



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



Part 1: Chapter 1

Pros.

Why, that's my spirit! But was not this nigh shore?

Ariel.

Close by, my master.

Pros.

But are they, Ariel, safe?

Ariel.

Not a hair perished: Tempest.

“D’ye here there, Mr. Mulford?” called out Capt. Stephen Spike, of the half-rigged, brigantine *Swash*, or *Molly Swash*, as was her registered name, to his mate—“we shall be dropping out as soon as the tide makes, and I intend to get through the Gate, at least, on the next flood. Waiting for a wind in port is lubberly seamanship, for he that wants one should go outside and look for it.”

This call was uttered from a wharf of the renowned city of Manhattan, to one who was in the trunk-cabin of a clipper-looking craft, of the name mentioned, and on the deck of which not a soul was visible. Nor was the wharf, though one of those wooden piers that line the arm of the sea that is called the East River, such a spot as ordinarily presents itself to the mind of the reader, or listener, when an allusion is made to a wharf of that town which it is the fashion of the times to call the Commercial Emporium of America—as if there might very well be an emporium of any other character. The wharf in question had not a single vessel of any sort lying at, or indeed very near it, with the exception of the *Molly Swash*. As it actually stood on the eastern side of the town, it is scarcely necessary to say that such a wharf could only be found high up, and at a considerable distance from the usual haunts of commerce. The brig lay more than a



mile above the Hook (Corlaer's, of course, is meant—not Sandy Hook) and quite near to the old Alms House—far above the ship-yards, in fact. It was a solitary place for a vessel, in the midst of a crowd. The grum top-chain voice of Captain Spike had nothing there to mingle with, or interrupt its harsh tones, and it instantly brought on deck Harry Mulford, the mate in question, apparently eager to receive his orders.

“Did you hail, Captain Spike?” called out the mate, a tight, well-grown, straight-built, handsome sailor-lad of two or three-and-twenty—one full of health, strength and manliness.

“Hail! If you call straining a man's throat until he's hoarse, hailing, I believe I did. I flatter myself, there is not a man north of Hatteras that can make himself heard further in gale of wind than a certain gentleman who is to be found within a foot of the spot where I stand. Yet, sir, I've been hailing the *Swash* these five minutes, and thankful am I to find some one at last who is on board to answer me.”

“What are your orders, Capt. Spike?”

“To see all clear for a start as soon as the flood makes. I shall go through the Gate on the next young flood, and I hope you'll have all the hands aboard in time. I see two or three of them up at that Dutch beer-house, this moment, and can tell'em; in plain language, if they come here with their beer aboard them, they'll have to go ashore again.”

“You have an uncommonly sober crew, Capt. Spike,” answered the young man, with great calmness. “During the whole time I have been with them, I have not seen a man among them the least in the wind.”

“Well, I hope it will turn out that I've an uncommonly sober mate in the bargain. Drunkenness I abominate, Mr. Mulford, and I can tell you, short metre, that I will not stand it.”

“May I inquire if you ever saw me, the least in the world, under the influence of liquor, Capt. Spike?” demanded the mate, rather than asked, with a very fixed meaning in his manner.

“I keep no log-book of trifles, Mr. Mulford, and cannot say. No man is the worse for bousing out his jib when off duty, though a drunkard's a thing I despise. Well, well—remember, sir, that the *Molly Swash* casts off on the young flood, and that Rose Budd and the good lady, her aunt, take passage in her, this v'y'ge.”

“Is it possible that you have persuaded them into that, at last!” exclaimed the handsome mate.

“Persuaded! It takes no great persuasion, sir, to get the ladies to try their luck in that brig. Lady Washington herself, if she was alive and disposed to a sea-v'y'ge, might



be glad of the chance. We've a ladies' cabin, you know, and it's suitable that it should have some one to occupy it. Old Mrs. Budd is a sensible woman, and takes time by the forelock. Rose is ailin'—pulmonary they call it, I believe, and her aunt wishes to try the sea for her constitution—"

"Rose Budd has no more of a pulmonary constitution than I have myself," interrupted the mate.

"Well, that's as people fancy. You must know, Mr. Mulford, they've got all sorts of diseases now-a-days, and all sorts of cures for 'em. One sort of a cure for consumption is what they tarm the Hyder-Ally—"

"I think you must mean hydropathy, sir—"

"Well it's something of the sort, no matter what—but cold water is at the bottom of it, and they do say it's a good remedy. Now Rose's aunt thinks if cold water is what is wanted, there is no place where it can be so plenty as out on the ocean. Sea-air is good, too, and by taking a v'y'ge her niece will get both requisites together, and cheap."

"Does Rose Budd think herself consumptive, Capt. Spike?" asked Mulford, with interest.

"Not she—you know it will never do to alarm a pulmonary, so Mrs. Budd has held her tongue carefully on the subject before the young woman. Rose fancies that her aunt is out of sorts, and that the v'y'ge is tried on her account—but the aunt, the cunning thing, knows all about it."

Mulford almost nauseated the expression of his commander's countenance while Spike uttered the last words. At no time was that countenance very inviting, the features being coarse and vulgar, while the color of the entire face was of an ambiguous red, in which liquor and the seasons would seem to be blended in very equal quantities. Such a countenance, lighted up by a gleam of successful management, not to say with hopes and wishes that it will hardly do to dwell on, could not but be revolting to a youth of Harry Mulford's generous feelings, and most of all to one who entertained the sentiments which he was quite conscious of entertaining for Rose Budd. The young man made no reply, but turned his face toward the water, in order to conceal the expression of disgust that he was sensible must be strongly depicted on it.

