



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



Part 1: Chapter 4

“Leander dived for love, Leucadia’s cliff
The Lesbian Sappho leap’d from in a miff,
To punish Phaon; Icarus went dead,
Because the wax did not continue stiff;
And, had he minded what his father said,
He had not given a name unto his watery bed.”

—Sands.

We must now advance the time several days, and change the scene to a distant part of the ocean; within the tropics indeed. The females had suffered slight attacks of seasickness, and recovered from them, and the brig was safe from all her pursuers. The manner of Spike’s escape was simple enough, and without any necromancy. While the steamer, on the one hand, was standing away to the northward and eastward, in order to head him off, and the schooner was edging in with the island, in order to prevent his beating up to windward of it, within its shadows, the brig had run close round the northern margin of the land, and hauled up to leeward of the island, passing between it and the steamer. All this time, her movements were concealed from the schooner by the island itself, and from the steamer, by its shadow and dark back-ground, aided by the distance. By making short tacks, this expedient answered perfectly well; and, at the very moment when the two revenue vessels met, at midnight, about three leagues to leeward of Blok Island, the brigantine, *Molly Swash*, was just clearing its most weatherly point, on the larboard tack, and coming out exactly at the spot where the steamer was when first seen that afternoon. Spike stood to the westward, until he was certain of having the island fairly between him and his pursuers, when he went



about, and filled away on his course, running out to sea again on an easy bowline. At sunrise the next day he was fifty miles to the southward and eastward of Montauk; the schooner was going into New London, her officers and people quite chop-fallen; and the steamer was paddling up the Sound, her captain being fully persuaded that the runaways had returned in the direction from which they had come, and might yet be picked up in that quarter.

The weather was light, just a week after the events related in the close of the last chapter. By this time the brig had got within the influence of the trades; and, it being the intention of Spike to pass to the southward of Cuba, he had so far profited by the westerly winds, as to get well to the eastward of the Mona Passage, the strait through which he intended to shape his course on making the islands. Early on that morning Mrs. Budd had taken her seat on the trunk of the cabin, with a complacent air, and arranged her netting, some slight passages of gallantry, on the part of the captain, having induced her to propose netting him a purse. Biddy was going to and fro, in quest of silks and needles, her mistress having become slightly capricious in her tastes of late, and giving her, on all such occasions, at least a double allowance of occupation. As for Rose, she sat reading beneath the shade of the coach-house deck, while the handsome young mate was within three feet of her, working up his logarithms, but within the sanctuary of his own state-room; the open door and window of which, however, gave him every facility he could desire to relieve his mathematics, by gazing at the sweet countenance of his charming neighbor. Jack Tier and Josh were both passing to and fro, as is the wont of stewards, between the camboose and the cabin, the breakfast table being just then in the course of preparation. In all other respects, always excepting the man at the wheel, who stood within a fathom of Rose, Spike had the quarter-deck to himself, and did not fail to pace its weather-side with an air that denoted the master and owner. After exhibiting his sturdy, but short, person in this manner, to the admiring eyes of all beholders, for some time, the captain suddenly took a seat at the side of the relict, and dropped into the following discourse.

“The weather is moderate, Madam Budd; quite moderate,” observed Spike, a sentimental turn coming over him at the moment. “What I call moderate and agreeable.”

“So much the better for us; the ladies are fond of moderation, sir.”

“Not in admiration, Madam Budd—ha! ha! ha! no, not in admiration. Immoderation is what they like when it comes to that. I’m a single man, but I know that the ladies like admiration—mind where you’re sheering to,” the captain



said, interrupting himself a little fiercely, considering the nature of the subject, in consequence of Jack Tier's having trodden on his toe in passing—"or I'll teach you the navigation of the quarter-deck, Mr. Burgo!"

"Moderation—moderation, my good captain," said the simpering relict. "As to admiration, I confess that it is agreeable to us ladies; more especially when it comes from gentlemen of sense, and intelligence, and experience."

Rose fidgeted, having heard every word that was said, and her face flushed; for she doubted not that Harry's ears were as good as her own. As for the man at the wheel, he turned the tobacco over in his mouth, hitched up his trousers, and appeared interested, though somewhat mystified—the conversation was what he would have termed "talking dictionary," and he had some curiosity to learn how the captain would work his way out of it. It is probable that Spike himself had some similar gleamings of the difficulties of his position, for he looked a little troubled, though still resolute. It was the first time he had ever lain yard-arm and yard-arm with a widow, and he had long entertained a fancy that such a situation was trying to the best of men.

"Yes, Madam Budd, yes," he said, "exper'ence and sense carry weight with 'em, wherever they go. I'm glad to find that you entertain these just notions of us gentlemen, and make a difference between boys and them that's seen and known exper'ence. For my part, I count youngsters under forty as so much lumber about decks, as to any comfort and calculations in keepin' a family, as a family ought to be kept."

