



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



Part 1: Chapter 6

“At the piping of all hands,
When the judgment signal’s spread—
When the islands and the land,
And the seas give up their dead,
And the south and the north shall come;
When the sinner is dismayed,
And the just man is afraid,
Then heaven be thy aid,
Poor Tom.”

—Brainard.

The people had now a cessation from their toil. Of all the labour known to seafaring men, that of pumping is usually thought to be the most severe. Those who work at it have to be relieved every minute, and it is only by having gangs to succeed each other, that the duty can be done at all with anything like steadiness. In the present instance, it is true, that the people of the *Swash* were sustained by the love of gold, but glad enough were they when Mulford called out to them to “knock off, and turn in for the night.” It was high time this summons should be made, for not only were the people excessively wearied, but the customary hours of labour were so far spent, that the light of the moon had some time before begun to blend with the little left by the parting sun. Glad enough were all hands to quit the toil; and two minutes were scarcely elapsed ere most of the crew had thrown themselves down, and were buried in deep sleep. Even Spike and Mulford took the rest they needed, the cook alone being left to look out for the changes in the weather. In a word, everybody but this idler was exhausted



with pumping and bailing, and even gold had lost its power to charm, until nature was recruited by rest.

The excitement produced by the scenes through which they had so lately passed, caused the females to sleep soundly, too. The death-like stillness which pervaded the vessel contributed to their rest, and Rose never woke, from the first few minutes after her head was on her pillow, until near four in the morning. The deep quiet seemed ominous to one who had so lately witnessed the calm which precedes the tornado, and she arose. In that low latitude and warm season, few clothes were necessary, and our heroine was on deck in a very few minutes. Here she found the same grave-like sleep pervading everything. There was not a breath of air, and the ocean seemed to be in one of its profoundest slumbers. The hard-breathing of Spike could be heard through the open windows of his state-room, and this was positively the only sound that was audible. The common men, who lay scattered about the decks, more especially from the mainmast forward, seemed to be so many logs, and from Mulford no breathing was heard.

The morning was neither very dark nor very light, it being easy to distinguish objects that were near, while those at a distance were necessarily lost in obscurity. Availing herself of the circumstance, Rose went as far as the gangway, to ascertain if the cook were at his post. She saw him lying near his galley, in as profound a sleep as any of the crew. This she felt to be wrong, and she felt alarmed, though she knew not why. Perhaps it was the consciousness of being the only person up and awake at that hour of deepest night, in a vessel so situated as the *Swash*, and in a climate in which hurricanes seem to be the natural offspring of the air. Some one must be aroused, and her tastes, feelings, and judgment, all pointed to Harry Mulford as the person she ought to awaken. He slept habitually in his clothes—the lightest summer dress of the tropics; and the window of his little state-room was always open for air. Moving lightly to the place, Rose laid her own little, soft hand on the arm of the young man, when the latter was on his feet in an instant. A single moment only was necessary to regain his consciousness, when Mulford left the state-room and joined Rose on the quarter-deck.

“Why am I called, Rose,” the young man asked, attempering his voice to the calm that reigned around him; “and why am I called by you?”

Rose explained the state of the brig, and the feeling which induced her to awaken him. With woman’s gentleness she now expressed her regret for having robbed Harry of his rest; had she reflected a moment, she might have kept watch herself, and allowed him to obtain the sleep he must surely so much require.



But Mulford laughed at this; protested he had never been awakened at a more favourable moment, and would have sworn, had it been proper, that a minute's further sleep would have been too much for him. After these first explanations, Mulford walked round the decks, carefully felt how much strain there was on the purchases, and rejoined Rose to report that all was right, and that he did not consider it necessary to call even the cook. The black was an idler in no sense but that of keeping watch, and he had toiled the past day as much as any of the men, though it was not exactly at the pumps.

A long and semi-confidential conversation now occurred between Harry and Rose. They talked of Spike, the brig, and her cargo, and of the delusion of the captain's widow. It was scarcely possible that powder should be so much wanted at the Havanna as to render smuggling, at so much cost, a profitable adventure; and Mulford admitted his convictions that the pretended flour was originally intended for Mexico. Rose related the tenor of the conversation she had overheard between the two parties, Don Juan and Don Esteban, and the mate no longer doubted that it was Spike's intention to sell the brig to the enemy. She also alluded to what had passed between herself and the stranger.

Mulford took this occasion to introduce the subject of Jack Tier's intimacy and favour with Rose. He even professed to feel some jealousy on account of it, little as there might be to alarm most men in the rivalry of such a competitor. Rose laughed, as girls will laugh when there is question of their power over the other sex, and she fairly shook her rich tresses as she declared her determination to continue to smile on Jack to the close of the voyage. Then, as if she had said more than she intended, she added with woman's generosity and tenderness,—“After all, Harry, you know how much I promised to you even before we sailed, and how much more since, and have no just cause to dread even Jack. There is another reason, however, that ought to set your mind entirely at ease on his account. Jack is married, and has a partner living at this very moment, as he does not scruple to avow himself.”

A hissing noise, a bright light, and a slight explosion, interrupted the half-laughing girl, and Mulford, turning on his heel, quick as thought, saw that a rocket had shot into the air, from a point close under the bows of the brig. He was still in the act of moving toward the fore-castle, when, at the distance of several leagues, he saw the explosion of another rocket high in the air. He knew enough of the practices of vessels of war, to feel certain that these were a signal and its answer from some one in the service of government. Not at all sorry to have the career of the *Swash* arrested,



before she could pass into hostile hands, or before evil could befall Rose, Mulford reached the forecandle just in time to answer the inquiry that was immediately put to him, in the way of a hail. A gig, pulling four oars only, with two officers in its stern-sheets, was fairly under the vessel's bows, and the mate could almost distinguish the countenance of the officer who questioned him, the instant he showed his head and shoulders above the bulwarks.

"What vessels are these?" demanded the stranger, speaking in the authoritative manner of one who acted for the state, but not speaking much above the usual conversational tone.

"American and Spanish," was the answer. "This brig is American—the schooner alongside is a Spaniard, that turned turtle in a tornado, about six-and-thirty hours since, and on which we have been hard at work trying to raise her, since the gale which succeeded the tornado has blown its pipe out."

"Ay, ay, that's the story, is it? I did not know what to make of you, lying cheek by jowl, in this fashion. Was anybody lost on board the schooner?"

"All hands, including every soul aft and forward, the supercargo excepted, who happened to be aboard here. We buried seventeen bodies this afternoon on the smallest of the Keys that you see near at hand, and two this morning alongside of the light. But what boat is that, and where are you from, and whom are you signalling?"