The river, as the well-known arm of the sea in which the *Swash* was lying is erroneously termed, was just at that moment unusually clear of craft, and not a sail, larger than that of a boat, was to be seen between the end of Blackwell's Island and Corlaer's Hook, a distance of about a league. This stagnation in the movement of the port, at that particular point, was owing to the state of wind and tide. Of the first, there



was little more than a southerly air, while the last was about two-thirds ebb. Nearly everything that was expected on that tide, coast-wise, and by the way of the Sound, had already arrived, and nothing could go eastward, with that light breeze and under canvas, until the flood made. Of course it was different with the steamers, who were paddling about like so many ducks, steering in all directions, though mostly crossing and re-crossing at the ferries. Just as Mulford turned away from his commander, however, a large vessel of that class shoved her bows into the view, doubling the Hook, and going eastward. The first glance at this vessel sufficed to drive even Rose Budd momentarily out of the minds of both master and mate, and to give a new current to their thoughts. Spike had been on the point of walking up the wharf, but he now so far changed his purpose as actually to jump on board of the brig and spring up alongside of his mate, on the taffrail, in order to get a better look at the steamer. Mulford, who loathed so much in his commander, was actually glad of this, Spike's rare merit as a seaman forming a sort of attraction that held him, as it might be against his own will, bound to his service.

"What will they do next, Harry?" exclaimed the master, his manner and voice actually humanized, in air and sound at least, by this unexpected view of something new in his calling—"What will they do next?"

"I see no wheels, sir, nor any movement in the water astern, as if she were a propeller," returned the young man.

"She's an out-of-the-way sort of a hussy! She's a man-of-war, too—one of Uncle Sam's new efforts."

"That can hardly be, sir. Uncle Sam has but three steamers, of any size or force, now the Missouri is burned; and yonder is one of them, lying at the Navy Yard, while another is, or was lately, laid up at Boston. The third is in the Gulf. This must be an entirely new vessel, if she belong to Uncle Sam."

"New! She's as new as a Governor, and they tell me they've got so now that they choose five or six of them, up at Albany, every fall. That craft is sea-going, Mr. Mulford, as any one can tell at a glance. She's none of your passenger-hoys."

"That's plain enough, sir—and she's armed. Perhaps she's English, and they've brought her here into this open spot to try some new machinery. Ay, ay! she's about to set her ensign to the navy men at the yard, and we shall see to whom she belongs."

A long, low, expressive whistle from Spike succeeded this remark, the colours of the steamer going up to the end of a gaff on the sternmost of her schooner-rigged masts, just as Mulford ceased speaking. There was just air enough, aided by the steamer's



motion, to open the bunting, and let the spectators see the design. There were the stars and stripes, as usual, but the last ran perpendicularly, instead of in a horizontal direction.

“Revenue, by George!” exclaimed the master, as soon as his breath was exhausted in the whistle. “Who would have believed they could screw themselves up to doing such a thing in that bloody service?”

“I now remember to have heard that Uncle Sam was building some large steamers for the revenue service, and, if I mistake not, with some new invention to get along with, that is neither wheel nor propeller. This must be one of these new craft, brought out here, into open water, just to try her, sir.”

“You’re right, sir, you’re right. As to the natur’ of the beast, you see her buntin’, and no honest man can want more. If there’s anything I do hate, it is that flag, with its unnat’ral stripes, up and down, instead of running in the true old way. I have heard a lawyer say, that the revenue flag of this country is unconstitutional, and that a vessel carrying it on the high seas might be sent in for piracy.”

Although Harry Mulford was neither Puffendorf, nor Grotius, he had too much common sense, and too little prejudice in favour of even his own vocation, to swallow such a theory, had fifty Cherry Street lawyers sworn to its justice. A smile crossed his fine, firm-looking mouth, and something very like a reflection of that smile, if smiles can be reflected in one’s own countenance, gleamed in his fine, large, dark eye.

“It would be somewhat singular, Capt, Spike,” he said, “if a vessel belonging to any nation should be seized as a pirate. The fact that she is national in character would clear her.”

“Then let her carry a national flag, and be d—d to her,” answered Spike fiercely. “I can show you law for what I say, Mr. Mulford. The American flag has its stripes fore and aft by law, and this chap carries his stripes parpendic’lar. If I commanded a cruiser, and fell in with one of these up and down gentry, blast me if I wouldn’t just send him into port, and try the question in the old Alms-House.”

Mulford probably did not think it worth while to argue the point any further, understanding the dogmatism and stolidity of his commander too well to deem it necessary. He preferred to turn to the consideration of the qualities of the steamer in sight, a subject on which, as seamen, they might better sympathize.

“That’s a droll-looking revenue cutter, after all, Capt. Spike,” he said—“a craft better fitted to go in a fleet, as a look-out vessel, than to chase a smuggler in-shore.”



“And no goer in the bargain! I do not see how she gets along, for she keeps all snug under water; but, unless she can travel faster than she does just now, the *Molly Swash* would soon lend her the Mother Carey’s Chickens of her own wake to amuse her.”

“She has the tide against her, just here, sir; no doubt she would do better in still water.”

Spike muttered something between his teeth, and jumped down on deck, seemingly dismissing the subject of the revenue entirely from his mind. His old, coarse, authoritative manner returned, and he again spoke to his mate about Rose Budd, her aunt, the “ladies’ cabin,” the “young flood,” and “casting off,” as soon as the last made. Mulford listened respectfully, though with a manifest distaste for the instructions he was receiving. He knew his man, and a feeling of dark distrust came over him, as he listened to his orders concerning the famous accommodations he intended to give to Rose Budd and that “capital old lady, her aunt;” his opinion of “the immense deal of good sea-air and a v’y’ge would do Rose,” and how “comfortable they both would be on board the *Molly Swash*.”

“I honour and respect, Mrs. Budd, as my captain’s lady, you see, Mr. Mulford, and intend to treat her accordin’ly. She knows it—and Rose knows it—and they both declare they’d rather sail with me, since sail they must, than with any other ship-master out of America.”

“You sailed once with Capt. Budd yourself, I think I have heard you say, sir?”

“The old fellow brought me up. I was with him from my tenth to my twentieth year, and then broke adrift to see fashions. We all do that, you know, Mr. Mulford, when we are young and ambitious, and my turn came as well as another’s.”

“Capt. Budd must have been a good deal older than his wife, sir, if you sailed with him when a boy,” Mulford observed a little drily.

“Yes; I own to forty-eight, though no one would think me more than five or six-and-thirty, to look at me. There was a great difference between old Dick Budd and his wife, as you say, he being about fifty, when he married, and she less than twenty. Fifty is a good age for matrimony, in a man, Mulford; as is twenty in a young woman.”