Mrs. Budd looked interested, but she remained silent on hearing this remark, as became her sex.

"Every man ought to settle in life, some time or other, Madam Budd, accordin' to my notion, though no man ought to be in a boyish haste about it," continued the captain. "Now, in my own case, I've been so busy all my youth—not that I'm very old now, but I'm no boy—but all my younger days have been passed in trying to make things meet, in a way to put any lady who might take a fancy to me—"

"Oh! Captain—that is too strong! The ladies do not take fancies for gentlemen, but the gentlemen take fancies for ladies!"

"Well, well, you know what I mean, Madam Budd; and so long as the parties understand each other, a word dropped, or a word put into a charter-party, makes it neither stronger nor weaker. There's a time, howsomever, in every man's life, when he begins to think of settling down, and of considerin' himself as a sort of mooring-chain, for children and the likes of them to make fast to. Such is my natur', I will own; and ever since I've got to be intimate in your family, Madam Budd, that sentiment has



grown stronger and stronger in me, till it has got to be uppermost in all my ideas. Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, as a body might say.”

Mrs. Budd now looked more than interested, for she looked a little confused, and Rose began to tremble for her aunt. It was evident that the parties most conspicuous in this scene were not at all conscious that they were overheard, the intensity of their attention being too much concentrated on what was passing to allow of any observation without their own narrow circle. What may be thought still more extraordinary, but what in truth was the most natural of all, each of the parties was so intently bent on his, or her, own train of thought, that neither in the least suspected any mistake.

“Grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength,” rejoined the relict, smiling kindly enough on the captain to have encouraged a much more modest man than he happened to be.

“Yes, Madam Budd—very just that remark; grown with my strength, and strengthened with my growth, as one might say; though I’ve not done much at growing for a good many years. Your late husband, Captain Budd, often remarked how very early I got my growth; and rated me as an ‘able-bodied’ hand, when most lads think it an honour to be placed among the ‘or’naries.”

The relict looked grave; and she wondered at any man’s being so singular as to allude to a first husband, at the very moment he was thinking of offering himself for a second. As for herself, she had not uttered as many words in the last four years, as she had uttered in that very conversation, without making some allusion to her “poor dear Mr. Budd.” The reader is not to do injustice to the captain’s widow, however, by supposing for a moment that she was actually so weak as to feel any tenderness for a man like Spike, which would be doing a great wrong to both her taste and her judgment, as Rose well knew, even while most annoyed by the conversation she could not but overhear. All that influenced the good relict was that besetting weakness of her sex, which renders admiration so universally acceptable; and predisposes a female, as it might be, to listen to a suitor with indulgence, and some little show of kindness, even when resolute to reject him. As for Rose, to own the truth, her aunt did not give her a thought, as yet, notwithstanding Spike was getting to be so sentimental.

“Yes, your late excellent and honourable consort always said that I got my growth sooner than any youngster he ever fell in with,” resumed the captain, after a short pause; exciting fresh wonder in his companion, that he would persist in lugging in the “dear departed” so very unseasonably. “I am a great admirer of all the Budd family, my



good lady, and only wish my connection with it had never tarminated; if tarminated it can be called.”

“It need not be terminated, Captain Spike, so long as friendship exists in the human heart.”

“Ay, so it is always with you ladies; when a man is bent on suthin’ closer and more interestin’ like, you’re for putting it off on friendship. Now friendship is good enough in its way, Madam Budd, but friendship isn’t love.”

“Love!” echoed the widow, fairly starting, though she looked down at her netting, and looked as confused as she knew how. “That is a very decided word, Captain Spike, and should never be mentioned to a woman’s ear lightly.”

So the captain now appeared to think, too, for no sooner had he delivered himself of the important monosyllable, than he left the widow’s side, and began to pace the deck, as it might be to moderate his own ardour. As for Rose, she blushed, if her more practised aunt did not; while Harry Mulford laughed heartily, taking good care, however, not to be heard. The man at the wheel turned the tobacco again, gave his trousers another hitch, and wondered anew whither the skipper was bound. But the drollest manifestation of surprise came from Josh, the steward, who was passing along the lee-side of the quarter-deck, with a tea-pot in his hand, when the energetic manner of the captain sent the words “friendship isn’t love” to his ears. This induced him to stop for a single instant, and to cast a wondering glance behind him; after which he moved on toward the galley, mumbling as he went—“Lub! What he want of lub, or what lub want of him! Well, I do t’ink Captain Spike bowse his jib out pretty ’arly dis mornin’.”

Captain Spike soon got over the effects of his effort, and the confusion of the relict did not last any material length of time. As the former had gone so far, however, he thought the present an occasion as good as another to bring matters to a crisis.

