Part 1: Chapter 2

"Watch. If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

Dogb. Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled; the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is, to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company."

—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

We left the brigantine of Capt. Spike in a very critical situation, and the master himself in great confusion of mind.

A thorough seaman, this accident would never have happened, but for the sudden appearance of the boat and its passengers; one of whom appeared to be a source of great uneasiness to him. As might be expected, the circumstance of striking a place as dangerous as the Pot Rock in Hell-Gate, produced a great sensation on board the vessel. This sensation betrayed itself in various ways, and according to the characters, habits, and native firmness of the parties. As for the ship-master's relict, she seized hold of the main-mast, and screamed so loud and perseveringly, as to cause the sensation to extend itself into the adjacent and thriving village of Astoria, where it was distinctly heard by divers of those who dwelt near the water. Biddy Noon had her share in this clamour, lying down on the deck in order to prevent rolling over, and possibly to scream more at her leisure, while Rose had sufficient self-command to be silent, though her cheeks lost their colour.

Nor was there anything extraordinary in females betraying this alarm, when one remembers the somewhat astounding signs of danger by which these persons were surrounded. There is always something imposing in the swift movement of a

considerable body of water. When this movement is aided by whirlpools and the other similar accessories of an interrupted current, it frequently becomes startling, more especially to those who happen to be on the element itself. This is peculiarly the case with the Pot Rock, where, not only does the water roll and roar as if agitated by a mighty wind, but where it even breaks, the foam seeming to glance up stream, in the rapid succession of wave to wave. Had the *Swash* remained in her terrific berth more than a second or two, she would have proved what is termed a "total loss;" but she did not. Happily, the Pot Rock lies so low that it is not apt to fetch up anything of a light draught of water, and the brigantine's fore-foot had just settled on its summit, long enough to cause the vessel to whirl round and make her obeisance to the place, when a succeeding swell lifted her clear, and away she went down stream, rolling as if scudding in a gale, and, for a moment, under no command whatever. There lay another danger ahead, or it would be better to say astern, for the brig was drifting stern foremost; and that was in an eddy under a bluff, which bluff lies at an angle in the reach, where it is no uncommon thing for craft to be cast ashore, after they have passed all the more imposing and more visible dangers above. It was in escaping this danger, and in recovering the command of his vessel, that Spike now manifested the sort of stuff of which he was really made, in emergencies of this sort. The yards were all sharp up when the accident occurred, and springing to the lee braces, just as a man winks when his eye is menaced, he seized the weather fore-brace with his own hands, and began to round in the yard, shouting out to the man at the wheel to "port his helm" at the same time. Some of the people flew to his assistance, and the yards were not only squared, but braced a little up on the other tack, in much less time than we have taken to relate the evolution. Mulford attended to the main-sheet, and succeeded in getting the boom out in the right direction. Although the wind was in truth very light, the velocity of the drift filled the canvas, and taking the arrow-like current on her lee bow, the *Swash*, like a frantic steed that is alarmed with the wreck made by his own madness, came under command, and sheered out into the stream again, where she could drift clear of the apprehended danger astern.

"Sound the pumps!" called out Spike to Mulford, the instant he saw he had regained his seat in the saddle. Harry sprang amidships to obey, and the eye of every mariner in that vessel was on the young man, as, in the midst of a death-like silence, he performed this all-important duty. It was like the physician's feeling the pulse of his patient before he pronounces on the degree of his danger.

"Well, sir?" cried out Spike, impatiently, as the rod reappeared.

"All right, sir," answered Harry, cheerfully—"the well is nearly empty."

"Hold on a moment longer, and give the water time to find its way amidships, if there be any."

The mate remained perched up on the pump, in order to comply, while Spike and his people, who now breathed more freely again, improved the leisure to brace up and haul aft, to the new course.

"Biddy," said Mrs. Budd considerately, during this pause in the incidents, "you needn't scream any longer. The danger seems to be past, and you may get up off the deck now. See, I have let go of the mast. The pumps have been sounded, and are found tight."

Biddy, like an obedient and respectful servant, did as directed, quite satisfied if the pumps were tight. It was some little time, to be sure, before she was perfectly certain whether she were alive or not—but, once certain of this circumstance, her alarm very sensibly abated, and she became reasonable. As for Mulford, he dropped the sounding rod again, and had the same cheering report to make.

"The brig is as tight as a bottle, sir."

"So much the better," answered Spike. "I never had such a whirl in her before in my life, and I thought she was going to stop and pass the night there. That's the very spot on which 'The Hussar' frigate was wrecked."

"So I have heard, sir. But she drew so much water that she hit slap against the rock, and started a butt. We merely touched on its top with our fore-foot, and slid off."

This was the simple explanation of the *Swash*'s escape, and, everybody being now well assured that no harm had been done, things fell into their old and regular train again. As for Spike, his gallantry, notwithstanding, was upset for some hours, and glad enough was he when he saw all three of his passengers quit the deck to go below. Mrs. Budd's spirits had been so much agitated that she told Rose she would go down into the cabin and rest a few minutes on its sofa. We say sofa, for that article of furniture, now-a-days, is far more common in vessels than it was thirty years ago in the dwellings of the country.

"There, Mulford," growled Spike, pointing ahead of the brig, to an object on the water that was about half a mile ahead of them, "there's that bloody boat—d'ye see? I should like of all things to give it the slip. There's a chap in that boat I don't like."

"I don't see how that can be very well done, sir, unless we anchor, repass the Gate at the turn of the tide, and go to sea by the way of Sandy Hook."

"That will never do. I've no wish to be parading the brig before the town. You see, Mulford, nothing can be more innocent and proper than the *Molly Swash*, as you know

from having sailed in her these twelve months. You'll give her that character, I'll be sworn?"

"I know no harm of her, Capt. Spike, and hope I never shall."

"No, sir—you know no harm of her, nor does any one else. A nursing infant is not more innocent than the *Molly Swash*, or could have a clearer character if nothing but truth was said of her. But the world is so much given to lying, that one of the old saints, of whom we read in the good book, such as Calvin and John Rogers, would be vilified if he lived in these times. Then, it must be owned, Mr. Mulford, whatever may be the raal innocence of the brig, she has a most desperate wicked look."

"Why, yes, sir—it must be owned she is what we sailors call a wicked-looking craft. But some of Uncle Sam's cruisers have that appearance, also."