“Rose Budd is not yet nineteen, I have heard her say,” returned the mate, with emphasis.

“Youngish, I will own, but that’s a fault a liberal-minded man can overlook. Every day, too, will lessen it. Well, look to the cabins, and see all clear for a start. Josh will be down presently with a cart-load of stores, and you’ll take ’em aboard without delay.”



As Spike uttered this order, his foot was on the plank-sheer of the bulwarks, in the act of passing to the wharf again. On reaching the shore, he turned and looked intently at the revenue steamer, and his lips moved, as if he were secretly uttering maledictions on her. We say maledictions, as the expression of his fierce ill-favoured countenance too plainly showed that they could not be blessings. As for Mulford, there was still something on his mind, and he followed to the gangway ladder and ascended it, waiting for a moment when the mind of his commander might be less occupied to speak. The opportunity soon occurred, Spike having satisfied himself with the second look at the steamer.

“I hope you don’t mean to sail again without a second mate, Capt. Spike?” he said.

“I do though, I can tell you. I hate Dickies—they are always in the way, and the captain has to keep just as much of a watch with one as without one.”

“That will depend on his quality. You and I have both been Dickies in our time, sir; and my time was not long ago.”

“Ay—ay—I know all about it—but you didn’t stick to it long enough to get spoiled. I would have no man aboard the *Swash* who made more than two v’y’ges as second officer. As I want no spies aboard my craft, I’ll try it once more without a Dicky.”

Saying this in a sufficiently positive manner, Capt. Stephen Spike rolled up the wharf, much as a ship goes off before the wind, now inclining to the right, and then again to the left. The gait of the man would have proclaimed him a sea-dog, to any one acquainted with that animal, as far as he could be seen. The short squab figure, the arms bent nearly at right angles at the elbow, and working like two fins with each roll of the body, the stumpy, solid legs, with the feet looking in the line of his course and kept wide apart, would all have contributed to the making up of such an opinion. Accustomed as he was to this beautiful sight, Harry Mulford kept his eyes riveted on the retiring person of his commander, until it disappeared behind a pile of lumber, waddling always in the direction of the more thickly peopled parts of the town. Then he turned and gazed at the steamer, which, by this time, had fairly passed the brig, and seemed to be actually bound through the Gate. That steamer was certainly a noble-looking craft, but our young man fancied she struggled along through the water heavily. She might be quick at need, but she did not promise as much by her present rate of moving. Still, she was a noble-looking craft, and, as Mulford descended to the deck again, he almost regretted he did not belong to her; or, at least, to anything but the *Molly Swash*.



Two hours produced a sensible change in and around that brigantine. Her people had all come back to duty, and what was very remarkable among seafaring folk, sober to a man. But, as has been said, Spike was a temperance man, as respects all under his orders at least, if not strictly so in practice himself. The crew of the *Swash* was large for a half-rigged brig of only two hundred tons, but, as her spars were very square, and all her gear as well as her mould seemed constructed for speed, it was probable more hands than common were necessary to work her with facility and expedition. After all, there were not many persons to be enumerated among the “people of the *Molly Swash*,” as they called themselves; not more than a dozen, including those aft, as well as those forward. A peculiar feature of this crew, however, was the circumstance that they were all middle-aged men, with the exception of the mate, and all thorough-bred sea-dogs. Even Josh, the cabin-boy, as he was called, was an old, wrinkled, gray-headed negro, of near sixty. If the crew wanted a little in the elasticity of youth, it possessed the steadiness and experience of their time of life, every man appearing to know exactly what to do, and when to do it. This, indeed, composed their great merit; an advantage that Spike well knew how to appreciate.

The stores had been brought alongside of the brig in a cart, and were already showed in their places. Josh had brushed and swept, until the ladies’ cabin could be made no neater. This ladies’ cabin was a small apartment beneath a trunk, which was, ingeniously enough, separated from the main cabin by pantries and double doors. The arrangement was unusual, and Spike had several times hinted that there was a history connected with that cabin; though what the history was Mulford never could induce him to relate. The latter knew that the brig had been used for a forced trade on the Spanish Main, and had heard something of her deeds in bringing off specie, and proscribed persons, at different epochs in the revolutions of that part of the world, and he had always understood that her present commander and owner had sailed in her, as mate, for many years before he had risen to his present station. Now, all was regular in the way of records, bills of sale, and other documents; Stephen Spike appearing in both the capacities just named. The register proved that the brig had been built as far back as the last English war, as a private cruiser, but recent and extensive repairs had made her “better than new,” as her owner insisted, and there was no question as to her seaworthiness. It is true the insurance offices blew upon her, and would have nothing to do with a craft that had seen her two score years and ten; but this gave none who belonged to her any concern, inasmuch as they could scarcely have been underwritten in their trade, let the age of the vessel be what it might. It was enough for them that the brig



was safe and exceedingly fast, insurances never saving the lives of the people, whatever else might be their advantages. With Mulford it was an additional recommendation, that the *Swash* was usually thought to be of uncommonly just proportions.

By half-past two, P. M., everything was ready for getting the brigantine under way. Her fore-topsail—or foretawsail as Spike called it—was loose, the fasts were singled, and a spring had been carried to a post in the wharf, that was well forward of the starboard bow, and the brig's head turned to the southwest, or down the stream, and consequently facing the young flood. Nothing seemed to connect the vessel with the land but a broad gangway plank, to which Mulford had attached life-lines, with more care than it is usual to meet with on board of vessels employed in short voyages. The men stood about the decks with their arms thrust into the bosoms of their shirts, and the whole picture was one of silent, and possibly of somewhat uneasy expectation. Nothing was said, however; Mulford walking the quarter-deck alone, occasionally looking up the still little tenanted streets of that quarter of the suburbs, as if to search for a carriage. As for the revenue-steamer, she had long before gone through the southern passage of Blackwell's, steering for the Gate.