“Our sentiments sometimes get to be so strong, Madam Budd,” resumed the lover, as he took his seat again on the trunk, “that they run away with us. Men is liable to be run away with as well as ladies. I once had a ship run away with me, and a pretty time we had of it. Did you ever hear of a ship’s running away with her people, Madam Budd, just as your horse ran away with your buggy?”

“I suppose I must have heard of such things, sir, my education having been so maritime, though just at this moment I cannot recall an instance. When my horse ran away, the buggy was cap-aside. Did your vessel cap-aside on the occasion you mention?”



“No, Madam Budd, no. The ship was off the wind at the time I mean, and vessels do not capsize when off the wind. I’ll tell you how it happened. We was a scuddin’ under a goose-wing foresail—”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted the relict, eagerly. “I’ve often heard of that sail, which is small, and used only in tempests.”

“Heavy weather, Madam Budd—only in heavy weather.”

“It is amazing to me, captain, how you seamen manage to weigh the weather. I have often heard of light weather and heavy weather, but never fairly understood the manner of weighing it.”

“Why we do make out to ascertain the difference,” replied the captain, a little puzzled for an answer; “and I suppose it must be by means of the barometer, which goes up and down like a pair of scales. But the time I mean, we was a scuddin’ under a goose-wing foresail—”

“A sail made of goose’s wings, and a beautiful object it must be; like some of the caps and cloaks that come from the islands, which are all of feathers, and charming objects are they. I beg pardon—you had your goose’s wings spread—”

“Yes, Madam Budd, yes; we was steering for a Mediterranean port, intending to clear a mole-head, when a sea took us under the larboard-quarter, gave us such a sheer to-port as sent our cat-head ag’in a spile, and raked away the chain-plates of the top-mast back-stays, bringing down all the forrard hamper about our ears.”

This description produced such a confusion in the mind of the widow, that she was glad when it came to an end. As for the captain, fearful that the “goose’s wings” might be touched upon again, he thought it wisest to attempt another flight on those of Cupid.

“As I was sayin’, Madam Budd, friendship isn’t love; no, not a bit of it! Friendship is a common sort of feelin’: but love, as you must know by exper’ence, Madam Budd, is an uncommon sort of feelin’.”

“Fie, Captain Spike, gentlemen should never allude to ladies knowing any thing about love. Ladies respect, and admire, and esteem, and have a regard for gentlemen; but it is almost too strong to talk about their love.”

“Yes, Madam Budd, yes; I dare say it is so, and ought to be so; and I ask pardon for having said as much as I did. But my love for your niece is of so animated and lastin’ a natur’, that I scarce know what I did say.”

“Captain Spike, you amaze me! I declare I can hardly breathe for astonishment. My niece! Surely you do not mean Rosy!”



“Who else should I mean? My love for Miss Rose is so very decided and animated, I tell you, Madam Budd, that I will not answer for the consequences, should you not consent to her marryin’ me.”

“I can scarce believe my ears! You, Stephen Spike, and an old friend of her uncle’s, wishing to marry his niece!”

“Just so, Madam Budd; that’s it, to a shavin’. The regard I have for the whole family is so great, that nothin’ less than the hand of Miss Rose in marriage can, what I call, mitigate my feelin’s.”

Now the relict had not one spark of tenderness herself in behalf of Spike; while she did love Rose better than any human being, her own self excepted. But she had viewed all the sentiment of that morning, and all the fine speeches of the captain, very differently from what the present state of things told her she ought to have viewed them; and she felt the mortification natural to her situation. The captain was so much bent on the attainment of his own object, that he saw nothing else, and was even unconscious that his extraordinary and somewhat loud discourse had been overheard. Least of all did he suspect that his admiration had been mistaken; and that in what he called “courtin’” the niece, he had been all the while “courtin’” the aunt. But little apt as she was to discover any thing, Mrs. Budd had enough of her sex’s discernment in a matter of this sort, to perceive that she had fallen into an awkward mistake, and enough of her sex’s pride to resent it. Taking her work in her hand, she left her seat, and descended to the cabin, with quite as much dignity in her manner as it was in the power of one of her height and “build” to express. What is the most extraordinary, neither she nor Spike ever ascertained that their whole dialogue had been overheard. Spike continued to pace the quarter-deck for several minutes, scarce knowing what to think of the relict’s manner, when his attention was suddenly drawn to other matters by the familiar cry of “sail-ho!”

This was positively the first vessel with which the *Molly Swash* had fallen in since she lost sight of two or three craft that had passed her in the distance, as she left the American coast. As usual, this cry brought all hands on deck, and Mulford out of his state-room.