"I know it—I know it, sir, and think nothing of looks myself. Men are often deceived in me, by my looks, which have none of your long-shore softness about 'em, perhaps; but my mother used to say I was one of the most tender-hearted boys she had ever heard spoken of—like one of the babes in the woods, as it might be. But mankind go so much by appearances that I don't like to trust the brig too much afore their eyes. Now, should we be seen in the lower bay, waiting for a wind, or for the ebb tide to make, to carry us over the bar, ten to one but some philotropic or other would be off with a complaint to the District Attorney that we looked like a slaver, and have us all fetched up to be tried for our lives as pirates. No, no—I like to keep the brig in out-of-the-way places, where she can give no offence to your 'tropics', whether they be philos, or of any other sort."

"Well, sir, we are to the eastward of the Gate, and all's safe. That boat cannot bring us up."

"You forget, Mr. Mulford, the revenue-craft that steamed up, on the ebb. That vessel must be off Sands' Point by this time, and she may hear something to our disparagement from the feller in the boat, and take it into her smoky head to walk us back to town. I wish we were well to the eastward of that steamer! But there's no use in lamentations. If there is really any danger, it's some distance ahead yet, thank Heaven!"

"You have no fears of the man who calls himself Jack Tier, Capt. Spike?"

"None in the world. That feller, as I remember him, was a little bustlin' chap that I kept in the cabin, as a sort of steward's mate. There was neither good nor harm in him, to the best of my recollection. But Josh can tell us all about him—just give Josh a call."

The best thing in the known history of Spike was the fact that his steward had sailed with him for more than twenty years. Where he had picked up Josh no one could

say, but Josh and himself, and neither chose to be very communicative on the subject. But Josh had certainly been with him as long as he had sailed the *Swash*, and that was from a time actually anterior to the birth of Mulford. The mate soon had the negro in the council.

"I say, Josh," asked Spike, "do you happen to remember such a hand aboard here as one Jack Tier?"

"Lor' bless you, yes sir—'members he as well as I do the pea soup that was burnt, and which you t'rowed all over him, to scald him for punishment."

"I've had to do that so often, to one careless fellow or other, that the circumstance does n't recall the man. I remember him—but not as clear as I could wish. How long did he sail with us?"

"Sebberal v'y'ge, sir, and got left ashore down on the main, one night, when'e boat were obliged to shove off in a hurry. Yes, 'members little Jack, right well I does."

"Did you see the man that spoke us from the wharf, and hailed for this very Jack Tier?"

"I see'd a man, sir, dat was won'erful Jack Tier built like, sir, but I did n't hear the conwersation, habbin' the ladies to 'tend to. But Jack was oncommon short in his floor timbers, sir, and had no length of keel at all. His beam was won'erful for his length, altogedder—what you call jolly-boat, or bum-boat build, and was only good afore'e wind, Cap'n Spike."

"Was he good for anything aboard ship, Josh? Worth heaving-to for, should he try to get aboard of us again?"

"Why, sir, can't say much for him in dat fashion. Jack was handy in the cabin, and capital feller to carry soup from the gally, aft. You see, sir, he was so low-rigged that the brig's lurchin' and pitchin' couldn't get him off his pins, and he stood up like a church in the heaviest wea'der. Yes, sir, Jack was right good for dat."

Spike mused a moment—then he rolled the tobacco over in his mouth, and added, in the way a man speaks when his mind is made up—"Ay ay! I see into the fellow. He'll make a handy lady's maid, and we want such a chap just now. It's better to have an old friend aboard, than to be pickin' up strangers, 'long shore. So, should this Jack Tier come off to us, from any of the islands or points ahead, Mr. Mulford, you'll round to and take him aboard. As for the steamer, if she will only pass out into the Sound where there's room, it shall go hard with us but I get to the eastward of her, without speaking. On the other hand, should she anchor this side of the fort, I'll not attempt to pass her. There is deep water inside of most of the islands, I know, and we'll try and

dodge her in that way, if no better offer. I've no more reason than another craft to fear a government vessel, but the sight of one of them makes me oncomfortable; that's all."

Mulford shrugged his shoulders and remained silent, perceiving that his commander was not disposed to pursue the subject any further. In the mean time, the brig had passed beyond the influence of the bluff, and was beginning to feel a stronger breeze, that was coming down the wide opening of Flushing Bay. As the tide still continued strong in her favour, and her motion through the water was getting to be four or five knots, there was every prospect of her soon reaching Whitestone, the point where the tides meet, and where it would become necessary to anchor; unless, indeed, the wind, which was now getting to the southward and eastward, should come round more to the south. All this Spike and his mate discussed together, while the people were clearing the decks, and making the preparations that are customary on board a vessel before she gets into rough water.

By this time it was ascertained that the brig had received no damage by her salute of the Pot Rock, and every trace of uneasiness on that account was removed. But Spike kept harping on the boat, and "the pilot-looking chap who was in her." As they passed Riker's Island, all hands expected a boat would put off with a pilot, or to demand pilotage; but none came, and the *Swash* now seemed released from all her present dangers, unless some might still be connected with the revenue steamer. To retard her advance, however, the wind came out a smart working breeze from the southward and eastward, compelling her to make "long legs and short ones" on her way towards Whitestone.

"This is beating the wind, Rosy dear," said Mrs. Budd, complacently, she and her niece having returned to the deck a few minutes after this change had taken place. "Your respected uncle did a great deal of this in his time, and was very successful in it. I have heard him say, that in one of his voyages between Liverpool and New York, he beat the wind by a whole fortnight, everybody talking of it in the insurance offices, as if it was a miracle."

"Ay, ay, Madam Budd," put in Spike, "I'll answer for that. They're desperate talkers in and about them there insurance offices in Wall street. Great gossips be they, and they think they know everything. Now just because this brig is a little old or so, and was built for a privateer in the last war, they'd refuse to rate her as even B, No. 2, and my blessing on 'em."

"Yes, B, No. 2, that's just what your dear uncle used to call me, Rosy—his charming B, No. 2, or Betsy, No. 2; particularly when he was in a loving mood. Captain Spike, did you ever beat the wind in a long voyage?"

"I can't say I ever did, Mrs. Budd," answered Spike, looking grimly around, to ascertain if any one dared to smile at his passenger's mistake; "especially for so long a pull as from New York to Liverpool."