“Dat's dem, Mr. Mulford,” Josh at length cried, from the look-out he had taken in a stern-port, where he could see over the low bulwarks of the vessel. “Yes, dat's dem, sir. I know dat old gray horse dat carries his head so low and sorrowful like, as a horse has a right to do dat has to drag a cab about this big town. My eye! what a horse it is, sir!”

Josh was right, not only as to the gray horse that carried his head “sorrowful like,” but as to the cab and its contents. The vehicle was soon on the wharf, and in its door soon appeared the short, sturdy figure of Capt. Spike, backing out, much as a bear descends a tree. On top of the vehicle were several light articles of female appliances, in the shape of bandboxes, bags, etc, the trunks having previously arrived in a cart. Well might that over-driven gray horse appear sorrowful, and travel with a lowered head. The cab, when it gave up its contents, discovered a load of no less than four persons besides the driver, all of weight, and of dimensions in proportion, with the exception of the pretty and youthful Rose Budd. Even she was plump, and of a well-rounded person; though still light and slender. But her aunt was a fair picture of a ship-master's widow; solid, comfortable and buxom. Neither was she old, nor ugly. On the contrary, her years did not exceed forty, and being well preserved, in consequence of never having been a mother, she might even have passed for thirty-five. The great objection to her appearance was the somewhat indefinite character of her shape, which seemed to blend too many of its charms into one. The fourth person, in the fare, was



Biddy Noon, the Irish servant and factotum of Mrs. Budd, who was a pock-marked, red-faced, and red-armed single woman, about her mistress's own age and weight, though less stout to the eye.

Of Rose we shall not stop to say much here. Her deep-blue eye, which was equally spirited and gentle, if one can use such contradictory terms, seemed alive with interest and curiosity, running over the brig, the wharf, the arm of the sea, the two islands, and all near her, including the Alms-House, with such a devouring rapidity as might be expected in a town-bred girl, who was setting out on her travels for the first time. Let us be understood; we say town-bred, because such was the fact; for Rose Budd had been both born and educated in Manhattan, though we are far from wishing to be understood that she was either very well-born, or highly educated. Her station in life may be inferred from that of her aunt, and her education from her station. Of the two, the last was, perhaps, a trifle the highest.

We have said that the fine blue eye of Rose passed swiftly over the various objects near her, as she alighted from the cab, and it naturally took in the form of Harry Mulford, as he stood in the gangway, offering his arm to aid her aunt and herself in passing the brig's side. A smile of recognition was exchanged between the young people, as their eyes met, and the colour, which formed so bright a charm in Rose's sweet face, deepened, in a way to prove that that colour spoke with a tongue and eloquence of its own. Nor was Mulford's cheek mute on the occasion, though he helped the hesitating, half-doubting, half-bold girl along the plank with a steady hand and rigid muscles. As for the aunt, as a captain's widow, she had not felt it necessary to betray any extraordinary emotions in ascending the plank, unless, indeed, it might be those of delight on finding her foot once more on the deck of a vessel!

Something of the same feeling governed Biddy, too, for, as Mulford civilly extended his hand to her also, she exclaimed—"No fear of me, Mr. Mate—I came from Ireland by wather, and knows all about ships and brigs, I do. If you could have seen the times we had, and the saas we crossed, you'd not think it nadeful to say much to the likes iv me."

Spike had tact enough to understand he would be out of his element in assisting females along that plank, and he was busy in sending what he called "the old lady's dunnage" on board, and in discharging the cabman. As soon as this was done, he sprang into the main-channels, and thence vid the bulwarks, on deck, ordering the plank to be hauled aboard. A solitary labourer was paid a quarter to throw off the fasts from the ring-bolts and posts, and everything was instantly in motion to cast the brig loose. Work



went on as if the vessel were in haste, and it consequently went on with activity. Spike bestirred himself, giving his orders in a way to denote he had been long accustomed to exercise authority on the deck of a vessel, and knew his calling to its minuti. The only ostensible difference between his deportment to-day and on any ordinary occasion, perhaps, was in the circumstance that he now seemed anxious to get clear of the wharf, and that in a way which might have attracted notice in any suspicious and attentive observer. It is possible that such a one was not very distant, and that Spike was aware of his presence, for a respectable-looking, well-dressed, middle-aged man had come down one of the adjacent streets, to a spot within a hundred yards of the wharf, and stood silently watching the movements of the brig, as he leaned against a fence. The want of houses in that quarter enabled any person to see this stranger from the deck of the *Swash*, but no one on board her seemed to regard him at all, unless it might be the master.

“Come, bear a hand, my hearty, and toss that bow-fast clear,” cried the captain, whose impatience to be off seemed to increase as the time to do so approached nearer and nearer. “Off with it, at once, and let her go.”

The man on the wharf threw the turns of the hawser clear of the post, and the *Swash* was released forward. A smaller line, for a spring, had been run some distance along the wharves, ahead of the vessel, and brought in aft. Her people clapped on this, and gave way to their craft, which, being comparatively light, was easily moved, and was very manageable. As this was done, the distant spectator who had been leaning on the fence moved toward the wharf with a step a little quicker than common. Almost at the same instant, a short, stout, sailor-like looking little person, waddled down the nearest street, seeming to be in somewhat of a hurry, and presently he joined the other stranger, and appeared to enter into conversation with him; pointing toward the *Swash* as he did so. All this time, both continued to advance toward the wharf.

In the meanwhile, Spike and his people were not idle. The tide did not run very strong near the wharves and in the sort of a bight in which the vessel had lain; but, such as it was, it soon took the brig on her inner bow, and began to cast her head off shore. The people at the spring pulled away with all their force, and got sufficient motion on their vessel to overcome the tide, and to give the rudder an influence. The latter was put hard a-starboard, and helped to cast the brig’s head to the southward.