"The boat is a gig," answered the stranger, deliberately, "and she belongs to a cruiser of Uncle Sam's, that is off the reef, a short bit to the eastward, and we signalled our captain. But I'll come on board you, sir, if you please."

Mulford walked aft to meet the stranger at the gangway, and was relieved, rather than otherwise, at finding that Spike was already on the quarter-deck. Should the vessel of war seize the brig, he could rejoice at it, but so strong were his professional ideas of duty to the craft he sailed in, that he did not find it in his heart to say aught against her. Were any mishap to befall it, or were justice to be done, he preferred that it might be done under Spike's own supervision, rather than under his.

"Call all hands, Mr. Mulford," said Spike, as they met. "I see a streak of day coming yonder in the east—let all hands be called at once. What strange boat is this we have alongside?"

This question was put to the strangers, Spike standing on his gangway-ladder to ask it, while the mate was summoning the crew. The officer saw that a new person was to be dealt with, and in his quiet, easy way, he answered, while stretching out his hands to take the man-rope—"Your servant, sir—we are man-of-war's men, belonging to one



of Uncle Sam's craft, outside, and have just come in to pay you a visit of ceremony. I told one, whom I suppose was your mate, that I would just step on board of you."

"Ay, ay—one at a time, if you please. It's war-time, and I cannot suffer armed boat's crews to board me at night, without knowing something about them. Come up yourself, if you please, but order your people to stay in the boat. Here, muster about this gangway, half a dozen of you, and keep an eye on the crew of this strange boat."

These orders had no effect on the cool and deliberate lieutenant, who ascended the brig's side, and immediately stood on her deck. No sooner had he and Spike confronted each other, than each gave a little start, like that of recognition, and the lieutenant spoke.

"Ay, ay—I believe I know this vessel now. It is the *Molly Swash*, of New York, bound to Key West, and a market; and I have the honour to see Captain Stephen Spike again."

It was Mr. Wallace, the second lieutenant of the sloop-of-war that had boarded the brig in the Mona Passage, and to avoid whom Spike had gone to the southward of Jamaica. The meeting was very mal-a-propos, but it would not do to betray that the captain and owner of the vessel thought as much as this; on the contrary, Wallace was warmly welcomed, and received, not only as an old acquaintance, but as a very agreeable visitor. To have seen the two, as they walked aft together, one might have supposed that the meeting was conducive of nothing but a very mutual satisfaction, it was so much like that which happens between those who keep up a hearty acquaintance.

"Well, I'm glad to see you again, Captain Spike," cried Wallace, after the greetings were passed, "if it be only to ask where you flew to, the day we left you in the Mona Passage? We looked out for you with all our eyes, expecting you would be down between San Domingo and Jamaica, but I hardly think you got by us in the night. Our master thinks you must have dove, and gone past loon-fashion. Do you ever perform that manoeuvre?"

"No, we've kept above water the whole time, lieutenant," answered Spike, heartily; "and that is more than can be said of the poor fellow alongside of us. I was so much afraid of the Isle of Pines, that I went round Jamaica."

"You might have given the Isle of Pines a berth, and still have passed to the northward of the Englishmen," said Wallace, a little drily. "However, that island is somewhat of a scarecrow, and we have been to take a look at it ourselves. All's right there, just now. But you seem light; what have you done with your flour?"



“Parted with every barrel of it. You may remember I was bound to Key West, and a market. Well, I found my market here, in American waters.”

“You have been lucky, sir. This ‘emporium’ does not seem to be exactly a commercial emporium.”

“The fact is, the flour is intended for the Havanna; and I fancy it is to be shipped for slavers. But I am to know nothing of all that, you’ll understand, lieutenant. If I sell my flour in American waters, at two prices, it’s no concern of mine what becomes of it a’terwards.”

“Unless it happen to pass into enemy’s hands, certainly not; and you are too patriotic to deal with Mexico, just now, I’m sure. Pray, did that flour go down when the schooner turned turtle?”

“Every barrel of it; but Don Wan, below there, thinks that most of it may yet be saved, by landing it on one of those Keys to dry. Flour, well packed, wets in slowly. You see we have some of it on deck.”

“And who may Don Wan be, sir, pray? We are sent here to look after Dons and Donas, you know.”

“Don Wan is a Cuban merchant, and deals in such articles as he wants. I fell in with him among the reefs here, where he was rummaging about in hopes of meeting with a wrack, he tells me, and thinking to purchase something profitable in that way; but finding I had flour, he agreed to take it out of me at this anchorage, and send me away in ballast at once. I have found Don Wan Montefalderon ready pay, and very honourable.”

Wallace then requested an explanation of the disaster, to the details of which he listened with a sailor’s interest. He asked a great many questions, all of which bore on the more nautical features of the event; and, day having now fairly appeared, he examined the purchases and backings of the *Swash* with professional nicety. The schooner was no lower in the water than when the men had knocked off work the previous night; and Spike set the people at the pumps and their bailing again, as the most effectual method of preventing their making any indiscreet communications to the man-of-war’s men.

About this time the relict appeared on deck, when Spike gallantly introduced the lieutenant anew to his passengers. It is true he knew no name to use, but that was of little moment, as he called the officer “the lieutenant,” and nothing else.

Mrs. Budd was delighted with this occasion to show-off, and she soon broke out on the easy, indolent, but waggish Wallace, in a strain to surprise him, notwithstanding the specimen of the lady’s skill from which he had formerly escaped.



“Captain Spike is of opinion, lieutenant, that our cast-anchor here is excellent, and I know the value of a good cast-anchor place; for my poor Mr. Budd was a sea-faring man, and taught me almost as much of your noble profession as he knew himself.”

“And he taught you, ma’am,” said Wallace, fairly opening his eyes, under the influence of astonishment, “to be very particular about cast-anchor places!”

“Indeed he did. He used to say, that roads-instead were never as good, for such purposes, as land that’s locked havens, for the anchors would return home, as he called it, in roads-instead.”

“Yes, ma’am,” answered Wallace, looking very queer at first, as if disposed to laugh outright, then catching a glance of Rose, and changing his mind; “I perceive that Mr. Budd knew what he was about, and preferred an anchorage where he was well land-locked, and where there was no danger of his anchors coming home, as so often happens in your open roadsteads.”

“Yes, that’s just it! That was just his notion! You cannot feel how delightful it is, Rose, to converse with one that thoroughly understands such subjects! My poor Mr. Budd did, indeed, denounce roads-instead, at all times calling them ‘savage.’”