It has been stated already that the brig was just beginning to feel the trades, and it might have been added, to see the mountains of San Domingo. The winds had been variable for the last day or two, and they still continued light, and disposed to be unsteady, ranging from north-east to south-east, with a preponderance in favour of the first point. At the cry of “sail-ho!” everybody looked in the indicated direction, which



was west, a little northerly, but for a long time without success. The cry had come from aloft, and Mulford went up as high as the fore-top before he got any glimpse of the stranger at all. He had slung a glass, and Spike was unusually anxious to know the result of his examination.

“Well, Mr. Mulford, what do you make of her?” he called out as soon as the mate announced that he saw the strange vessel.

“Wait a moment, sir, till I get a look,—she’s a long way off, and hardly visible.”

“Well, sir, well?”

“I can only see the heads of her top-gallant sails. She seems a ship steering to the southward, with as many kites flying as an Indiaman in the trades. She looks as if she were carrying royal stun’-sails, sir.”

“The devil she does! Such a chap must not only be in a hurry, but he must be strong-handed to give himself all this trouble in such light and var’able winds. Are his yards square?—Is he man-of-war-ish?”

“There’s no telling, sir, at this distance; though I rather think its stun’-sails that I see. Go down and get your breakfast, and in half an hour I’ll give a better account of him.”

This was done, Mrs. Budd appearing at the table with great dignity in her manner. Although she had so naturally supposed that Spike’s attentions had been intended for herself, she was rather mortified than hurt on discovering her mistake. Her appetite, consequently, was not impaired, though her stomach might have been said to be very full. The meal passed off without any scene, notwithstanding, and Spike soon re-appeared on deck, still masticating the last mouthful like a man in a hurry, and a good deal l’Americaine. Mulford saw his arrival, and immediately levelled his glass again.

“Well, what news now, sir?” called out the captain. “You must have a better chance at him by this time, for I can see the chap from off the coach-house here.”

“Ay, ay, sir; he’s a bit nearer, certainly. I should say that craft is a ship under stun’-sails, looking to the eastward of south, and that there are caps with gold bands on her quarter-deck.”

“How low down can you see her?” demanded Spike, in a voice of thunder.

So emphatic and remarkable was the captain’s manner in putting this question, that the mate cast a look of surprise beneath him ere he answered it. A look with the glass succeeded, when the reply was given.

“Ay, ay, sir; there can be no mistake—it’s a cruiser, you may depend on it. I can see the heads of her topsails now, and they are so square and symmetrical, that gold bands are below beyond all doubt.”



“Perhaps he’s a Frenchman—Johnny Crapaud keeps cruisers in these seas as well as the rest on’em.”

“Johnny Crapaud’s craft don’t spread such arms, sir. The ship is either English or American; and he’s heading for the Mona Passage as well as ourselves.”

“Come down, sir, come down—there’s work to be done as soon as you have breakfasted.”

Mulford did come down, and he was soon seated at the table, with both Josh and Jack Tier for attendants. The aunt and the niece were in their own cabin, a few yards distant, with the door open.

“What a fuss’e cap’in make ’bout dat sail,” grumbled Josh, who had been in the brig so long that he sometimes took liberties with even Spike himself. “What good he t’ink t’will do to measure him inch by inch? Bye’m by he get alongside, and den ’e ladies even can tell all about him.”

“He nat’rally wishes to know who gets alongside,” put in Tier, somewhat apologetically.

“What matter dat. All sort of folk get alongside of *Molly Swash*; and what good it do ’em? Yoh! yoh! yoh! I do remem’er sich times vid’e ole hussy!”

“What old hussy do you mean?” demanded Jack Tier a little fiercely, and in a way to draw Mulford’s eyes from the profile of Rose’s face to the visages of his two attendants.

“Come, come, gentlemen, if you please; recollect where you are,” interrupted the mate authoritatively. “You are not now squabbling in your galley, but are in the cabin. What is it to you, Tier, if Josh does call the brig an old hussy; she is old, as we all know, and years are respectable; and as for her being a ‘hussy,’ that is a term of endearment sometimes. I’ve heard the captain himself call the *Molly* a ‘hussy,’ fifty times, and he loves her as he does the apple of his eye.”

This interference put an end to the gathering storm as a matter of course, and the two disputants shortly after passed on deck. No sooner was the coast clear than Rose stood in the door of her own cabin.

“Do you think the strange vessel is an American?” she asked eagerly.

“It is impossible to say—English or American I make no doubt. But why do you inquire?”

“But my aunt and myself desire to quit the brig, and if the stranger should prove to be an American vessel of war, might not the occasion be favourable?”

“And what reason can you give for desiring to do so?”



“What signifies a reason,” answered Rose with spirit. “Spike is not our master, and we can come and go as we may see fit.”