Down to this moment, the only sail that was loose on board the *Swash* was the fore-topsail, as mentioned. This still hung in the gear, but a hand had been sent aloft to overhaul the buntlines and clewlines, and men were also at the sheets. In a minute the



sail was ready for hoisting. The *Swash* carried a wapper of a fore-and-aft mainsail, and, what is more, it was fitted with a standing gaff, for appearance in port. At sea, Spike knew better than to trust to this arrangement; but in fine weather, and close in with the land, he found it convenient to have this sail haul out and brail like a ship's spanker. As the gaff was now aloft, it was only necessary to let go the brails to loosen this broad sheet of canvas, and to clap on the out-hauler, to set it. This was probably the reason why the brig was so unceremoniously cast into the stream, without showing more of her cloth. The jib and flying-jibs, however, did at that moment drop beneath their booms, ready for hoisting.

Such was the state of things as the two strangers came first upon the wharf. Spike was on the taffrail, overhauling the main-sheet, and Mulford was near him, casting the foretopsail braces from the pins, preparatory to clapping on the halyards.

"I say, Mr. Mulford," asked the captain, "did you ever see either of them chaps afore? These jokers on the wharf, I mean."

"Not to my recollection, sir," answered the mate, looking over the taffrail to examine the parties. "The little one is a burster! The funniest-looking little fat old fellow I've seen in many a day."

"Ay, ay, them fat little bursters, as you call 'em, are sometimes full of the devil. I don't like either of the chaps, and am right glad we are well cast, before they got here."

"I do not think either would be likely to do us much harm, Capt. Spike."

"There's no knowing sir. The biggest fellow looks as if he might lug out a silver oar at any moment."

"I believe the silver oar is no longer used, in this country at least," answered Mulford, smiling. "And if it were, what have we to fear from it? I fancy the brig has paid her reckoning."

"She don't owe a cent, nor ever shall for twenty-four hours after the bill is made out, while I own her. They call me ready-money Stephen, round among the ship-chandlers and caulkers. But I don't like them chaps, and what I don't relish I never swallow, you know."

"They'll hardly try to get aboard us, sir; you see we are quite clear of the wharf, and the mainsail will take now, if we set it."

Spike ordered the mate to clap on the outhauler, and spread that broad sheet of canvas at once to the little breeze there was. This was almost immediately done, when the sail filled, and began to be felt on the movement of the vessel. Still, that movement was very slow, the wind being so light, and the vis inertioe of so large a



body remaining to be overcome. The brig receded from the wharf, almost in a line at right angles to its face, inch by inch, as it might be, dropping slowly up with the tide at the same time. Mulford now passed forward to set the jibs, and to get the topsail on the craft, leaving Spike on the taffrail, keenly eyeing the strangers, who, by this time, had got down nearly to the end of the wharf, at the berth so lately occupied by the *Swash*. That the captain was uneasy was evident enough, that feeling being exhibited in his countenance, blended with a malignant ferocity.

“Has that brig any pilot?” asked the larger and better-looking of the two strangers.

“What’s that to you, friend?” demanded Spike, in return. “Have you a Hell-Gate branch?”

“I may have one, or I may not. It is not usual for so large a craft to run the Gate without a pilot.”

“Oh! My gentleman’s below, brushing up his logarithms. We shall have him on deck to take his departure before long, when I’ll let him know your kind inquiries after his health.”

The man on the wharf seemed to be familiar with this sort of sea-wit, and he made no answer, but continued that close scrutiny of the brig, by turning his eyes in all directions, now looking below, and now aloft, which had in truth occasioned Spike’s principal cause for uneasiness.

“Is not that Capt. Stephen Spike, of the brigantine *Molly Swash*?” called out the little, dumpling-looking person, in a cracked, dwarfish sort of a voice, that was admirably adapted to his appearance. Our captain fairly started; turned full toward the speaker; regarded him intently for a moment; and gulped the words he was about to utter, like one confounded. As he gazed, however, at little dumpy, examining his bow-legs, red broad cheeks, and coarse snub nose, he seemed to regain his self-command, as if satisfied the dead had not really returned to life.

“Are you acquainted with the gentleman you have named?” he asked, by way of answer. “You speak of him like one who ought to know him.”

“A body is apt to know a shipmate. Stephen Spike and I sailed together twenty years since, and I hope to live to sail with him again.”

“You sail with Stephen Spike? when and where, may I ask, and in what v’y’ge, pray?”

“The last time was twenty years since. Have you forgotten little Jack Tier, Capt. Spike?”

Spike looked astonished, and well he might, for he had supposed Jack to be dead fully fifteen years. Time and hard service had greatly altered him, but the general



resemblance in figure, stature, and waddle, certainly remained. Notwithstanding, the Jack Tier that Spike remembered was quite a different person from this Jack Tier. That Jack had worn his intensely black hair clubbed and curled, whereas this Jack had cut his locks into short bristles, which time had turned into an intense gray. That Jack was short and thick, but he was flat and square; whereas this Jack was just as short, a good deal thicker, and as round as a dumpling. In one thing, however, the likeness still remained perfect. Both Jacks chewed tobacco, to a degree that became a distinct feature in their appearance.

Spike had many reasons for wishing Jack Tier were not resuscitated in this extraordinary manner, and some for being glad to see him. The fellow had once been largely in his confidence, and knew more than was quite safe for any one to remember but himself, while he might be of great use to him in his future operations. It is always convenient to have one at your elbow who thoroughly understands you, and Spike would have lowered a boat and sent it to the wharf to bring Jack off, were it not for the gentleman who was so inquisitive about pilots. Under the circumstances, he determined to forego the advantages of Jack's presence, reserving the right to hunt him up on his return.

The reader will readily enough comprehend, that the *Molly Swash* was not absolutely standing still while the dialogue related was going on, and the thoughts we have recorded were passing through her master's mind. On the contrary, she was not only in motion, but that motion was gradually increasing, and by the time all was said that has been related, it had become necessary for those who spoke to raise their voices to an inconvenient pitch in order to be heard. This circumstance alone would soon have put an end to the conversation, had not Spike's pausing to reflect brought about the same result, as mentioned.

In the mean time, Mulford had got the canvas spread. Forward, the *Swash* showed all the cloth of a full-rigged brig, even to royals and flying jib; while aft, her mast was the raking, tall, naked pole of an American schooner. There was a taunt topmast, too, to which a gaff-topsail was set, and the gear proved that she could also show, at need, a staysail in this part of her, if necessary. As the Gate was before them, however, the people had set none but the plain, manageable canvas.