“Savage, aunt,” put in Rose, hoping to stop the good relict by her own interposition—“that is a strange word to apply to an anchorage!”

“Not at all, young lady,” said Wallace gravely. “They are often wild berths, and wild berths are not essentially different from wild beasts. Each is savage, as a matter of course.”

“I knew I was right!” exclaimed the widow. “Savage cast-anchors come of wild births, as do savage Indians. Oh! The language of the ocean, as my poor Mr. Budd used to say, is eloquence tempered by common sense!”

Wallace stared again, but his attention was called to other things, just at that moment. The appearance of Don Juan Montefalderon y Castro on deck, reminded him of his duty, and approaching that gentleman he condoled with him on the grave loss he had sustained. After a few civil expressions on both sides, Wallace made a delicate allusion to the character of the schooner.

“Under other circumstances,” he said, “it might be my duty to inquire a little particularly as to the nationality of your vessel, Señor, for we are at war with the Mexicans, as you doubtless know.”

“Certainly,” answered Don Juan, with an unmoved air and great politeness of manner, “though it would be out of my power to satisfy you. Everything was lost in the schooner, and I have not a paper of any sort to show you. If it be your pleasure to make



a prize of a vessel in this situation, certainly it is in your power to do it. A few barrels of wet flour are scarce worth disputing about.”

Wallace now seemed a little ashamed, the sang froid of the other throwing dust in his eyes, and he was in a hurry to change the subject. Señor Don Juan was very civilly condoled with again, and he was made to repeat the incidents of the loss, as if his auditor took a deep interest in what he said, but no further hint was given touching the nationality of the vessel. The lieutenant’s tact let him see that Señor Montefalderon was a person of a very different calibre from Spike, as well as of different habits; and he did not choose to indulge in the quiet irony that formed so large an ingredient in his own character, with this new acquaintance. He spoke Spanish himself, with tolerable fluency, and a conversation now occurred between the two, which was maintained for some time with spirit and a very manifest courtesy.

This dialogue between Wallace and the Spaniard gave Spike a little leisure for reflection. As the day advanced the cruiser came more and more plainly in view, and his first business was to take a good survey of her. She might have been three leagues distant, but approaching with a very light breeze, at the rate of something less than two knots in the hour. Unless there was some one on board her who was acquainted with the channels of the Dry Tortugas, Spike felt little apprehension of the ship’s getting very near to him; but he very well understood that, with the sort of artillery that was in modern use among vessels of war, he would hardly be safe could the cruiser get within a league. That near Uncle Sam’s craft might certainly come without encountering the hazards of the channels, and within that distance she would be likely to get in the course of the morning, should he have the complaisance to wait for her. He determined, therefore, not to be guilty of that act of folly.

All this time the business of lightening the schooner proceeded. Although Mulford earnestly wished that the man-of-war might get an accurate notion of the true character and objects of the brig, he could not prevail on himself to become an informer. In order to avoid the temptation so to do, he exerted himself in keeping the men at their tasks, and never before had pumping and bailing been carried on with more spirit. The schooner soon floated of herself, and the purchases which led to the *Swash* were removed. Near a hundred more barrels of the flour had been taken out of the hold of the Spanish craft, and had been struck on the deck of the brig, or sent to the Key by means of the boats. This made a material change in the buoyancy of the vessel, and enabled the bailing to go on with greater facility. The pumps were never idle, but two small streams of water were running the whole time toward the scuppers, and through them into the sea.



At length the men were ordered to knock off, and to get their breakfasts. This appeared to arouse Wallace, who had been chatting, quite agreeably to himself, with Rose, and seemed reluctant to depart, but who now became sensible that he was neglecting his duty. He called away his boat's crew, and took a civil leave of the passengers; after which he went over the side. The gig was some little distance from the *Swash*, when Wallace rose and asked to see Spike, with whom he had a word to say at parting.

"I will soon return," he said, "and bring you forty or fifty fresh men, who will make light work with your wreck. I am certain our commander will consent to my doing so, and will gladly send on board you two or three boat's crews."

"If I let him," muttered Spike between his teeth, "I shall be a poor, miserable cast-anchor devil, that's all."

To Wallace, however, he expressed his hearty acknowledgments; begged him not to be in a hurry, as the worst was now over, and the row was still a long one. If he got back toward evening it would be all in good time. Wallace waved his hand, and the gig glided away. As for Spike, he sat down on the plank-sheer where he had stood, and remained there ruminating intently for two or three minutes. When he descended to the deck his mind was fully made up. His first act was to give some private orders to the boatswain, after which he withdrew to the cabin, whither he summoned Tier, without delay.

"Jack," commenced the captain, using very little circumlocution in opening his mind, "you and I are old shipmates, and ought to be old friends, though I think your natur' has undergone some changes since we last met. Twenty years ago there was no man in the ship on whom I could so certainly depend as on Jack Tier; now, you seem given up altogether to the women. Your mind has changed even more than your body."

"Time does that for all of us, Captain Spike," returned Tier coolly. "I am not what I used to be, I'll own, nor are you yourself, for that matter. When I saw you last, noble captain, you were a handsome man of forty, and could go aloft with any youngster in the brig; but, now, you're heavy, and not over-active."

"I!—Not a bit of change has taken place in me for the last thirty years. I defy any man to show the contrary. But that's neither here nor there; you are no young woman, Jack, that I need be boasting of my health and beauty before you. I want a bit of real sarvice from you, and want it done in old-times fashion; and I mean to pay for it in old-times fashion, too."

As Spike concluded, he put into Tier's hand one of the doubloons that he had received from Señor Montefalderon, in payment for the powder. The doubloons, for



which so much pumping and bailing were then in process, were still beneath the waters of the gulf.

“Ay, ay, sir,” returned Jack, smiling and pocketing the gold, with a wink of the eye, and a knowing look; “this does resemble old times sum’at. I now begin to know Captain Spike, my old commander again, and see that he’s more like himself than I had just thought him. What am I to do for this, sir? Speak plain, that I may be sertain to steer the true course.”

“Oh, just a trifle, Jack—nothing that will break up the ground-tier of your wits, my old shipmate. You see the state of the brig, and know that she is in no condition for ladies.”

“’T would have been better all round, sir, had they never come aboard at all,” answered Jack, looking dark.

Spike was surprised, but he was too much bent on his projects to heed trifles.