“But a reason must be given to satisfy the commander of the vessel of war. Craft of that character are very particular about the passengers they receive; nor would it be altogether wise in two unprotected females to go on board a cruiser, unless in a case of the most obvious necessity.”

“Will not what has passed this morning be thought a sufficient reason,” added Rose, drawing nearer to the mate, and dropping her voice so as not to be heard by her aunt.

Mulford smiled as he gazed at the earnest but attractive countenance of his charming companion.

“And who could tell it, or how could it be told? Would the commander of a vessel of war incur the risk of receiving such a person as yourself on board his vessel, for the reason that the master of the craft she was in when he fell in with her desired to marry her?”

Rose appeared vexed, but she was at once made sensible that it was not quite as easy to change her vessel at sea, as to step into a strange door in a town. She drew slowly back into her own cabin silent and thoughtful; her aunt pursuing her netting the whole time with an air of dignified industry.

“Well, Mr. Mulford, well,” called out Spike at the head of the cabin stairs, “what news from the coffee?”

“All ready, sir,” answered the mate, exchanging significant glances with Rose. “I shall be up in a moment.”

That moment soon came, and Mulford was ready for duty. While below, Spike had caused certain purchases to be got aloft, and the main-hatch was open and the men collected around it, in readiness to proceed with the work. Harry asked no questions, for the preparations told him what was about to be done, but passing below, he took charge of the duty there, while the captain superintended the part that was conducted on deck. In the course of the next hour eight twelve-pound carronades were sent up out of the hold, and mounted in as many of the ports which lined the bulwarks of the brigantine. The men seemed to be accustomed to the sort of work in which they were now engaged, and soon had their light batteries in order, and ready for service. In the mean time the two vessels kept on their respective courses, and by the time the guns were mounted, there was a sensible difference in their relative positions. The stranger had drawn so near the brigantine as to be very obvious from the latter’s deck, while the



brigantine had drawn so much nearer to the islands of San Domingo and Porto Rico, as to render the opening between them, the well-known Mona Passage, distinctly visible.

Of all this Spike appeared to be fully aware, for he quitted the work several times before it was finished, in order to take a look at the stranger, and at the land. When the batteries were arranged, he and Mulford, each provided with a glass, gave a few minutes to a more deliberate examination of the first.

“That’s the Mona ahead of us,” said the captain; “of that there can be no question, and a very pretty land-fall you’ve made of it, Harry. I’ll allow you to be as good a navigator as floats.”

“Nevertheless, sir, you have not seen fit to let me know whither the brig is really bound this voyage.”

“No matter for that, young man—no matter, as yet. All in good time. When I tell you to lay your course for the Mona, you can lay your course for the Mona; and, as soon as we are through the passage, I’ll let you know what is wanted next—if that bloody chap, who is nearing us, will let me.”

“And why should any vessel wish to molest us on our passage, Captain Spike?”

“Why, sure enough! It’s war-times, you know, and war-times always bring trouble to the trader—though it sometimes brings profit, too.”

As Spike concluded, he gave his mate a knowing wink, which the other understood to mean that he expected himself some of the unusual profit to which he alluded. Mulford did not relish this secret communication, for the past had induced him to suspect the character of the trade in which his commander was accustomed to engage. Without making any sort of reply, or encouraging the confidence by even a smile, he levelled his glass at the stranger, as did Spike, the instant he ceased to grin.

“That’s one of Uncle Sam’s fellows!” exclaimed the captain, dropping the glass. “I’d swear to the chap in any admiralty court on ’arth.”

“’T is a vessel of war, out of all doubt,” returned the mate, “and under a cloud of canvas. I can make out the heads of her courses now, and see that she is carrying hard, for a craft that is almost close-hauled.”

“Ay, ay; no merchantmen keeps his light stun’-sails set, as near the wind as that fellow’s going. He’s a big chap, too—a frigate, at least, by his canvas.”

“I do not know, sir—they build such heavy corvettes now-a-days, that I should rather take her for one of them. They tell me ships are now sent to sea which mount only two-and-twenty guns, but which measure quite a thousand tons.”

“With thunderin’ batteries, of course.”

“With short thirty-twos and a few rapping sixty-eight Paixhans—or Columbiads, as they ought in justice to be called.”

“And you think this chap likely to be a craft of that sort?”

“Nothing is more probable, sir. Government has several, and, since this war has commenced, it has been sending off cruiser after cruiser into the Gulf. The Mexicans dare not send a vessel of war to sea, which would be sending them to Norfolk, or New York, at once; but no one can say when they may begin to make a prey of our commerce.”

“They have taken nothing as yet, Mr. Mulford, and, to tell you the truth, I’d much rather fall in with one of Don Montezuma’s craft than one of Uncle Sam’s.”

