



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef

By
James Fenimore Cooper

Preface

This work has already appeared in Graham's Magazine, under the title of "Rose Budd." The change of name is solely the act of the author, and arises from a conviction that the appellation given in this publication is more appropriate than the one laid aside. The necessity of writing to a name, instead of getting it from the incidents of the book itself, has been the cause of this departure from the ordinary rules.

When this book was commenced, it was generally supposed that the Mexican war would end, after a few months of hostilities. Such was never the opinion of the writer. He has ever looked forward to a protracted struggle; and, now that Congress has begun to interfere, sees as little probability of its termination, as on the day it commenced. Whence honourable gentlemen have derived their notions of the constitution, when they advance the doctrine that Congress is an American Aulic council, empowered to encumber the movements of armies, and, as old Blucher expressed it in reference to the diplomacy of Europe, "to spoil with the pen the work achieved by the sword," it is difficult to say more than this, that they do not get them from the constitution itself. It has generally been supposed that the present executive was created in order to avoid the very evils of a distracted and divided council, which this new construction has a direct tendency to revive. But a presidential election has ever proved, and probably will ever prove, stronger than any written fundamental law.

We have had occasion to refer often to Mexico in these pages. It has been our aim to do so in a kind spirit; for, while we have never doubted that the factions which have possessed themselves of the government in that country have done us great wrong, wrong that would have justified a much earlier appeal to arms, we have always regarded the class of Mexicans who alone can properly be termed the "people," as mild, amiable, and disposed to be on friendly terms with us. Providence, however, directs all to the completion of its own wise ends. If the crust which has so long



encircled that nation, enclosing it in bigotry and ignorance, shall now be irretrievably broken, letting in light, even Mexico herself may have cause hereafter to rejoice in her present disasters. It was in this way that Italy has been, in a manner, regenerated; the conquests of the French carrying in their train the means and agencies which have, at length, aroused that glorious portion of the earth to some of its ancient spirit. Mexico, in certain senses, is the Italy of this continent; and war, however ruthless and much to be deplored, may yet confer on her the inestimable blessings of real liberty, and a religion released from “feux d’artifice,” as well as all other artifices.

A word on the facts of our legend. The attentive observer of men and things has many occasions to note the manner in which ordinary lookers on deceive themselves, as well as others. The species of treason portrayed in these pages is no uncommon occurrence; and it will often be found that the traitor is the loudest in his protestations of patriotism. It is a pretty safe rule to suspect the man of hypocrisy who makes a parade of his religion, and the partisan of corruption and selfishness, who is clamorous about the rights of the people. Captain Spike was altogether above the first vice; though fairly on level, as respects the second, with divers patriots who live by their deity.