“You know what sort of flour they’re whipping out of the schooner, and must understand that the brig will soon be in a pretty litter. I do not intend to let them send a single barrel of it beneath my hatches again, but the deck and the islands must take it all. Now I wish to relieve my passengers from the confinement this will occasion, and I have ordered the boatswain to pitch a tent for them on the largest of these here Tortugas; and what I want of you, is to muster food and water, and other women’s knickknacks, and go ashore with them, and make them as comfortable as you can for a few days, or until we can get this schooner loaded and off.”

Jack Tier looked at his commander as if he would penetrate his most secret thoughts. A short pause succeeded, during which the steward’s mate was intently musing, then his countenance suddenly brightened; he gave the doubloon a fillip, and caught it on the palm of his hand as it descended, and he uttered the customary “Ay, ay, sir,” with apparent cheerfulness. Nothing more passed between these two worthies, who now parted, Jack to make his arrangements, and Spike to “tell his yarn,” as he termed the operation in his own mind, to Mrs. Budd, Rose, and Biddy. The widow listened complacently, though she seemed half doubting, half ready to comply. As for Rose, she received the proposal with delight—The confinement of the vessel having become irksome to her. The principal obstacle was in overcoming the difficulties made by the aunt, Biddy appearing to like the notion quite as much as “Miss Rosy.” As for the light-house, Mrs. Budd had declared nothing would induce her to go there; for she did not doubt that the place would soon be, if it were not already, haunted. In this opinion she was sustained by Biddy; and it was the knowledge of this opinion that induced Spike to propose the tent.



“Are you sure, Captain Spike, it is not a desert island?” asked the widow; “I remember that my poor Mr. Budd always spoke of desert islands as horrid places, and spots that every one should avoid.”

“What if it is, aunty,” said Rose eagerly, “while we have the brig here, close at hand. We shall suffer none of the wants of such a place, so long as our friends can supply us.”

“And such friends, Miss Rose,” exclaimed Spike, a little sentimentally for him, “friends that would undergo hunger and thirst themselves, before you should want for any comforts.”

“Do, now, Madam Budd,” put in Bidly in her hearty way, “it’s an island, ye’ll remember: and sure that’s just what ould Ireland has ever been, God bless it! Islands make the pleasantest residences.”

“Well I’ll venture to oblige you and Bidly, Rosy, dear,” returned the aunt, still half reluctant to yield; “but you’ll remember, that if I find it at all a desert island, I’ll not pass the night on it on any account whatever.”

With this understanding the party was transferred to the shore. The boatswain had already erected a sort of a tent, on a favourable spot, using some of the old sails that had covered the flour-barrels, not only for the walls, but for a carpet of some extent also. This tent was ingeniously enough contrived. In addition to the little room that was entirely enclosed, there was a sort of piazza, or open verandah, which would enable its tenants to enjoy the shade in the open air. Beneath this verandah, a barrel of fresh water was placed, as well as three or four ship’s stools, all of which had been sent ashore with the materials for constructing the tent. The boat had been going and coming for some time, and the distance being short, the “desert island” was soon a desert no longer. It is true that the supplies necessary to support three women for as many days, were no great matter, and were soon landed, but Jack Tier had made a provision somewhat more ample. A capital caterer, he had forgotten nothing within the compass of his means, that could contribute to the comfort of those who had been put especially under his care. Long before the people “knocked off” for their dinners, the arrangements were completed, and the boatswain was ready to take his leave.

“Well, ladies,” said that grum old salt, “I can do no more for you, as I can see. This here island is now almost as comfortable as a ship that has been in blue water for a month, and I do n’t know how it can be made more comfortabler.”

This was only according to the boatswain’s notion of comfort; but Rose thanked him for his care in her winning way, while her aunt admitted that, “for a place that was



almost a desert island, things did look somewhat promising.” In a few minutes the men were all gone, and the islet was left to the sole possession of the three females, and their constant companion, Jack Tier. Rose was pleased with the novelty of her situation, though the islet certainly did deserve the opprobrium of being a “desert island.” There was no shade but that of the tent, and its verandah-like covering, though the last, in particular, was quite extensive. There was no water, that in the barrel and that of the ocean excepted. Of herbage there was very little on this islet, and that was of the most meagre and coarse character, being a long wiry grass, with here and there a few stunted bushes. The sand was reasonably firm, however, more especially round the shore, and the walking was far from unpleasant. Little did Rose know it, but a week earlier, the spot would have been next to intolerable to her, on account of the mosquitoes, gallinippers, and other similar insects of the family of tormentors; but everything of the sort had temporarily disappeared in the currents of the tornado. To do Spike justice, he was aware of this circumstance, or he might have hesitated about exposing females to the ordinary annoyances of one of these spots. Not a mosquito, or anything of the sort was left, however, all having gone to leeward, in the vortex which had come so near sweeping off the Mexican schooner.

“This place will do very well, aunty, for a day or two,” cried Rose cheerfully, as she returned from a short excursion, and threw aside her hat, one made to shade her face from the sun of a warm climate, leaving the sea-breeze that was just beginning to blow, to fan her blooming and sunny cheeks. “It is better than the brig. The worst piece of land is better than the brig.”

“Do not say that, Rose—not if it’s a desert island, dear; and this is desperately like a desert island; I am almost sorry I ventured on it.”

“It will not be deserted by us, aunty, until we shall see occasion to do so. Why not endeavour to get on board of yonder ship, and return to New York in her; or at least induce her captain to put us ashore somewhere near this, and go home by land. Your health never seemed better than it is at this moment; and as for mine, I do assure you, aunty, dear, I am as perfectly well as I ever was in my life.”

“All from this voyage. I knew it would set you up, and am delighted to hear you say as much. Bidy and I were talking of you this very morning, my child, and we both agreed that you were getting to be yourself again. Oh, ships, and brigs, and schooners, full-jigger or half-jigger, for pulmonary complaints, say I! My poor Mr. Budd always maintained that the ocean was the cure for all diseases, and I determined that to sea you should go, the moment I became alarmed for your health.”



The good widow loved Rose most tenderly, and she was obliged to use her handkerchief to dry the tears from her eyes as she concluded. Those tears sprung equally from a past feeling of apprehension, and a present feeling of gratitude. Rose saw this, and she took a seat at her aunt's side, touched herself, as she never failed to be on similar occasions with this proof of her relative's affection. At that moment even Harry Mulford would have lost a good deal in her kind feelings toward him, had he so much as smiled at one of the widow's nautical absurdities. At such times, Rose seemed to be her aunt's guardian and protectress, instead of reversing the relations, and she entirely forgot herself the many reasons which existed for wishing that she had been placed in childhood, under the care of one better qualified than the well-meaning relict of her uncle, for the performance of her duties.