“That is a singular taste, for an American, Captain Spike, unless you think, now our guns are mounted, we can handle a Mexican,” returned Mulford coldly. “At all events, it is some answer to those who ask ‘What is the navy about?’ that months of war have gone by, and not an American has been captured. Take away that navy, and the insurance offices in Wall-street would tumble like a New York party-wall in a fire.”

“Nevertheless, I’d rather take my chance, just now, with Don Montezuma than with Uncle Sam.”

Mulford did not reply, though the earnest manner in which Spike expressed himself, helped to increase his distrust touching the nature of the voyage. With him the captain had no further conference, but it was different as respects the boatswain. That worthy was called aft, and for half an hour he and Spike were conversing apart, keeping their eyes fastened on the strange vessel most of the time.

It was noon before all uncertainly touching the character of the stranger ceased. By that time, however, both vessels were entering the Mona Passage; the brig well to windward, on the Porto Rico side; while the ship was so far to leeward as to be compelled to keep everything close-hauled, in order to weather the island. The hull of the last could now be seen, and no doubt was entertained about her being a cruiser, and one of some size, too. Spike thought she was a frigate; but Mulford still inclined to the opinion that she was one of the new ships; perhaps a real corvette, or with a light spar-deck over her batteries. Two or three of the new vessels were known to be thus fitted, and this might be one. At length all doubt on the subject ceased, the stranger setting an American ensign, and getting so near as to make it apparent that she had but a single line of guns. Still she was a large ship, and the manner that she ploughed through the brine, close-hauled as she was, extorted admiration even from Spike.



“We had better begin to shorten sail, Mr. Mulford,” the captain at length most reluctantly remarked. “We might give the chap the slip, perhaps, by keeping close in under Porto Rico, but he would give us a long chase, and might drive us away to windward, when I wish to keep off between Cuba and Jamaica. He’s a traveller; look, how he stands up to it under that cloud of canvas!”

Mulford was slow to commence on the studding-sails, and the cruiser was getting nearer and nearer. At length a gun was fired, and a heavy shot fell about two hundred yards short of the brig, and a little out of line with her. On this hint, Spike turned the hands up, and began to shorten sail. In ten minutes the *Swash* was under her topsail, mainsail and jib, with her light sails hanging in the gear, and all the steering canvas in. In ten minutes more the cruiser was so near as to admit of the faces of the three or four men whose heads were above the hammock-cloths being visible, when she too began to fold her wings. In went her royals, topgallant-sails, and various kites, as it might be by some common muscular agency; and up went her courses. Everything was done at once. By this time she was crossing the brig’s wake, looking exceedingly beautiful, with her topsails lifting, her light sails blowing out, and even her heavy courses fluttering in the breeze. There flew the glorious stars and stripes also; of brief existence, but full of recollections! The moment she had room, her helm went up, her bows fell off, and down she came, on the weather quarter of the *Swash*, so near as to render a trumpet nearly useless.

On board the brig everybody was on deck; even the relict having forgotten her mortification in curiosity. On board the cruiser no one was visible, with the exception of a few men in each top, and a group of gold-banded caps on the poop. Among these officers stood the captain, a red-faced, middle-aged man, with the usual signs of his rank about him; and at his side was his lynx-eyed first lieutenant. The surgeon and purser were also there, though they stood a little apart from the more nautical dignitaries. The hail that followed came out of a trumpet that was thrust through the mizzen-rigging; the officer who used it taking his cue from the poop.

“What brig is that?” commenced the discourse.

“The *Molly Swash*, of New York, Stephen Spike, master.”

“Where from, and whither bound?”

“From New York, and bound to Key West and a market.”

A pause succeeded this answer, during which the officers on the poop of the cruiser held some discourse with him of the trumpet. During the interval the cruiser ranged fairly up abeam.



“You are well to windward of your port, sir,” observed he of the trumpet significantly.

“I know it; but it’s war times, and I didn’t know but there might be piccaroons hovering about the Havanna.”

“The coast is clear, and our cruisers will keep it so. I see you have a battery, sir!”

“Ay, ay; some old guns that I’ve had aboard these ten years: they’re useful, sometimes, in these seas.”

“Very true. I’ll range ahead of you, and as soon as you’ve room, I’ll thank you to heave-to. I wish to send a boat on board you.”

Spike was sullen enough on receiving this order, but there was no help for it. He was now in the jaws of the lion, and his wisest course was to submit to the penalties of his position with the best grace he could. The necessary orders were consequently given, and the brig no sooner got room than she came by the wind and backed her topsail. The cruiser went about, and passing to windward, backed her main-topsail just forward of the *Swash*’s beam. Then the latter lowered a boat, and sent it, with a lieutenant and a midshipman in its stern-sheets, on board the brigantine. As the cutter approached, Spike went to the gangway to receive the strangers.