"Then your uncle used to boast of *The Rose In Bloom*'s wearing and attacking. She would attack anything that came in her way, no matter who, and as for wearing, I think he once told me she would wear just what she had a mind to, like any human being."

Rose was a little mystified, but she looked vexed at the same time, as if she distrusted all was not right.

"I remember all my sea education," continued the unsuspecting widow, "as if it had been learnt yesterday. Beating the wind and attacking ship, my poor Mr. Budd used to say, were nice manoeuvres, and required most of his tactics, especially in heavy weather. Did you know, Rosy dear, that sailors weigh the weather, and know when it is heavy and when it is light?"

"I did not, aunt; nor do I understand now how it can very well be done."

"Oh! Child, before you have been at sea a week, you will learn so many things that are new, and get so many ideas of which you never had any notion before, that you'll not be the same person. My captain had an instrument he called a thermometer, and with that he used to weigh the weather, and then he would write down in the log-book 'today, heavy weather, or to-morrow, light weather,' just as it happened, and that helped him mightily along in his voyages."

"Mrs. Budd has merely mistaken the name of the instrument—the 'barometer' is what she wished to say," put in Mulford, opportunely.

Rose looked grateful, as well as relieved. Though profoundly ignorant on these subjects herself, she had always suspected her aunt's knowledge. It was, consequently, grateful to her to ascertain that, in this instance, the old lady's mistake had been so trifling.

"Well, it may have been the barometer, for I know he had them both," resumed the aunt. "Barometer, or thermometer, it don't make any great difference; or quadrant, or sextant. They are all instruments, and sometimes he used one, and sometimes another. Sailors take on board the sun, too, and have an instrument for that, as well as one to weigh the weather with. Sometimes they take on board the stars, and the moon, and 'fill their ships with the heavenly bodies,' as I've heard my dear husband say, again and again! But the most curious thing at sea, as all sailors tell me, is crossing the line, and I do hope we shall cross the line, Rosy, that you and I may see it."

"What is the line, aunty, and how do vessels cross it."

"The line, my dear, is a place in the ocean where the earth is divided into two parts, one part being called the North Pole, and the other part the South Pole. Neptune lives near this line, and he allows no vessel to go out of one pole into the other, without paying it a visit. Never! Never!—he would as soon think of living on dry land as think of letting even a canoe pass, without visiting it."

"Do you suppose there is such a being, really, as Neptune, aunty?"

"To be sure I do; he is king of the sea. Why shouldn't there be? The sea must have a king, as well as the land."

"The sea may be a republic, aunty, like this country; then, no king is necessary. I have always supposed Neptune to be an imaginary being."

"Oh that's impossible—the sea is no republic; there are but two republics, America and Texas. I've heard that the sea is a highway, it is true—the 'highway of nations,' I believe it is called, and that must mean something particular. But my poor Mr. Budd always told me that Neptune was king of the seas, and he was always so accurate, you might depend on everything he said. Why, he called his last Newfoundland dog Neptune; and do you think, Rosy, that your dear uncle would call his dog after an imaginary being?—and he a man to beat the wind, and attack ship, and take the sun, moon and stars aboard! No, no, child; fanciful folk may see imaginary beings, but solid folk see solid beings."

Even Spike was dumfounded at this, and there is no knowing what he might have said, had not an old sea-dog, who had just come out of the fore-topmast cross-trees, come aft, and, hitching up his trowsers with one hand while he touched his hat with the other, said with immoveable gravity,

"The revenue-steamer has brought up just under the fort, Capt. Spike."

"How do you know that, Bill?" demanded the captain, with a rapidity that showed how completely Mrs. Budd and all her absurdities were momentarily forgotten.

"I was up on the fore-topgallant yard, sir, a bit ago, just to look to the strap of the jewel-block, which wants some sarvice on it, and I see'd her over the land, blowin' off steam and takin' in her kites. Afore I got out of the cross-trees, she was head to wind under bare-poles, and if she had n't anchored, she was about to do so. I'm sartin 't was she, sir, and that she was about to bring up."

Spike gave a long, low whistle, after his fashion, and he walked away from the females, with the air of a man who wanted room to think in. Half a minute later, he called out—"Stand by to shorten sail, boys. Man fore-clew-garnets, flying jib down

haul, topgallant sheets, and gaff-topsail gear. In with 'em all, my lads—in with everything, with a will."

An order to deal with the canvas in any way, on board ship, immediately commands the whole attention of all whose duty it is to attend to such matters, and there was an end of all discourse while the *Swash* was shortening sail. Everybody understood, too, that it was to gain time, and prevent the brig from reaching Throg's Neck sooner than was desirable.

"Keep the brig off," called out Spike, "and let her ware—we're too busy to tack just now."

The man at the wheel knew very well what was wanted, and he put his helm up, instead of putting it down, as he might have done without this injunction. As this change brought the brig before the wind, and Spike was in no hurry to luff up on the other tack, the *Swash* soon ran over a mile of the distance she had already made, putting her back that much on her way to the Neck. It is out of our power to say what the people of the different craft in sight thought of all this, but an opportunity soon offered of putting them on a wrong scent. A large coasting schooner, carrying everything that would draw on a wind, came sweeping under the stern of the *Swash*, and hailed.

"Has anything happened, on board that brig?" demanded her master.

"Man overboard," answered Spike—"you hav'nt seen his hat, have you?"

"No—no," came back, just as the schooner, in her onward course, swept beyond the reach of the voice. Her people collected together, and one or two ran up the rigging a short distance, stretching their necks, on the look-out for the "poor fellow," but they were soon called down to "'bout ship." In less than five minutes, another vessel, a rakish coasting sloop, came within hail.

"Did n't that brig strike the Pot Rock, in passing the Gate?" demanded her captain.

"Ay, ay!—and a devil of a rap she got, too."

This satisfied him; there being nothing remarkable in a vessel's acting strangely that had hit the Pot Rock in passing Hell Gate.

"I think we may get in our mainsail on the strength of this, Mr. Mulford," said Spike. "There can be nothing oncommon in a craft's shortening sail, that has a man overboard, and which has hit the Pot Rock. I wonder I never thought of all this before."

"Here is a skiff trying to get alongside of us, Capt. Spike," called out the boatswain.

"Skiff be d—d! I want no skiff here."

"The man that called himself Jack Tier is in her, sir."