The *Molly Swash* kept close on a wind, luffing athwart the broad reach she was in, until far enough to weather Blackwell's, when she edged off to her course, and went through the southern passage. Although the wind remained light, and a little baffling, the brig was so easily impelled, and was so very handy, that there was no difficulty in



keeping her perfectly in command. The tide, too, was fast increasing in strength and volocity, and the movement from this cause alone was getting to be sufficiently rapid.

As for the passengers, of whom we have lost sight in order to get the brig under way, they were now on deck again. At first, they had all gone below, under the care of Josh, a somewhat rough groom of the chambers, to take possession of their apartment, a sufficiently neat, and exceedingly comfortable cabin, supplied with everything that could be wanted at sea, and, what was more, lined on two of its sides with state-rooms. It is true, all these apartments were small, and the state-rooms were very low, but no fault could be found with their neatness and general arrangements, when it was recollected that one was on board a vessel.

“Here ebbery t’ing heart can wish,” said Josh, exultingly, who, being an old-school black, did not disdain to use some of the old-school dialect of his caste. “Yes, ladies, ebbery t’ing. Let Cap’n Spike alone for dat! He won’erful at accommodation! Not a bed-bug aft—know better dan come here; jest like de people, in dat respects, and keep deir place forrard. You nebber see a pig come on de quarter-deck, nudder.”

“You must maintain excellent discipline, Josh,” cried Rose, in one of the sweetest voices in the world, which was easily attuned to merriment—“and we are delighted to learn what you tell us. How do you manage to keep up these distinctions, and make such creatures know their places so well?”

“Nuttin easier, if you begin right, miss. As for de pig, I teach dem wid scaldin’ water. Wheneber I sees a pig come aft, I gets a little water from de copper, and just scald him wid it. You can’t t’ink, miss, how dat mend his manners, and make him squeel fuss, and t’ink arter. In dat fashion I soon get de ole ones in good trainin’, and den I has no more trouble with dem as comes fresh aboard; for de ole hog tell de young one, and ’em won’erful cunnin’, and know how to take care of ’emself.”

Rose Budd’s sweet eyes were full of fun and expectation, and she could no more repress her laugh than youth and spirits can always be discreet.

“Yes, with the pigs,” she cried, “that might do very well; but how is it with those—other creatures?”

“Rosy, dear,” interrupted the aunt, “I wish you would say no more about such shocking things. It’s enough for us that Capt. Spike has ordered them all to stay forward among the men, which is always done on board well disciplined vessels. I’ve heard your uncle say, a hundred times, that the quarter-deck was sacred, and that might be enough to keep such animals off it.”



It was barely necessary to look at Mrs. Budd in the face to get a very accurate general notion of her character. She was one of those inane, uncultivated beings who seem to be protected by a benevolent Providence in their pilgrimage on earth, for they do not seem to possess the power to protect themselves. Her very countenance expressed imbecility and mental dependence, credulity and a love of gossip. Notwithstanding these radical weaknesses, the good woman had some of the better instincts of her sex, and was never guilty of anything that could properly convey reproach.

She was no mistress for Rose, however, the niece much oftener influencing the aunt, than the aunt influencing the niece. The latter had been fortunate in having had an excellent instructress, who, though incapable of teaching her much in the way of accomplishments, had imparted a great deal that was respectable and useful. Rose had character, and strong character, too, as the course of our narrative will show; but her worthy aunt was a pure picture of as much mental imbecility as at all comported with the privileges of self-government.

The conversation about “those other creatures” was effectually checked by Mrs. Budd’s horror of the “animals,” and Josh was called on deck so shortly after as to prevent its being renewed. The females staid below a few minutes, to take possession, and then they re-appeared on deck, to gaze at the horrors of the Hell Gate passage. Rose was all eyes, wonder and admiration of everything she saw. This was actually the first time she had ever been on the water, in any sort of craft, though born and brought up in sight of one of the most thronged havens in the world. But there must be a beginning to everything, and this was Rose Budd’s beginning on the water. It is true the brigantine was a very beautiful, as well as an exceedingly swift vessel; but all this was lost on Rose, who would have admired a horse-jockey bound to the West Indies, in this the incipient state of her nautical knowledge. Perhaps the exquisite neatness that Mulford maintained about everything that came under his care, and that included everything on deck, or above-board, and about which neatness Spike occasionally muttered an oath, as so much senseless trouble, contributed somewhat to Rose’s pleasure; but her admiration would scarcely have been less with anything that had sails, and seemed to move through the water with a power approaching that of volition.

It was very different with Mrs. Budd. She, good woman, had actually made one voyage with her late husband, and she fancied that she knew all about a vessel. It was her delight to talk on nautical subjects, and never did she really feel her great superiority over her niece, so very unequivocally, as when the subject of the ocean



was introduced, about which she did know something, and touching which Rose was profoundly ignorant, or as ignorant as a girl of lively imagination could remain with the information gleaned from others.

“I am not surprised you are astonished at the sight of the vessel, Rosy,” observed the self-complacent aunt at one of her niece’s exclamations of admiration. “A vessel is a very wonderful thing, and we are told what extr’orny beings they are that ‘go down to the sea in ships.’ But you are to know this is not a ship at all, but only a half-jigger rigged, which is altogether a different thing.”

“Was my uncle’s vessel, *The Rose In Bloom*, then, very different from the *Swash*?”

“Very different indeed, child! Why, *The Rose In Bloom* was a full-jiggered ship, and had twelve masts—and this is only a half-jiggered brig, and has but two masts. See, you may count them—one—two!”

Harry Mulford was coiling away a top-gallant-brace, directly in front of Mrs. Budd and Rose, and, at hearing this account of the wonderful equipment of *The Rose In Bloom*, he suddenly looked up, with a lurking expression about his eye that the niece very well comprehended, while he exclaimed, without much reflection, under the impulse of surprise—“Twelve masts! Did I understand you to say, ma’am, that Capt. Budd’s ship had twelve masts?”