Although there will be frequent occasion to mention this cruiser, the circumstances are of so recent occurrence, that we do not choose to give either her name, or that of any one belonging to her. We shall, consequently, tell the curious, who may be disposed to turn to their navy-lists and blue-books, that the search will be of no use, as all the names we shall use, in reference to this cruiser, will be fictitious. As much of the rest of our story as the reader please may be taken for gospel; but we tell him frankly, that we have thought it most expedient to adopt assumed names, in connection with this vessel and all her officers. There are good reasons for so doing; and, among others, is that of abstaining from arming a clique to calumniate her commander, (who, by the way, like another commander in the Gulf that might be named, and who has actually been exposed to the sort of tracasserie to which there is allusion, is one of the very ablest men in the service,) in order to put another in his place.

The officer who now came over the side of the *Swash* we shall call Wallace; he was the second lieutenant of the vessel of war. He was about thirty, and the midshipman who followed him was a well-grown lad of nineteen. Both had a decided man-of-war look, and both looked a little curiously at the vessel they had boarded.



“Your servant, sir,” said Wallace, touching his cap in reply to Spike’s somewhat awkward bow. “Your brig is the *Molly Swash*, Stephen Spike, bound from New York to Key West and a market.”

“You’ve got it all as straight, lieutenant, as if you was a readin’ it from the log.”

“The next thing, sir, is to know of what your cargo is composed?”

“Flour; eight hundred barrels of flour.”

“Flour! Would you not do better to carry that to Liverpool? The Mississippi must be almost turned into paste by the quantity of flour it floats to market.”

“Notwithstanding that, lieutenant, I know Uncle Sam’s economy so well, as to believe I shall part with every barrel of my flour to his contractors, at a handsome profit.”

“You read Whig newspapers principally, I rather think, Mr. Spike,” answered Wallace, in his cool, deliberate way, smiling, however, as he spoke.

We may just as well say here, that nature intended this gentleman for a second lieutenant, the very place he filled. He was a capital second lieutenant, while he would not have earned his rations as first. So well was he assured of this peculiarity in his moral composition, that he did not wish to be the first lieutenant of anything in which he sailed. A respectable seaman, a well-read and intelligent man, a capital deck officer, or watch officer, he was too indolent to desire to be anything more, and was as happy as the day was long, in the easy berth he filled. The first lieutenant had been his messmate as a midshipman, and ranked him but two on the list in his present commission; but he did not envy him in the least. On the contrary, one of his greatest pleasures was to get “Working Willy,” as he called his senior, over a glass of wine, or a tumbler of “hot stuff,” and make him recount the labours of the day. On such occasions, Wallace never failed to compare the situation of “Working Willy” with his own gentlemanlike ease and independence. As second lieutenant, his rank raised him above most of the unpleasant duty of the ship, while it did not raise him high enough to plunge him into the never-ending labours of his senior. He delighted to call himself the “ship’s gentleman,” a sobriquet he well deserved, on more accounts than one.

“You read Whig newspapers principally, I rather think, Mr. Spike,” answered the lieutenant, as has been just mentioned, “while we on board the *Poughkeepsie* indulge in looking over the columns of the *Union*, as well as over those of the *Intelligencer*, when by good luck we can lay our hands on a stray number.”

“That ship, then, is called the *Poughkeepsie*, is she, sir?” inquired Spike.

“Such is her name, thanks to a most beneficent and sage provision of Congress, which has extended its parental care over the navy so far as to imagine that a man



chosen by the people to exercise so many of the functions of a sovereign, is not fit to name a ship. All our two and three deckers are to be called after states; the frigates after rivers; and the sloops after towns. Thus it is that our craft has the honour to be called the United States ship the ‘Poughkeepsie,’ instead of the ‘Arrow,’ or the ‘Wasp,’ or the ‘Curlew,’ or the ‘Petrel,’ as might otherwise have been the case. But the wisdom of Congress is manifest, for the plan teaches us sailors geography.”

“Yes, sir, yes, one can pick up a bit of l’arnin’ in that way cheap. The Poughkeepsie, Captain—?”

“The United States’ ship Poughkeepsie, 20, Captain Adam Mull, at your service. But, Mr. Spike, you will allow me to look at your papers. It is a duty I like, for it can be performed quietly, and without any fuss.”

Spike looked distrustfully at his new acquaintance, but went for his vessel’s papers without any very apparent hesitation. Every thing was en regle, and Wallace soon got through with the clearance, manifest, etc. Indeed the cargo, on paper at least, was of the simplest and least complicated character, being composed of nothing but eight hundred barrels of flour.

“It all looks very well on paper, Mr. Spike,” added the boarding officer. “With your permission, we will next see how it looks in sober reality. I perceive your main hatch is open, and I suppose it will be no difficult matter just to take a glance at your hold.”