"The d—l he is!" cried Spike, springing over to the opposite side of the deck to take a look for himself. To his infinite satisfaction he perceived that Tier was alone in the skiff, with the exception of a negro, who pulled its sculls, and that this was a very different boat from that which had glanced through Hell Gate, like an arrow darting from its bow.

"Luff, and shake your topsail," called out Spike. "Get a rope there to throw to this skiff."

The orders were obeyed, and Jack Tier, with his clothes-bag, was soon on the deck of the *Swash*. As for the skiff and the negro, they were cast adrift the instant the latter had received his quarter. The meeting between Spike and his quondam steward's mate was a little remarkable. Each stood looking intently at the other, as if to note the changes which time had made. We cannot say that Spike's hard, red, selfish countenance betrayed any great feeling, though such was not the case with Jack Tier's. The last, a lymphatic, puffy sort of a person at the best, seemed really a little touched, and he either actually brushed a tear from his eye, or he affected so to do.

"So, you are my old shipmate, Jack Tier, are ye?" exclaimed Spike, in a half-patronizing, half-hesitating way—"and you want to try the old craft ag'in. Give us a leaf of your log, and let me know where you have been this many a day, and what you have been about? Keep the brig off, Mr. Mulford. We are in no particular hurry to reach Throg's, you'll remember, sir."

Tier gave an account of his proceedings, which could have no interest with the reader. His narrative was anything but very clear, and it was delivered in a cracked, octave sort of a voice, such as little dapper people not unfrequently enjoy—tones between those of a man and a boy. The substance of the whole story was this. Tier had been left ashore, as sometimes happens to sailors, and, by necessary connection, was left to shift for himself. After making some vain endeavours to rejoin his brig, he had shipped in one vessel after another, until he accidentally found himself in the port of New York, at the same time as the *Swash*. He know'd he never should be truly happy ag'in until he could once more get aboard the old hussy, and had hurried up to the wharf, where he understood the brig was lying. As he came in sight, he saw she was about to cast off, and, dropping his clothes-bag, he had made the best of his way to the wharf, where the conversation passed that has been related.

"The gentleman on the wharf was about to take boat, to go through the Gate," concluded Tier, "and so I begs a passage of him. He was good-natured enough to wait

until I could find my bag, and as soon a'terwards as the men could get their grog we shoved off. The *Molly* was just getting in behind Blackwell's as we left the wharf, and, having four good oars, and the shortest road, we come out into the Gate just ahead on you. My eye! What a place that is to go through in a boat, and on a strong flood! The gentleman, who watched the brig as a cat watches a mouse, says you struck on the Pot, as he called it, but I says 'no,' for the *Molly Swash* was never know'd to hit rock or shoal in my time aboard her."

"And where did you quit that gentleman, and what has become of him?" asked Spike.

"He put me ashore on that point above us, where I see'd a nigger with his skiff, who I thought would be willin' to 'arn his quarter by giving me a cast alongside. So here I am, and a long pull I've had to get here."

As this was said, Jack removed his hat and wiped his brow with a handkerchief, which, if it had never seen better days, had doubtless been cleaner. After this, he looked about him, with an air not entirely free from exultation.

This conversation had taken place in the gangway, a somewhat public place, and Spike beckoned to his recruit to walk aft, where he might be questioned without being overheard.

"What became of the gentleman in the boat, as you call him?" demanded Spike.

"He pulled ahead, seeming to be in a hurry."

"Do you know who he was?"

"Not a bit of it. I never saw the man before, and he didn't tell me his business, sir."

"Had he anything like a silver oar about him."

"I saw nothing of the sort, Capt. Spike, and knows nothing consarning him."

"What sort of a boat was he in, and where did he get it?"

"Well, as to the boat, sir, I can say a word, seein' it was so much to my mind, and pulled so wonderful smart. It was a light ship's yawl, with four oars, and came round the Hook just a'ter you had got the brig's head round to the eastward. You must have seen it, I should think, though it kept close in with the wharves, as if it wished to be snug."

"Then the gentleman, as you call him, expected that very boat to come and take him off?"

"I suppose so, sir, because it did come and take him off. That's all I knows about it."

"Had you no jaw with the gentleman? You wasn't mum the whole time you was in the boat with him?"

"Not a bit of it, sir. Silence and I does n't agree together long, and so we talked most of the time."

"And what did the stranger say of the brig?"

"Lord, sir, he catechised me like as if I had been a child at Sunday-school. He asked me how long I had sailed in her; what ports we'd visited, and what trade we'd been in. You can't think the sight of questions he put, and how cur'ous he was for the answers."

"And what did you tell him in your answers? You said nothin' about our call down on the Spanish Main, the time you were left ashore, I hope, Jack?"

"Not I, sir. I played him off surprisin'ly. He got nothin' to count upon out of me. Though I do owe the *Molly Swash* a grudge, I'm not goin' to betray her."

"You owe the *Molly Swash* a grudge! Have I taken an enemy on board her, then?"

Jack started, and seemed sorry he had said so much; while Spike eyed him keenly. But the answer set all right. It was not given, however, without a moment for recollection.

"Oh, you knows what I mean, sir. I owe the old hussy a grudge for having desarted me like; but it's only a love quarrel atween us. The old *Molly* will never come to harm by my means."

"I hope not, Jack. The man that wrongs the craft he sails in can never be a true-hearted sailor. Stick by your ship in all weathers is my rule, and a good rule it is to go by. But what did you tell the stranger?"

"Oh! I told him I'd been six v'y'ges in the brig. The first was to Madagascar—"

"The d—l you did? Was he soft enough to believe that?"

"That's more than I knows, sir. I can only tell you what I said; I don't pretend to know how much he believed."

"Heave ahead—what next?"

"Then I told him we went to Kamschatka for gold dust and ivory."

"Whe-e-ew! What did the man say to that?"

"Why, he smiled a bit, and a'ter that he seemed more cur'ous than ever to hear all about it. I told him my third v'y'ge was to Canton, with a cargo of broom-corn, where we took in salmon and dun-fish for home. A'ter that we went to Norway with ice, and brought back silks and money. Our next run was to the Havana, with salt and 'nips—"

"'Nips! What the devil be they?"

"Turnips, you knows, sir. We always calls 'em 'nips in cargo. At the Havana I told him we took in leather and jerked beef, and came home. Oh! He got nothin' from me, Capt. Spike, that'll ever do the brig a morsel of harm!"