“Yes, sir, twelve! And I can tell you all their names, for I learnt them by heart—it appearing to me proper that a ship-master’s wife should know the names of all the masts in her husband’s vessel. Do you wish to hear their names, Mr. Mulford?”

Harry Mulford would have enjoyed this conversation to the top of his bent, had it not been for Rose. She well knew her aunt’s general weakness of intellect, and especially its weakness on this particular subject, but she would suffer no one to manifest contempt for either, if in her power to prevent it. It is seldom one so young, so mirthful, so ingenuous and innocent in the expression of her countenance, assumed so significant and rebuking a frown as did pretty Rose Budd when she heard the mate’s involuntary exclamation about the “twelve masts.” Harry, who was not easily checked by his equals, or any of his own sex, submitted to that rebuking frown with the meekness of a child, and stammered out, in answer to the well-meaning, but weak-minded widow’s question—“If you please, Mrs. Budd—just as you please, ma’am—only twelve is a good many masts—” Rose frowned again—“that is—more than I’m used to seeing—that’s all.”

“I dare say, Mr. Mulford—for you sail in only a half-jigger; but Capt. Budd always sailed in a full-jigger—and his full-jiggered ship had just twelve masts, and, to prove



it to you, I'll give you the names—first then, there were the fore, main, and mizen masts—”

“Yes—yes—ma'am,” stammered Harry, who wished the twelve masts and *The Rose In Bloom* at the bottom of the ocean, since her owner's niece still continued to look coldly displeased—“that's right, I can swear!”

“Very true, sir, and you'll find I am right as to all the rest. Then, there were the fore, main, and mizen top-masts—they make six, if I can count, Mr. Mulford?”

“Ah!” exclaimed the mate, laughing, in spite of Rose's frowns, as the manner in which the old sea-dog had quizzed his wife became apparent to him. “I see how it is—you are quite right, ma'am—I dare say *The Rose In Bloom* had all these masts, and some to spare.”

“Yes, sir—I knew you would be satisfied. The fore, main and mizen top-gallant-masts make nine—and the fore, main and mizen royals make just twelve. Oh, I'm never wrong in anything about a vessel, especially if she is a full-jiggered ship.”

Mulford had some difficulty in restraining his smiles each time the full-jigger was mentioned, but Rose's expression of countenance kept him in excellent order—and she, innocent creature, saw nothing ridiculous in the term, though the twelve masts had given her a little alarm. Delighted that the old lady had got through her enumeration of the spars with so much success, Rose cried, in the exuberance of her spirits—“Well, aunty, for my part, I find a half-jigger vessel, so very, very beautiful, that I do not know how I should behave were I to go on board a full-jigger.”

Mulford turned abruptly away, the circumstance of Rose's making herself ridiculous giving him sudden pain, though he could have laughed at her aunt by the hour.

“Ah, my dear, that is on account of your youth and inexperience—but you will learn better in time. I was just so, myself, when I was of your age, and thought the fore-rafters were as handsome as the squared-jiggers, but soon after I married Capt. Budd I felt the necessity of knowing more than I did about ships, and I got him to teach me. He didn't like the business, at first, and pretended I would never learn; but, at last, it came all at once like, and then he used to be delighted to hear me 'talk ship,' as he called it. I've known him laugh, with his cronies, as if ready to die, at my expertness in sea-terms, for half an hour together—and then he would swear—that was the worst fault your uncle had, Rosy—he would swear, sometimes, in a way that frightened me, I do declare!”

“But he never swore at you, aunty?”



“I can’t say that he did exactly do that, but he would swear all round me, even if he didn’t actually touch me, when things went wrong—but it would have done your heart good to hear him laugh! He had a most excellent heart, just like your own, Rosy dear; but, for that matter, all the Budds have excellent hearts, and one of the commonest ways your uncle had of showing it was to laugh, particularly when we were together and talking. Oh, he used to delight in hearing me converse, especially about vessels, and never failed to get me at it when he had company. I see his good-natured, excellent-hearted countenance at this moment, with the tears running down his fat, manly cheeks, as he shook his very sides with laughter. I may live a hundred years, Rosy, before I meet again with your uncle’s equal.”

This was a subject that invariably silenced Rose. She remembered her uncle, herself, and remembered his affectionate manner of laughing at her aunt, and she always wished the latter to get through her eulogiums on her married happiness, as soon as possible, whenever the subject was introduced.

All this time the *Molly Swash* kept in motion. Spike never took a pilot when he could avoid it, and his mind was too much occupied with his duty, in that critical navigation, to share at all in the conversation of his passengers, though he did endeavour to make himself agreeable to Rose, by an occasional remark, when a favourable opportunity offered.

As soon as he had worked his brig over into the south or weather passage of Blackwell’s, however, there remained little for him to do, until she had drifted through it, a distance of a mile or more; and this gave him leisure to do the honours. He pointed out the castellated edifice on Blackwell’s as the new penitentiary, and the hamlet of villas, on the other shore, as Ravenswood, though there is neither wood nor ravens to authorize the name. But the “Sunswick,” which satisfied the Delafields and Gibbises of the olden time, and which distinguished their lofty halls and broad lawns, was not elegant enough for the cockney tastes of these latter days, so “wood” must be made to usurp the place of cherries and apples, and “ravens” that of gulls, in order to satisfy its cravings. But all this was lost on Spike. He remembered the shore as it had been twenty years before, and he saw what it was now, but little did he care for the change. On the whole, he rather preferred the Grecian Temples, over which the ravens would have been compelled to fly, had there been any ravens in that neighbourhood, to the old-fashioned and highly respectable residence that once alone occupied the spot. The point he did understand, however, and on the merits of which he had something to say, was a little farther ahead. That, too, had been re-christened—the Hallet’s Cove of the mariner



being converted into Astoria—not that bloody-minded place at the mouth of the Oregon, which has come so near bringing us to blows with our “ancestors in England,” as the worthy denizens of that quarter choose to consider themselves still, if one can judge by their language. This Astoria was a very different place, and is one of the many suburban villages that are shooting up, like mushrooms in a night, around the great Commercial Emporium. This spot Spike understood perfectly, and it was not likely that he should pass it without communicating a portion of his knowledge to Rose.