"Thank you, aunty—thank'ee, dear aunty," said Rose, kissing the widow affectionately. "I know that you mean the best for me, though you are a little mistaken in supposing me ill. I do assure you, dear," patting her aunt's cheek, as if she herself had been merely a playful child, "I never was better; and if I have been pulmonary, I am entirely cured, and am now ready to return home."

"God be praised for this, Rosy. Under His divine providence, it is all owing to the sea. If you really feel so much restored, however, I do not wish to keep you a moment longer on a ship's board than is necessary. We owe something to Captain Spike's care, and cannot quit him too unceremoniously; but as soon as he is at liberty to go into a harbour, I will engage him to do so, and we can return home by land—unless, indeed, the brig intends to make the home voyage herself."

"I do not like this brig, aunty, and now we are out of her, I wish we could keep out of her. Nor do I like your Captain Spike, who seems to me anything but an agreeable gentleman."

"That's because you arn't accustomed to the sea. My poor Mr. Budd had his ways, like all the rest of them; it takes time to get acquainted with them. All sailors are so."

Rose bent her face involuntarily, but so low as to conceal the increasing brightness of her native bloom, as she answered,

"Harry Mulford is not so, aunty, dear—and he is every inch a sailor."

"Well, there is a difference, I must acknowledge, though I dare say Harry will grow every day more and more like all the rest of them. In the end, he will resemble Captain Spike."

"Never," said Rose, firmly.

"You can't tell, child. I never saw your uncle when he was Harry's age, for I wasn't born till he was thirty, but often and often has he pointed out to me some slender,



genteel youth, and say, ‘just such a lad was I at twenty,’ though nothing could be less alike, at the moment he was speaking, than they two. We all change with our years. Now I was once as slender, and almost—not quite, Rosy, for few there are that be—but almost as handsome as you yourself.”

“Yes, aunty, I’ve heard that before,” said Rose, springing up, in order to change the discourse; “but Harry Mulford will never become like Stephen Spike. I wish we had never known the man, dearest aunty.”

“It was all your own doings, child. He’s a cousin of your most intimate friend, and she brought him to the house; and one couldn’t offend Mary Mulford, by telling her we did n’t like her cousin.”

Rose seemed vexed, and she kept her little foot in motion, patting the sail that formed the carpet, as girls will pat the ground with their feet when vexed. This gleam of displeasure was soon over, however, and her countenance became as placid as the clear, blue sky that formed the vault of the heavens above her head. As if to atone for the passing rebellion of her feelings, she threw her arms around her aunt’s neck; after which she walked away, along the beach, ruminating on her present situation, and of the best means of extricating their party from the power of Spike.

It requires great familiarity with vessels and the seas, for one to think, read, and pursue the customary train of reasoning on board a ship that one has practised ashore. Rose had felt this embarrassment during the past month, for the whole of which time she had scarcely been in a condition to act up to her true character, suffering her energies, and in some measure her faculties, to be drawn into the vortex produced by the bustle, novelties, and scenes of the vessel and the ocean. But, now she was once more on the land, diminutive and naked as was the islet that composed her present world, and she found leisure and solitude for reflection and decision. She was not ignorant of the nature of a vessel of war, or of the impropriety of unprotected females placing themselves on board of one; but gentlemen of character, like the officers of the ship in sight, could hardly be wanting in the feelings of their caste; and anything was better than to return voluntarily within the power of Spike. She determined within her own mind that voluntarily she would not. We shall leave this young girl, slowly wandering along the beach of her islet, musing on matters like these, while we return to the vessels and the mariners.

A good breeze had come in over the reef from the Gulf, throwing the sloop-of-war dead to leeward of the brigantine’s anchorage. This was the reason that the former had closed so slowly. Still the distance between the vessels was so small, that a swift



cruiser, like the ship of war, would soon have been alongside of the wreckers, but for the intervening islets and the intricacies of their channels. She had made sail on the wind, however, and was evidently disposed to come as near to the danger as her lead showed would be safe, even if she did not venture among them.

Spike noted all these movements, and he took his measures accordingly. The pumping and bailing had been going on since the appearance of light, and the flour had been quite half removed from the schooner's hold. That vessel consequently floated with sufficient buoyancy, and no further anxiety was felt on account of her sinking. Still, a great deal of water remained in her, the cabin itself being nearly half full. Spike's object was to reduce this water sufficiently to enable him to descend into the state-room which Señor Montefalderon had occupied, and bring away the doubloons that alone kept him in the vicinity of so ticklish a neighbour as the Poughkeepsie. Escape was easy enough to one who knew the passages of the reef and islets; more especially since the wind had so fortunately brought the cruiser to leeward. Spike most apprehended a movement upon him in the boats, and he had almost made up his mind, should such an enterprise be attempted, to try his hand in beating it off with his guns. A good deal of uncertainty on the subject of Mulford's consenting to resist the recognised authorities of the country, as well as some doubts of a similar nature in reference to two or three of the best of the foremast hands, alone left him at all in doubt as to the expediency of such a course. As no boats were lowered from the cruiser, however, the necessity of resorting to so desperate a measure, did not occur, and the duty of lightening the schooner had proceeded without interruption. As soon as the boatswain came off from the islet, he and the men with him were directed to take the hands and lift the anchors, of which it will be remembered the *Swash* had several down. Even Mulford was shortly after set at work on the same duty; and these expert and ready seamen soon had the brig clear of the ground. As the schooner was anchored, and floated without assistance, the *Swash* rode by her.

Such was the state of things when the men turned to, after having had their dinners. By this time, the sloop-of-war was within half a league of the bay, her progress having been materially retarded by the set of the current, which was directly against her. Spike saw that a collision of some sort or other must speedily occur, and he determined to take the boatswain with him, and descend into the cabin of the schooner in quest of the gold. The boatswain was summoned, and Señor Montefalderon repeated in this man's presence the instructions that he thought it necessary for the adventurers to follow, in order to secure the prize. Knowing how little locks would avail on board a



vessel, were the men disposed to rob him, that gentleman had trusted more to secreting his treasure, than to securing it in the more ordinary way. When the story had again been told, Spike and his boatswain went on board the schooner, and, undressing, they prepared to descend into the cabin. The captain paused a single instant to take a look at the sloop-of-war, and to examine the state of the weather. It is probable some new impression was made on him by this inquiry, for, hailing Mulford, he ordered him to loosen the sails, and to sheet home, and hoist the foretopsail. In a word, to “see all ready to cast off, and make sail on the brig at the shortest notice.” With this command he disappeared by the schooner’s companion-way.