"I am glad of that, Jack. You must know enough of the seas to understand that a close mouth is sometimes better for a vessel than a clean bill of health. Was there nothing said about the revenue-steamer?"

"Now you name her, sir, I believe there was—ay, ay, sir, the gentleman did say, if the steamer fetched up to the westward of the fort, that he should overhaul her without difficulty, on this flood.

"That'll do, Jack; that'll do, my honest fellow. Go below, and tell Josh to take you into the cabin again, as steward's mate. You're rather too Dutch built, in your old age, to do much aloft."

One can hardly say whether Jack received this remark as complimentary, or not. He looked a little glum, for a man may be as round as a barrel, and wish to be thought genteel and slender; but he went below, in quest of Josh, without making any reply.

The succeeding movements of Spike appeared to be much influenced by what he had just heard. He kept the brig under short canvas for near two hours, sheering about in the same place, taking care to tell everything which spoke him that he had lost a man overboard. In this way, not only the tide, but the day itself, was nearly spent. About the time the former began to lose its strength, however, the fore-course and the main-sail were got on the brigantine, with the intention of working her up toward Whitestone, where the tides meet, and near which the revenue-steamer was known to be anchored. We say near, though it was, in fact, a mile or two more to the eastward, and close to the extremity of the Point.

Notwithstanding these demonstrations of a wish to work to windward, Spike was really in no hurry. He had made up his mind to pass the steamer in the dark, if possible, and the night promised to favour him; but, in order to do this, it might be necessary not to come in sight of her at all; or, at least, not until the obscurity should in some measure conceal his rig and character. In consequence of this plan, the *Swash* made no great progress, even after she had got sail on her, on her old course. The wind lessened, too, after the sun went down, though it still hung to the eastward, or nearly ahead. As the tide gradually lost its force, moreover, the set to windward became less and less, until it finally disappeared altogether.

There is necessarily a short reach in this passage, where it is always slack water, so far as current is concerned. This is precisely where the tides meet, or, as has been

intimated, at Whitestone, which is somewhat more than a mile to the westward of Throgmorton's Neck, near the point of which stands Fort Schuyler, one of the works recently erected for the defence of New York. Off the pitch of the point, nearly mid-channel, had the steamer anchored, a fact of which Spike had made certain, by going aloft himself, and reconnoitering her over the land, before it had got to be too dark to do so. He entertained no manner of doubt that this vessel was in waiting for him, and he well knew there was good reason for it; but he would not return and attempt the passage to sea by way of Sandy Hook. His manner of regarding the whole matter was cool and judicious. The distance to the Hook was too great to be made in such short nights ere the return of day, and he had no manner of doubt he was watched for in that direction, as well as in this. Then he was particularly unwilling to show his craft at all in front of the town, even in the night. Moreover, he had ways of his own for effecting his purposes, and this was the very spot and time to put them in execution.

While these things were floating in his mind, Mrs. Budd and her handsome niece were making preparations for passing the night, aided by Biddy Noon. The old lady was factotum, or factota, as it might be most classical to call her, though we are entirely without authorities on the subject, and was just as self-complacent and ambitious of seawomanship below decks, as she had been above board. The effect, however, gave Spike great satisfaction, since it kept her out of sight, and left him more at liberty to carry out his own plans. About nine, however, the good woman came on deck, intending to take a look at the weather, like a skilful marineress as she was, before she turned in. Not a little was she astonished at what she then and there beheld, as she whispered to Rose and Biddy, both of whom stuck close to her side, feeling the want of good pilotage, no doubt, in strange waters.

The *Molly Swash* was still under her canvas, though very little sufficed for her present purposes. She was directly off Whitestone, and was making easy stretches across the passage, or river, as it is called, having nothing set but her huge fore-and-aft mainsail and the jib. Under this sail she worked like a top, and Spike sometimes fancied she travelled too fast for his purposes, the night air having thickened the canvas as usual, until it "held the wind as a bottle holds water." There was nothing in this, however, to attract the particular attention of the ship-master's widow, a sail, more or less, being connected with observation much too critical for her schooling, nice as the last had been. She was surprised to find the men stripping the brig forward, and converting her into a schooner. Nor was this done in a loose and slovenly manner, under favour of the obscurity. On the contrary, it was so well executed that it might

have deceived even a seaman under a noon-day sun, provided the vessel were a mile or two distant. The manner in which the metamorphosis was made was as follows: the studding-sail booms had been taken off the topsail-yard, in order to shorten it to the eye, and the yard itself was swayed up about half-mast, to give it the appearance of a schooner's fore-yard. The brig's real lower yard was lowered on the bulwarks, while her royal yard was sent down altogether, and the topgallant-mast was lowered until the heel rested on the topsail yard, all of which, in the night, gave the gear forward very much the appearance of that of a fore-topsail schooner, instead of that of a half-rigged brig, as the craft really was. As the vessel carried a try-sail on her foremast, it answered very well, in the dark, to represent a schooner's foresail. Several other little dispositions of this nature were made, about which it might weary the uninitiated to read, but which will readily suggest themselves to the mind of a sailor.

These alterations were far advanced when the females re-appeared on deck. They at once attracted their attention, and the captain's widow felt the imperative necessity, as connected with her professional character, of proving the same. She soon found Spike, who was bustling around the deck, now looking around to see that his brig was kept in the channel, now and then issuing an order to complete her disguise.

"Captain Spike, what can be the meaning of all these changes? The tamper of your vessel is so much altered that I declare I should not have known her!"

"Is it, by George! Then she is just in the state I want her to be in."

"But why have you done it—and what does it all mean?"

"Oh, *Molly*'s going to bed for the night, and she's only undressing herself—that's all."

"Yes, Rosy dear, Captain Spike is right. I remember that my poor Mr. Budd used to talk about *The Rose In Bloom* having her clothes on, and her clothes off, just as if she was a born woman! But do n't you mean to navigate at all in the night, Captain Spike? Or will the brig navigate without sails?"

"That's it—she's just as good in the dark, under one sort of canvas, as under another. So, Mr. Mulford, we'll take a reef in that mainsail; it will bring it nearer to the size of our new foresail, and seem more ship-shape and Brister fashion—then I think she'll do, as the night is getting to be rather darkish."

"Captain Spike," said the boatswain, who had been set to look-out for that particular change—"the brig begins to feel the new tide, and sets to windward."

