**Court Martial of Billy Budd**

**By James M. Salem**

imple, kindhearted Billy Budd is the most popular man on the ship and an object of hatred for Claggart, the Petty Officer and Master-At-Arms. The Captain is convinced that Billy is innocent of the charge of plotting mutiny brought by Claggart, but investigates anyway. The investigation makes it quite evident that the charge is a put-up job that Claggart has created. Billy, stunned by the sudden charge of Claggart, unable to defend himself verbally, strikes out in the only way he knows—with his fist—and Claggart falls and dies. The Captain is then confronted with incontrovertible evidence of a deed for which the penalty is death. In his heart the Captain knows that Billy is morally innocent—but the defense of his country allows only one course of action—an immediate court martial followed by a hanging. This dramatic play about justice in war-time deals in a clear and effective manner with the appalling problem of the untutored and unlettered man who responds with violence to an injustice he cannot stand.