Spike and his companion found the water in the cabin very much deeper than they had supposed. With a view to comfort, the cabin-floor had been sunk much lower than is usual on board American vessels, and this brought the water up nearly to the arm-pits of two men as short as our captain and his sturdy little boatswain. The former grumbled a good deal, when he ascertained the fact, and said something about the mate’s being better fitted to make a search in such a place, but concluding with the remark, that “the man who wants ticklish duty well done, must see to it himself.”

The gold-hunters groped their way cautiously about the cabin for some time, feeling for a drawer, in which they had been told they should find the key of Señor Montefalderon’s state-room door. In this Spike himself finally succeeded, he being much better acquainted with cabins and their fixtures, than the boatswain.

“Here it is, Ben,” said the captain, “now for a dive among the Don’s val’ables. Should you pick up anything worth speaking of, you can condemn it for salvage, as I mean to cast off, and quit the wrack the moment we’ve made sure of the doubloons.”

“And what will become of all the black flour that is lying about, sir?” asked the boatswain with a grin.

“It may take care of itself. My agreement will be up as soon as the doubloons are found. If the Don will come down handsomely with his share of what will be left, I may be bought to put the kegs we have in the brig ashore for him somewhere in Mexico; but my wish is to get out of the neighbourhood of that bloody sloop-of-war, as soon as possible.”

“She makes but slow headway ag’in the current, sir; but a body would think she might send in her boats.”

“The boats might be glad to get back again,” muttered Spike. “Ay, here is the door unlocked, and we can now fish for the money.”

Some object had rolled against the state-room door, when the vessel was capsized, and there was a good deal of difficulty in forcing it open. They succeeded at last, and



Spike led the way by wading into the small apartment. Here they began to feel about beneath the water, and by a very insufficient light, in quest of the hidden treasure. Spike and his boatswain differed as to the place which had just been described to them, as men will differ even in the account of events that pass directly before their eyes. While thus employed, the report of a heavy gun came through the doors of the cabin, penetrating to the recess in which they were thus employed.

“Ay, that’s the beginning of it!” exclaimed Spike. “I wonder that the fool has put it off so long.”

“That gun was a heavy fellow, Captain Spike,” returned the boatswain; “and it sounded in my ears as if’t was shotted.”

“Ay, ay, I dare say you’re right enough in both opinions. They put such guns on board their sloops-of-war, now-a-days, as a fellow used to find in the lower batteries of a two-decker only in old times; and as for shot, why Uncle Sam pays, and they think it cheaper to fire one out of a gun, than to take the trouble of drawing it.”

“I believe here’s one of the bags, Captain Spike,” said the boatswain, making a dip, and coming up with one-half of the desired treasure in his fist. “By George, I’ve grabbed him, sir; and the other bag can’t be far off.”

“Hand that over to me,” said the captain, a little authoritatively, “and take a dive for the next.”

As the boatswain was obeying this order, a second gun was heard, and Spike thought that the noise made by the near passage of a large shot was audible also. He called out to Ben to “bear a hand, as the ship seems in ’arnest.” But the head of the boatswain being under water at the time, the admonition was thrown away. The fellow soon came up, however, puffing like a porpoise that has risen to the surface to blow.

“Hand it over to me at once,” said Spike, stretching out his unoccupied hand to receive the prize; “we have little time to lose.”

“That’s sooner said than done, sir,” answered the boat-swain; “a box has driven down upon the bag, and there’s a tight jam. I got hold of the neck of the bag, and pulled like a horse, but it wouldn’t come no how.”

“Show me the place, and let me have a drag at it. There goes another of his bloody guns!”

Down went Spike, and the length of time he was under water, proved how much he was in earnest. Up he came at length, and with no better luck than his companion. He had got hold of the bag, satisfied himself by feeling its outside that it contained the doubloons, and hauled with all his strength, but it would not come. The boatswain



now proposed to take a jamming hitch with a rope around the neck of the bag, which was long enough to admit of such a fastening, and then to apply their united force. Spike assented, and the boatswain rummaged about for a piece of small rope to suit his purpose. At this moment Mulford appeared at the companion-way to announce the movements on the part of the sloop-of-war. He had been purposely tardy, in order to give the ship as much time as possible; but he saw by the looks of the men that a longer delay might excite suspicion.

“Below there!” called out the mate.

“What’s wanting, sir?—What’s wanting, sir?” answered Spike; “let’s know at once.”

“Have you heard the guns, Captain Spike?”

“Ay, ay, every grumbler of them. They’ve done no mischief, I trust, Mr. Mulford?”

“None as yet, sir; though the last shot, and it was a heavy fellow, passed just above the schooner’s deck. I’ve the topsail sheeted home and hoisted, and it’s that which has set them at work. If I clewed up again, I dare say they’d not fire another gun.”

“Clew up nothing, sir, but see all clear for casting off and making sail through the South Pass. What do you say, Ben, are you ready for a drag?”

“All ready, sir,” answered the boatswain, once more coming up to breathe. “Now for it, sir; a steady pull, and a pull all together.”

They did pull, but the hitch slipped, and both went down beneath the water. In a moment they were up again, puffing a little and swearing a great deal. Just then another gun, and a clatter above their heads, brought them to a stand.

“What means that, Mr. Mulford?” demanded Spike, a good deal startled.

“It means that the sloop-of-war has shot away the head of this schooner’s foremast, sir, and that the shot has chipp’d a small piece out of the heel of our maintop-mast—that’s all.”

Though excessively provoked at the mate’s cool manner of replying, Spike saw that he might lose all by being too tenacious about securing the remainder of the doubloons. Pronouncing in very energetic terms on Uncle Sam, and all his cruisers, an anathema that we do not care to repeat, he gave a surly order to Ben to “knock-off,” and abandoned his late design. In a minute he was on deck and dressed.

“Cast off, lads,” cried the captain, as soon as on the deck of his own brig again, “and four of you man that boat. We have got half of your treasure, Señor Wan, but have been driven from the rest of it, as you see. There is the bag; when at leisure we’ll divide it, and give the people their share. Mr. Mulford, keep the brig in motion, hauling up



toward the South Pass, while I go ashore for the ladies. I'll meet you just in the throat of the passage."

This said, Spike tumbled into his boat, and was pulled ashore. As for Mulford, though he cast many an anxious glance toward the islet, he obeyed his orders, keeping the brig standing off and on, under easy canvas, but working her up toward the indicated passage.

Spike was met by Jack Tier on the beach of the little island.

"Muster the women at once," ordered the captain, "we have no time to lose, for that fellow will soon be firing broad-sides, and his shot now range half a mile beyond us."