"Let her go, then—now is as good a time as another. We've got to run the gantlet, and the sooner it is done the better."

As the moment seemed propitious, not only Mulford, but all the people, heard this order with satisfaction. The night was star-light, though not very clear at that. Objects on the water, however, were more visible than those on the land, while those on the last could be seen well enough, even from the brig, though in confused and somewhat shapeless piles. When the *Swash* was brought close by the wind, she had just got into the last reach of the "river," or that which runs parallel with the Neck for near a mile, doubling where the Sound expands itself, gradually, to a breadth of many leagues. Still the navigation at the entrance of this end of the Sound was intricate and somewhat dangerous, rendering it indispensable for a vessel of any size to make a crooked course. The wind stood at south-east, and was very scant to lay through the reach with, while the tide was so slack as barely to possess a visible current at that place. The steamer lay directly off the Point, mid-channel, as mentioned, showing lights, to mark her position to anything which might be passing in or out. The great thing was to get by her without exciting her suspicion. As all on board, the females excepted, knew what their captain was at, the attempt was made amid an anxious and profound silence; or, if any one spoke at all, it was only to give an order in a low tone, or its answer in a simple monosyllable.

Although her aunt assured her that everything which had been done already, and which was now doing, was quite in rule, the quick-eyed and quick-witted Rose noted these unusual proceedings, and had an opinion of her own on the subject. Spike had gone forward, and posted himself on the weather-side of the forecastle, where he could get the clearest look ahead, and there he remained most of the time, leaving Mulford on the quarter-deck, to work the vessel, Perceiving this, she managed to get near the mate, without attracting her aunt's attention, and at the same time out of ear-shot.

"Why is everybody so still and seemingly so anxious, Harry Mulford?" she asked, speaking in a low tone herself, as if desirous of conforming to a common necessity. "Is there any new danger here? I thought the Gate had been passed altogether, some hours ago?"

"So it has. D'ye see that large dark mass on the water, off the Point, which seems almost as huge as the fort, with lights above it? That is a revenue-steamer which came out of York a few hours before us. We wish to get past her without being troubled by any of her questions."

"And what do any in this brig care about her questions? They can be answered, surely."

"Ay, ay, Rose—they may be answered, as you say, but the answers sometimes are unsatisfactory. Captain Spike, for some reason or other, is uneasy, and would rather not

have anything to say to her. He has the greatest aversion to speaking the smallest craft when on a coast."

"And that's the reason he has undressed his *Molly*, as he calls her, that he might not be known."

Mulford turned his head quickly toward his companion, as if surprised by her quickness of apprehension, but he had too just a sense of his duty to make any reply. Instead of pursuing the discourse, he adroitly contrived to change it, by pointing out to Rose the manner in which they were getting on, which seemed to be very successfully.

Although the *Swash* was under much reduced canvas, she glided along with great ease and with considerable rapidity of motion. The heavy night air kept her canvas distended, and the weatherly set of the tide, trifling as it yet was, pressed her up against the breeze, so as to turn all to account. It was apparent enough, by the manner in which objects on the land were passed, that the crisis was fast approaching. Rose rejoined her aunt, in order to await the result, in nearly breathless expectation. At that moment, she would have given the world to be safe on shore. This wish was not the consequence of any constitutional timidity, for Rose was much the reverse from timid, but it was the fruit of a newly-awakened and painful, though still vague, suspicion. Happy, thrice happy was it for one of her naturally confiding and guileless nature, that distrust was thus opportunely awakened, for she was without a guardian competent to advise and guide her youth, as circumstances required.

The brig was not long in reaching the passage that opened to the Sound. It is probable she did this so much the sooner because Spike kept her a little off the wind, with a view of not passing too near the steamer. At this point, the direction of the passage changes at nearly a right angle, the revenue-steamer lying on a line with the Neck, and leaving a sort of bay, in the angle, for the *Swash* to enter. The land was somewhat low in all directions but one, and that was by drawing a straight line from the Point, through the steamer, to the Long Island shore. On the latter, and in that quarter, rose a bluff of considerable elevation, with deep water quite near it; and, under the shadows of that bluff, Spike intended to perform his nicest evolutions. He saw that the revenue vessel had let her fires go down, and that she was entirely without steam. Under canvas, he had no doubt of beating her hand over hand, could he once fairly get to windward; and then she was at anchor, and would lose some time in getting under way, should she even commence a pursuit. It was all important, therefore, to gain as much to windward as possible, before the people of the government vessel took the alarm.

There can be no doubt that the alterations made on board the *Swash* served her a very good turn on this occasion. Although the night could not be called positively dark, there was sufficient obscurity to render her hull confused and indistinct at any distance, and this so much the more when seen from the steamer outside, or between her and the land. All this Spike very well understood, and largely calculated on. In effect he was not deceived; the look-outs on board the revenue craft could trace little of the vessel that was approaching beyond the spars and sails which rose above the shores, and these seemed to be the spars and sails of a common foretopsail schooner. As this was not the sort of craft for which they were on the watch, no suspicion was awakened, nor did any reports go from the quarter-deck to the cabin. The steamer had her quarter watches, and officers of the deck, like a vessel of war, the discipline of which was fairly enough imitated, but even a man-of-war may be overreached on an occasion.

Spike was only great in a crisis, and then merely as a seaman. He understood his calling to its minuti, and he understood the *Molly Swash* better than he understood any other craft that floated. For more than twenty years had he sailed her, and the careful parent does not better understand the humours of the child, than he understood exactly what might be expected from his brig. His satisfaction sensibly increased, therefore, as she stole along the land, toward the angle mentioned, without a sound audible but the gentle gurgling of the water, stirred by the stem, and which sounded like the ripple of the gentlest wave, as it washes the shingle of some placid beach.

As the brig drew nearer to the bluff, the latter brought the wind more ahead, as respected the desired course. This was unfavourable, but it did not disconcert her watchful commander.

"Let her come round, Mr. Mulford," said this pilot-captain, in a low voice—"we are as near in as we ought to go."