“There, Miss Rose,” he said, with a didactic sort of air, pointing with his short, thick finger at the little bay which was just opening to their view; “there’s as neat a cove as a craft need bring up in. That used to be a capital place to lie in, to wait for a wind to pass the Gate; but it has got to be most too public for my taste. I’m rural, I tell Mulford, and love to get in out-of-the-way berths with my brig, where she can see salt-meadows, and smell the clover. You never catch me down in any of the crowded slips, around the markets, or anywhere in that part of the town, for I do love country air. That’s Hallet’s Cove, Miss Rose, and a pretty anchorage it would be for us, if the wind and tide didn’t sarve to take us through the Gate.”

“Are we near the Gate, Capt. Spike?” asked Rose, the fine bloom on her cheek lessening a little, under the apprehension that formidable name is apt to awaken in the breasts of the inexperienced.

“Half a mile, or so. It begins just at the other end of this island on our larboard hand, and will be all over in about another half mile, or so. It’s no such bad place, a’ter all, is Hell-Gate, to them that’s used to it. I call myself a pilot in Hell-Gate, though I have no branch.”

“I wish, Capt. Spike, I could teach you to give that place its proper and polite name. We call it Whirl-Gate altogether now,” said the relict.

“Well, that’s new to me,” cried Spike. “I have heard some chicken-mouthed folk say Hurl-Gate, but this is the first time I ever heard it called Whirl-Gate—they’ll get it to Whirligig-Gate next. I do n’t think that my old commander, Capt. Budd, called the passage anything but honest up and down Hell-Gate.”

“That he did—that he did—and all my arguments and reading could not teach him any better. I proved to him that it was Whirl-Gate, as any one can see that it ought to be. It is full of whirlpools, they say, and that shows what Nature meant the name to be.”

“But, aunty,” put in Rose, half reluctantly, half anxious to speak, “what has gate to do with whirlpools? You will remember it is called a gate—the gate to that wicked place I suppose is meant.”



“Rose, you amaze me! How can you, a young woman of only nineteen, stand up for so vulgar a name as Hell-Gate!”

“Do you think it as vulgar as Hurl-Gate, aunty? To me it always seems the most vulgar to be straining at gnats.”

“Yes,” said Spike sentimentally, “I’m quite of Miss Rose’s way of thinking—straining at gnats is very ill-manners, especially at table. I once knew a man who strained in this way, until I thought he would have choked, though it was with a fly to be sure; but gnats are nothing but small flies, you know, Miss Rose. Yes, I’m quite of your way of thinking, Miss Rose; it is very vulgar to be straining at gnats and flies, more particularly at table. But you’ll find no flies or gnats aboard here, to be straining at, or brushing away, or to annoy you. Stand by there, my hearties, and see all clear to run through Hell-Gate. Don’t let me catch you straining at anything, though it should be the fin of a whale!”

The people forward looked at each other, as they listened to this novel admonition, though they called out the customary “ay, ay, sir,” as they went to the sheets, braces and bowlines. To them the passage of no Hell-Gate conveyed the idea of any particular terror, and with the one they were about to enter, they were much too familiar to care anything about it.

The brig was now floating fast, with the tide, up abreast of the east end of Blackwell’s, and in two or three more minutes she would be fairly in the Gate. Spike was aft, where he could command a view of everything forward, and Mulford stood on the quarter-deck, to look after the head-braces. An old and trustworthy seaman, who acted as a sort of boatswain, had the charge on the forecastle, and was to tend the sheets and tack. His name was Rove.

“See all clear,” called out Spike. “D’ye hear there, for’ard! I shall make a half-board in the Gate, if the wind favour us, and the tide prove strong enough to hawse us to wind’ard sufficiently to clear the Pot—so mind your—”

The captain breaking off in the middle of this harangue, Mulford turned his head, in order to see what might be the matter. There was Spike, levelling a spy-glass at a boat that was pulling swiftly out of the north channel, and shooting like an arrow directly athwart the brig’s bows into the main passage of the Gate. He stepped to the captain’s elbow.

“Just take a look at them chaps, Mr. Mulford,” said Spike, handing his mate the glass.

“They seem in a hurry,” answered Harry, as he adjusted the glass to his eye, “and will go through the Gate in less time than it will take to mention the circumstance.”



“What do you make of them, sir?”

“The little man who called himself Jack Tier is in the stern-sheets of the boat, for one,” answered Mulford.

“And the other, Harry—what do you make of the other?”

“It seems to be the chap who hailed to know if we had a pilot. He means to board us at Riker’s Island, and make us pay pilotage, whether we want his services or not.”

“Blast him and his pilotage too! Give me the glass”—taking another long look at the boat, which by this time was glancing, rather than pulling, nearly at right angles across his bows. “I want no such pilot aboard here, Mr. Mulford. Take another look at him—here, you can see him, away on our weather bow, already.”

Mulford did take another look at him, and this time his examination was longer and more scrutinizing than before.

“It is not easy to cover him with the glass,” observed the young man—“the boat seems fairly to fly.”

“We’re forereaching too near the Hog’s Back, Capt. Spike,” roared the boatswain, from forward.

“Ready about—hard a lee,” shouted Spike. “Let all fly, for’ard—help her round, boys, all you can, and wait for no orders! Bestir yourselves—bestir yourselves.”

It was time the crew should be in earnest. While Spike’s attention had been thus diverted by the boat, the brig had got into the strongest of the current, which, by setting her fast to windward, had trebled the power of the air, and this was shooting her over toward one of the greatest dangers of the passage on a flood tide. As everybody bestirred themselves, however, she was got round and filled on the opposite tack, just in time to clear the rocks. Spike breathed again, but his head was still full of the boat. The danger he had just escaped as Scylla met him as Charybdis. The boatswain again roared to go about. The order was given as the vessel began to pitch in a heavy swell. At the next instant she rolled until the water came on deck, whirled with her stern down the tide, and her bows rose as if she were about to leap out of water. The *Swash* had hit the Pot Rock.