"You'll no more move the widow and her maid, than you'll move the island," answered Jack, laconically.

"Why should I not move them? Do they wish to stay here and starve?"

"It's little that they think of that. The sloop-of-war no sooner begun to fire than down went Mrs. Budd on the canvas floor of the tent, and set up just such a screaming as you may remember she tried her hand at the night the revenue craft fired into us. Biddy lay down alongside of her mistress, and at every gun, they just scream as loud as they can, as if they fancied they might frighten off Uncle Sam's men from their duty."

"Duty!—You little scamp, do you call tormenting honest traders in this fashion the duty of any man?"

"Well, captain, I'm no ways partic'lar about a word or two. Their 'ways,' if you like that better than duty, sir."

"Where's Rose? Is she down too, screaming and squalling?"

"No, Captain Spike, no. Miss Rose is endeavouring, like a handsome young Christian lady as she is, to pacify and mollify her aunt and Biddy; and right down sensible talk does she give them."

"Then she at least can go aboard the brig," exclaimed Spike, with a sudden animation, and an expression of countenance that Jack did not at all like.

"I ray-y-ther think she'll wish to hold on to the old lady," observed the steward's-mate, a little emphatically.

"You be d—d," cried Spike, fiercely; "when your opinion is wanted, I'll ask for it. If I find you've been setting that young woman's mind ag'in me, I'll toss you overboard, as I would the offals of a shark."

"Young women's minds, when they are only nineteen, get set ag'in boys of fifty-six without much assistance."



“Fifty-six yourself.”

“I’m fifty-three—that I’ll own without making faces at it,” returned Jack, meekly; “and, Stephen Spike, you logged fifty-six your last birthday, or a false entry was made.”

This conversation did not take place in the presence of the boat’s crew, but as the two walked together toward the tent. They were now in the verandah, as we have called the shaded opening in front, and actually within sound of the sweet voice of Rose, as she exhorted her aunt, in tones a little louder than usual for her to use, to manifest more fortitude. Under such circumstances Spike did not deem it expedient to utter that which was uppermost in his mind, but, turning short upon Tier, he directed a tremendous blow directly between his eyes. Jack saw the danger and dodged, falling backward to avoid a concussion which he knew would otherwise be fearful, coming as it would from one of the best forecastle boxers of his time. The full force of the blow was avoided, though Jack got enough of it to knock him down, and to give him a pair of black eyes. Spike did not stop to pick the assistant steward up, for another gun was fired at that very instant, and Mrs. Budd and Bidy renewed their screams. Instead of pausing to kick the prostrate Tier, as had just before been his intention, the captain entered the tent.

A scene that was sufficiently absurd met the view of Spike, when he found himself in the presence of the females. The widow had thrown herself on the ground, and was grasping the cloth of the sail on which the tent had been erected with both her hands, and was screaming at the top of her voice. Bidy’s imitation was not exactly literal, for she had taken a comfortable seat at the side of her mistress, but in the way of cries, she rather outdid her principal.

“We must be off,” cried Spike, somewhat unceremoniously. “The man-of-war is blazing away, as if she was a firin’ minute-guns over our destruction, and I can wait no longer.”

“I’ll not stir,” answered the widow—“I can’t stir—I shall be shot if I go out. No, no, no—I’ll not stir an inch.”

“We’ll be kilt!—We’ll be kilt!” echoed Bidy, “and a wicket murther’t will be in that same man, war or no war.”

The captain perceived the uselessness of remonstrance at such a moment, and perhaps he was secretly rejoiced thereat; but it is certain that he whipped Rose up under his arm, and walked away with her, as if she had been a child of two or three years of age. Rose did not scream, but she struggled and protested vehemently. It was in vain. Already the captain had carried her half the distance between the tent and the boat, in the last of which, a minute more would have deposited his victim, when a severe blow



on the back of his head caused Spike to stumble, and he permitted Rose to escape from his grasp, in the effort to save himself from a fall. Turning fiercely toward his assailant, whom he suspected to be one of his boat's crew, he saw Tier standing within a few yards, levelling a pistol at him.

“Advance a step, and you're a dead man, villain!” screamed Jack, his voice almost cracked with rage, and the effort he made to menace.

Spike muttered an oath too revolting for our pages; but it was such a curse as none but an old salt could give vent to, and that in the bitterness of his fiercest wrath. At that critical moment, while Rose was swelling with indignation and wounded maiden pride, almost within reach of his arms, looking more lovely than ever, as the flush of anger deepened the colour in her cheeks, a fresh and deep report from one of the guns of the sloop-of-war drew all eyes in her direction. The belching of that gun seemed to be of double the power of those which had preceded it, and jets of water, that were twenty feet in height, marked the course of the formidable missile that was projected from the piece. The ship had, indeed, discharged one of those monster-cannons that bear the name of a distinguished French engineer, but which should more properly be called by the name of the ingenious officer who is at the head of our own ordnance, as they came originally from his inventive faculties, though somewhat improved by their European adopter. Spike suspected the truth, for he had heard of these “Pazans,” as he called them, and he watched the booming, leaping progress of the eight-inch shell that this gun threw, with the apprehension that unknown danger is apt to excite. As jet succeeded jet, each rising nearer and nearer to his brig, the interval of time between them seeming fearfully to diminish, he muttered oath upon oath. The last leap that the shell made on the water was at about a quarter of a mile's distance of the islet on which his people had deposited at least a hundred and fifty barrels of his spurious flour:- thence it flew, as it might be without an effort, with a grand and stately bound into the very centre of the barrels, exploding at the moment it struck. All saw the scattering of flour, which was instantly succeeded by the heavy though slightly straggling explosion of all the powder on the island. A hundred kegs were lighted, as it might be, in a common flash, and a cloud of white smoke poured out and concealed the whole islet, and all near it.

Rose stood confounded, nor was Jack Tier in a much better state of mind, though he still kept the pistol levelled, and menaced Spike. But the last was no longer dangerous to any there. He recollected that piles of the barrels encumbered the decks of his vessel, and he rushed to the boat, nearly frantic with haste, ordering the men to



pull for their lives. In less than five minutes he was alongside, and on the deck of the *Swash*—his first order being to—“Tumble every barrel of this bloody powder into the sea, men. Over with it, Mr. Mulford, clear away the midship ports, and launch as much as you can through them.”

Remonstrance on the part of Señor Montefalderon would have been useless, had he been disposed to make it; but, sooth to say, he was as ready to get rid of the powder as any there, after the specimen he had just witnessed of the power of a Paixhan gun.