The helm was put down, the head sheets started, and away into the wind shot the *Molly Swash*, fore-reaching famously in stays, and, of course, gaining so much on her true course. In a minute she was round, and filled on the other tack. Spike was now so near the land, that he could perceive the tide was beginning to aid him, and that his weatherly set was getting to be considerable. Delighted at this, he walked aft, and told Mulford to go about again as soon as the vessel had sufficient way to make sure of her in stays. The mate inquired if he did not think the revenue people might suspect something, unless they stood further out toward mid-channel, but Spike reminded him that they would be apt to think the schooner was working up under the southern shore, because the ebb first made there. This reason satisfied Mulford, and, as soon as they

were half-way between the bluff and the steamer, the *Swash* was again tacked, with her head to the former. This manoeuvre was executed when the brig was about two hundred yards from the steamer, a distance that was sufficient to preserve, under all the circumstances, the disguise she had assumed.

"They do not suspect us, Harry!" whispered Spike to his mate. "We shall get to windward of 'em, as sartain as the breeze stands. That boatin' gentleman might as well have staid at home, as for any good his hurry done him or his employers!"

"Whom do you suppose him to be, Captain Spike?"

"Who,—a feller that lives by his own wicked deeds. No matter who he is. An informer, perhaps. At any rate, he is not the man to outwit the *Molly Swash*, and her old, stupid, foolish master and owner, Stephen Spike. Luff, Mr. Mulford, luff. Now's the time to make the most of your leg—Luff her up and shake her. She is setting to windward fast, the ebb is sucking along that bluff like a boy at a molasses hogshead. All she can drift on this tack is clear gain; there is no hurry, so long as they are asleep aboard the steamer. That's it—make a half-board at once, but take care and not come round. As soon as we are fairly clear of the bluff, and open the bay that makes up behind it, we shall get the wind more to the southward, and have a fine long leg for the next stretch."

Of course Mulford obeyed, throwing the brig up into the wind, and allowing her to set to windward, but filling again on the same tack, as ordered. This, of course, delayed her progress toward the land, and protracted the agony, but it carried the vessel in the direction she most wished to go, while it kept her not only end on to the steamer, but in a line with the bluff, and consequently in the position most favourable to conceal her true character. Presently, the bay mentioned, which was several miles deep, opened darkly toward the south, and the wind came directly out of it, or more to the southward. At this moment the *Swash* was near a quarter of a mile from the steamer, and all that distance dead to windward of her, as the breeze came out of the bay. Spike tacked his vessel himself now, and got her head up so high that she brought the steamer on her lee quarter, and looked away toward the island which lies northwardly from the Point, and quite near to which all vessels of any draught of water are compelled to pass, even with the fairest winds.

"Shake the reef out of the mainsail, Mr. Mulford," said Spike, when the *Swash* was fairly in motion again on this advantageous tack. "We shall pass well to windward of the steamer, and may as well begin to open our cloth again."

"Is it not a little too soon, sir?" Mulford ventured to remonstrate; "the reef is a large one, and will make a great difference in the size of the sail."

"They'll not see it at this distance. No, no, sir, shake out the reef, and sway away on the topgallant-mast rope; I'm for bringing the *Molly Swash* into her old shape again, and make her look handsome once more."

"Do you dress the brig, as well as undress her, o'mights; Captain Spike?" inquired the ship-master's relict, a little puzzled with this fickleness of purpose. "I do not believe my poor Mr. Budd ever did that."

"Fashions change, madam, with the times—ay, ay, sir—shake out the reef, and sway away on that mast-rope, boys, as soon as you have manned it. We'll convart our schooner into a brig again."

As these orders were obeyed, of course, a general bustle now took place. Mulford soon had the reef out, and the sail distended to the utmost, while the topgallant-mast was soon up and fidded. The next thing was to sway upon the fore-yard, and get that into its place. The people were busied at this duty, when a hoarse hail came across the water on the heavy night air.

"Brig ahoy!" was the call.

"Sway upon that fore-yard," said Spike, unmoved by this summons—"start it, start it at once."

"The steamer hails us, sir," said the mate.

"Not she. She is hailing a brig; we are a schooner yet."

A moment of active exertion succeeded, during which the fore-yard went into its place. Then came a second hail.

"Schooner, ahoy!" was the summons this time.

"The steamer hails us again, Captain Spike."

"The devil a bit. We're a brig now, and she hails a schooner. Come boys, bestir yourselves, and get the canvas on *Molly* for'ard. Loose the fore-course before you quit the yard there, then up aloft and loosen everything you can find."

All was done as ordered, and done rapidly, as is ever the case on board a well-ordered vessel when there is occasion for exertion. That occasion now appeared to exist in earnest, for while the men were sheeting home the topsail, a flash of light illuminated the scene, when the roar of a gun came booming across the water, succeeded by the very distinct whistling of its shot. We regret that the relict of the late Captain Budd did not behave exactly as became a shipmaster's widow, under fire. Instead of remaining silent and passive, even while frightened, as was the case with Rose, she screamed quite as loud as she had previously done that very day in Hell-Gate. It appeared to Spike, indeed, that practice was making her perfect; and, as for Biddy, the spirit of

emulation became so powerful in her bosom, that, if anything, she actually outshrieked her mistress. Hearing this, the widow made a second effort, and fairly recovered the ground some might have fancied she had lost.

"Oh! Captain Spike," exclaimed the agitated widow, "do not—do not, if you love me, do not let them fire again!"

"How am I to help it!" asked the captain, a good deal to the point, though he overlooked the essential fact, that, by heaving-to, and waiting for the steamer's boat to board him, he might have prevented a second shot, as completely as if he had the ordering of the whole affair. No second shot was fired, however. As it afterward appeared, the screams of Mrs. Budd and Biddy were heard on board the steamer, the captain of which, naturally enough, supposing that the slaughter must be terrible where such cries had arisen, was satisfied with the mischief he had already done, and directed his people to secure their gun and go to the capstan-bars, in order to help lift the anchor. In a word, the revenue vessel was getting under way, man-of-war fashion, which means somewhat expeditiously.

Spike understood the sounds that reached him, among which was the call of the boatswain, and he bestirred himself accordingly. Experienced as he was in chases and all sorts of nautical artifices, he very well knew that his situation was sufficiently critical. It would have been so, with a steamer at his heels, in the open ocean; but, situated as he was, he was compelled to steer but one course, and to accept the wind on that course as it might offer. If he varied at all in his direction it was only in a trifling way, though he did make some of these variations. Every moment was now precious, however, and he endeavoured to improve the time to the utmost. He knew that he could greatly outsail the revenue vessel, under canvas, and some time would be necessary to enable her to get up her steam; half an hour at the very least. On that half hour, then, depended the fate of the *Molly Swash*.

