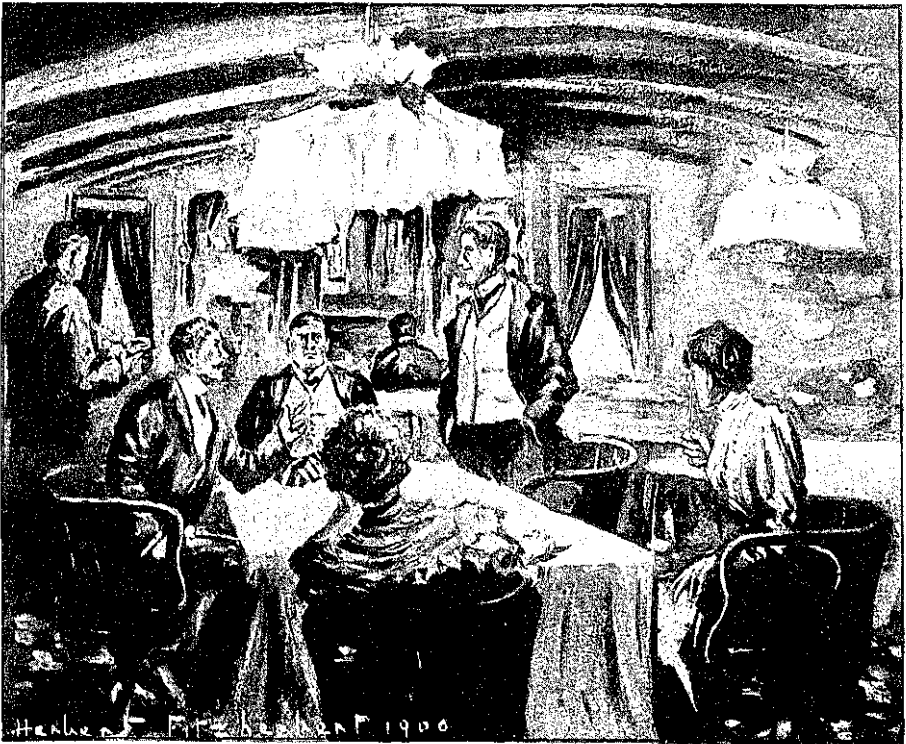


"Yes," said he, "I remember those streets. I did not see that any especial danger attached to the carrying of the precious stones, for no one knew that I had them except the dealer from whom they were being returned, and I was wending my way along leisurely enough when, on turning into a side lane to shorten my journey, I heard distinct sounds of a woman's voice crying for help.

"I looked where the sounds seemed to

me, and stooping down called to his mate to just run through this lot to see if there was any blunt about, I could only gaze at him with eyes which must have been fixed in their sockets.

"They were the most villainous-looking pair that it is possible to conceive: one, the short one who spoke, and who was now busily engaged in roughly searching my pockets, was a stout, thick-set man with a cast in one eye, a brutal chin, a receding



IT WAS NOT A BADLY-ASSORTED SHIP'S PARTY.

come from, and following the direction, presently opened a high gate and came into a dirty courtyard at the back of a most forbidding tenement. I had hardly glanced around me when I was felled to the ground by a blow on the back of the head, a blow which seemed to have a strange benumbing power, for I tried to raise my voice and could not utter a sound.

"I could see perfectly what was going on, but my whole frame seemed paralysed, and when the author of the blow came before

forehead, and a head with such close-cropped hair that it betokened recent residence at Her Majesty's Government's expense. The other was an oilier, more polite and gentlemanly villain, and had I been capable, I would have shuddered at the silky expressiveness of his voice. Of course they presently came to the diamonds.

"Hullo, Jerry, what about this? If I don't think that these sparklers are worth a trifle—— Gawd 'elp us, the young un's