Thus it is ever with men. Had two or three of those shells been first thrown without effect, as might very well have happened under the circumstances, none there would have cared for the risk they were running; but the chance explosion which had occurred, presented so vivid a picture of the danger, dormant and remote as it really was, as to throw the entire crew of the *Swash* into a frenzy of exertion.

Nor was the vessel at all free from danger. On the contrary, she ran very serious risk of being destroyed, and in some degree, in the very manner apprehended. Perceiving that Spike was luffing up through one of the passages nearest the reef, which would carry him clear of the group, a long distance to windward of the point where he could only effect the same object, the commander of the sloop-of-war opened his fire in good earnest, hoping to shoot away something material on board the *Swash*, before she could get beyond the reach of his shot. The courses steered by the two vessels, just at that moment, favoured such an attempt, though they made it necessarily very short-lived. While the *Swash* was near the wind, the sloop-of-war was obliged to run off to avoid islets ahead of her, a circumstance which, while it brought the brig square with the ship's broadside, compelled the latter to steer on a diverging line to the course of her chase. It was in consequence of these facts, that the sloop-of-war now opened in earnest, and was soon canopied in the smoke of her own fire.

Great and important changes, as has been already mentioned, have been made in the armaments of all the smaller cruisers within the last few years. Half a generation since, a ship of the rate—we do not say of the size—of the vessel which was in chase of Spike and his craft, would not have had it in her power to molest an enemy at the distance these two vessels were now apart. But recent improvements have made ships of this nominal force formidable at nearly a league's distance; more especially by means of their Paixhans and their shells.

For some little time the range carried the shot directly over the islet of the tent; Jack Tier and Rose, both of whom were watching all that passed with intense interest, standing in the open air the whole time, seemingly with no concern for themselves, so



absorbed was each, notwithstanding all that had passed, in the safety of the brig. As for Rose, she thought only of Harry Mulford, and of the danger he was in by those fearful explosions of the shells. Her quick intellect comprehended the peculiar nature of the risk that was incurred by having the flour-barrels on deck, and she could not but see the manner in which Spike and his men were tumbling them into the water, as the quickest manner of getting rid of them. After what had just passed between Jack Tier and his commander, it might not be so easy to account for his manifest, nay, intense interest in the escape of the *Swash*. This was apparent by his troubled countenance, by his exclamations, and occasionally by his openly expressed wishes for her safety. Perhaps it was no more than the interest the seaman is so apt to feel in the craft in which he has so long sailed, and which to him has been a home, and of which Mulford exhibited so much, in his struggles between feeling and conscience—between a true and a false duty.

As for Spike and his people, we have already mentioned their efforts to get rid of the powder. Shell after shell exploded, though none very near the brig, the ship working her guns as if in action. At length the officers of the sloop-of-war detected a source of error in their aim, that is of very common occurrence in sea-gunnery. Their shot had been thrown to ricochet, quartering a low, but very regular succession of little waves. Each shot striking the water at an acute angle to its agitated surface, was deflected from a straight line, and described a regular curve toward the end of its career; or, it might be truer to say, an irregular curvature, for the deflection increased as the momentum of the missile diminished.

No sooner did the commanding officer of the sloop-of-war discover this fact, and it was easy to trace the course of the shots by the jets of water they cast into the air, and to see as well as to hear the explosions of the shells, than he ordered the guns pointed more to windward, as a means of counteracting the departure from the straight lines. This expedient succeeded in part, the solid shot falling much nearer to the brig the moment the practice was resorted to. No shell was fired for some little time after the new order was issued, and Spike and his people began to hope these terrific missiles had ceased their annoyance. The men cheered, finding their voices for the first time since the danger had seemed so imminent, and Spike was heard animating them to their duty. As for Mulford, he was on the coach-house deck, working the brig, the captain having confided to him that delicate duty, the highest proof he could furnish of confidence in his seamanship. The handsome young mate had just made a half-board, in the neatest manner, shoving the brig by its means through a most difficult part of



the passage, and had got her handsomely filled again on the same tack, looking right out into open water, by a channel through which she could now stand on a very easy bowline. Everything seemed propitious, and the sloop-of-war's solid shot began to drop into the water, a hundred yards short of the brig. In this state of things one of the Paixhans belched forth its angry flame and sullen roar again. There was no mistaking the gun. Then came its mass of iron, a globe that would have weighed just sixty-eight pounds, had not sufficient metal been left out of its interior to leave a cavity to contain a single pound of powder. Its course, as usual, was to be marked by its path along the sea, as it bounded, half a mile at a time, from wave to wave. Spike saw by its undeviating course that this shell was booming terrifically toward his brig, and a cry to "look out for the shell," caused the work to be suspended. That shell struck the water for the last time, within two hundred yards of the brig, rose dark and menacing in its furious leap, but exploded at the next instant. The fragments of the iron were scattered on each side, and ahead. Of the last, three or four fell into the water so near the vessel as to cast their spray on her decks.

"Overboard with the rest of the powder!" shouted Spike. "Keep the brig off a little, Mr. Mulford—keep her off, sir; you luff too much, sir."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the mate. "Keep her off, it is."

"There comes the other shell!" cried Ben, but the men did not quit their toil to gaze this time. Each seaman worked as if life and death depended on his single exertions. Spike alone watched the course of the missile. On it came, booming and hurtling through the air, tossing high the jets, at each leap it made from the surface, striking the water for its last bound, seemingly in a line with the shell that had just preceded it. From that spot it made its final leap. Every hand in the brig was stayed and every eye was raised as the rushing tempest was heard advancing. The mass went muttering directly between the masts of the *Swash*. It had scarcely seemed to go by when the fierce flash of fire and the sharp explosion followed. Happily for those in the brig, the projectile force given by the gun carried the fragments from them, as in the other instance it had brought them forward; else would few have escaped mutilation, or death, among their crew.

The flashing of fire so near the barrels of powder that still remained on their deck, caused the frantic efforts to be renewed, and barrel after barrel was tumbled overboard, amid the shouts that were now raised to animate the people to their duty.

"Luff, Mr. Mulford—luff you may, sir," cried Spike. No answer was given.

"D'ye hear there, Mr. Mulford?—it is luff you may, sir."



“Mr. Mulford is not aft, sir,” called out the man at the helm—“but luff it is, sir.”

“Mr. Mulford not aft! Where’s the mate, man? Tell him he is wanted.”

No Mulford was to be found! A call passed round the decks, was sent below, and echoed through the entire brig, but no sign or tidings could be had of the handsome mate. At that exciting moment the sloop-of-war seemed to cease her firing, and appeared to be securing her guns.