"Send the booms on the yards, and set stun'sails at once, Mr. Mulford," said Spike, the instant the more regular canvas was spread forward. "This wind will be free enough for all but the lower stun'sail, and we must drive the brig on."

"Are we not looking up too high, Captain Spike? The Stepping-Stones are ahead of us, sir."

"I know that very well, Mulford. But it's nearly high water, and the brig's in light trim, and we may rub and go. By making a short cut here, we shall gain a full mile on the steamer; that mile may save us."

"Do you really think it possible to get away from that craft, which can always make a fair wind of it, in these narrow waters, Captain Spike?"

"One don't know, sir. Nothin' is done without tryin', and by tryin' more is often done than was hoped for. I have a scheme in my head, and Providence may favour me in bringing it about."

Providence! The religionist quarrels with the philosopher if the latter happen to remove this interposition of a higher power, even so triflingly as by the intervention of secondary agencies, while the biggest rascal dignifies even his success by such phrases as Providential aid! But it is not surprising men should misunderstand terms, when they make such sad confusion in the acts which these terms are merely meant to represent. Spike had his Providence as well as a priest, and we dare say he often counted on its succour, with quite as rational grounds of dependence as many of the pharisees who are constantly exclaiming, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these."

Sail was made on board the *Swash* with great rapidity, and the brig made a bold push at the Stepping-Stones. Spike was a capital pilot. He insisted if he could once gain sight of the spar that was moored on those rocks for a buoy, he should run with great confidence. The two lights were of great assistance, of course; but the revenue vessel could see these lights as well as the brig, and she, doubtless, had an excellent pilot on board. By the time the studding-sails were set on board the *Swash*, the steamer was aweigh, and her long line of peculiar sails became visible. Unfortunately for men who were in a hurry, she lay so much within the bluff as to get the wind scant, and her commander thought it necessary to make a stretch over to the southern shore, before he attempted to lay his course. When he was ready to tack, an operation of some time with a vessel of her great length, the *Swash* was barely visible in the obscurity, gliding off upon a slack bowline, at a rate which nothing but the damp night air, the ballast-trim of the vessel, united to her excellent sailing qualities, could have produced with so light a breeze.

The first half hour took the *Swash* completely out of sight of the steamer. In that time, in truth, by actual superiority in sailing, by her greater state of preparation, and by the distance saved by a bold navigation, she had gained fully a league on her pursuer. But, while the steamer had lost sight of the *Swash*, the latter kept the former in view, and that by means of a signal that was very portentous. She saw the light of the steamer's chimneys, and could form some opinion of her distance and position.

It was about eleven o'clock when the *Swash* passed the light at Sands' Point, close in with the land. The wind stood much as it had been. If there was a change at all, it was half a point more to the southward, and it was a little fresher. Such as it was, Spike saw he was getting, in that smooth water, quite eight knots out of his craft, and

he made his calculations thereon. As yet, and possibly for half an hour longer, he was gaining, and might hope to continue to gain on the steamer. Then her turn would come. Though no great traveller, it was not to be expected that, favoured by smooth water and the breeze, her speed would be less than ten knots, while there was no hope of increasing his own without an increase of the wind. He might be five miles in advance, or six at the most; these six miles would be overcome in three hours of steaming, to a dead certainty, and they might possibly be overcome much sooner. It was obviously necessary to resort to some other experiment than that of dead sailing, if an escape was to be effected.

The Sound was now several miles in width, and Spike, at first, proposed to his mate, to keep off dead before the wind, and by crossing over to the north shore, let the steamer pass ahead, and continue a bootless chase to the eastward. Several vessels, however, were visible in the middle of the passage, at distances varying from one to three miles, and Mulford pointed out the hopelessness of attempting to cross the sheet of open water, and expect to go unseen by the watchful eyes of the revenue people.

"What you say is true enough, Mr. Mulford," answered Spike, after a moment of profound reflection, "and every foot that they come nearer, the less will be our chance. But here is Hempstead Harbour a few leagues ahead; if we can reach that before the blackguards close, we may do well enough. It is a deep bay, and has high land to darken the view. I don't think the brig could be seen at midnight by anything outside; if she was once fairly up that water a mile or two."

"That is our chance, sir!" exclaimed Mulford cheerfully. "Ay, ay, I know the spot; and everything is favourable—try that, Captain Spike; I'll answer for it that we go clear."

Spike did try it. For a considerable time longer he stood on, keeping as close to the land as he thought it safe to run, and carrying everything that would draw. But the steamer was on his heels, evidently gaining fast. Her chimneys gave out flames, and there was every sign that her people were in earnest. To those on board the *Swash* these flames seemed to draw nearer each instant, as indeed was the fact, and just as the breeze came fresher out of the opening in the hills, or the low mountains, which surround the place of refuge in which they designed to enter, Mulford announced that by aid of the night-glass he could distinguish both sails and hull of their pursuer. Spike took a look, and throwing down the instrument, in a way to endanger it, he ordered the studding-sails taken in. The men went aloft like cats, and worked as if they could stand in air. In a minute or two the *Swash* was under what Mrs. Budd might have called

her "attacking" canvas, and was close by the wind, looking on a good leg well up the harbour. The brig seemed to be conscious of the emergency, and glided ahead at capital speed. In five minutes she had shut in the flaming chimneys of the steamer. In five minutes more Spike tacked, to keep under the western side of the harbour, and out of sight as long as possible, and because he thought the breeze drew down fresher where he was than more out in the bay.

All now depended on the single fact whether the brig had been seen from the steamer or not, before she hauled into the bay. If seen, she had probably been watched; if not seen, there were strong grounds for hoping that she might still escape. About a quarter of an hour after Spike hauled up, the burning chimneys came again into view. The brig was then half a league within the bay, with a fine dark background of hills to throw her into shadow. Spike ordered everything taken in but the trysail, under which the brig was left to set slowly over toward the western side of the harbour. He now rubbed his hands with delight, and pointed out to Mulford the circumstance that the steamer kept on her course directly athwart the harbour's mouth! Had she seen the *Swash*, no doubt she would have turned into the bay also. Nevertheless, an anxious ten minutes succeeded, during which the revenue vessel steamed fairly past, and shut in her flaming chimneys again by the eastern headlands of the estuary.