“Here is a ladder, sir, that will take us at once to the half-deck, for I have no proper ’twixt decks in this craft; she’s too small for that sort of outfit.”

“No matter, she has a hold, I suppose, and that can contain cargo. Take me to it by the shortest road, Mr. Spike, for I am no great admirer of trouble.”

Spike now led the way below, Wallace following, leaving the midshipman on deck, who had fallen into conversation with the relict and her pretty niece. The half-deck of the brigantine contained spare sails, provisions, and water, as usual, while quantities of old canvas lay scattered over the cargo; more especially in the wake of the hatches, of which there were two besides that which led from the quarter-deck.

“Flour to the number of eight hundred barrels,” said Wallace, striking his foot against a barrel that lay within his reach. “The cargo is somewhat singular to come from New York, going to Key West, my dear Spike?”

“I suppose you know what sort of a place Key West is, sir; a bit of an island in which there is scarce so much as a potatoe grows.”

“Ay, ay, sir; I know Key West very well, having been in and out a dozen times. All eatables are imported, turtle excepted. But flour can be brought down the Mississippi so much cheaper than it can be brought from New York.”



“Have you any idee, lieutenant, what Uncle Sam’s men are paying for it at New Orleans, just to keep soul and bodies together among the so’gers?”

“That may be true, sir—quite true, I dare say, Mr. Spike. Haven’t you a bit of a chair that a fellow can sit down on—this half-deck of your’s is none of the most comfortable places to stand in. Thank you, sir—thank you with all my heart. What lots of old sails you have scattered about the hold, especially in the wake of the hatches!”

“Why, the craft being little more than in good ballast trim, I keep the hatches off to air her; and the spray might spit down upon the flour at odd times but for them ’ere sails.”

“Ay, a prudent caution. So you think Uncle Sam’s people will be after this flour as soon as they learn you have got it snug in at Key West?”

“What more likely, sir? You know how it is with our government—always wrong, whatever it does! And I can show you paragraphs in letters written from New Orleans, which tell us that Uncle Sam is paying seventy-five and eighty per cent more for flour than anybody else.”

“He must be a flush old chap to be able to do that, Spike.”

“Flush! I rather think he is. Do you know that he is spendin’, accordin’ to approved accounts, at this blessed moment, as much as half a million a day? I own a wish to be pickin’ up some of the coppers while they are scattered about so plentifully.”

“Half a million a day! Why that is only at the rate of \$187,000,000 per annum; a mere trifle, Spike, that is scarce worth mentioning among us mariners.”

“It’s so in the newspapers, I can swear, lieutenant.”

“Ay, ay, and the newspapers will swear to it, too, and they that gave the newspapers their cue. But no matter, our business is with this flour. Will you sell us a barrel or two for our mess? I heard the caterer say we should want flour in the course of a week or so.”

Spike seemed embarrassed, though not to a degree to awaken suspicion in his companion.

“I never sold cargo at sea, long as I’ve sailed and owned a craft,” he answered, as if uncertain what to do. “If you’ll pay the price I expect to get in the Gulf, and will take ten barrels, I don’t know but we may make a trade on’t. I shall only ask expected prices.”

“Which will be—?”

“Ten dollars a barrel. For one hundred silver dollars I will put into your boat ten barrels of the very best brand known in the western country.”



“This is dealing rather more extensively than I anticipated, but we will reflect on it.”

Wallace now indolently arose and ascended to the quarter-deck, followed by Spike, who continued to press the flour on him, as if anxious to make money. But the lieutenant hesitated about paying a price as high as ten dollars, or to take a quantity as large as ten barrels.

“Our mess is no great matter after all,” he said carelessly. “Four lieutenants, the purser, two doctors, the master, and a marine officer, and you get us all. Nine men could never eat ten barrels of flour, my dear Spike, you will see for yourself, with the quantity of excellent bread we carry. You forget the bread.”

“Not a bit of it, Mr. Wallace, since that is your name. But such flour as this of mine has not been seen in the Gulf this many a day. I ought in reason to ask twelve dollars for it, and insist on such a ship as your’n’s taking twenty instead of the ten barrels.”

“I thank you, sir, the ten will more than suffice; unless, indeed, the captain wants some for the cabin. How is it with your steerage messes, Mr. Archer—do you want any flour?”

“We draw a little from the ship, according to rule, sir, but we can’t go as many puddings latterly as we could before we touched last at the Havanna,” answered the laughing midshipman. “There is n’t a fellow among us, sir, that could pay a shore-boat for landing him, should we go in again before the end of another month. I never knew such a place as Havanna. They say midshipmen’s money melts there twice as soon as lieutenants’ money.”

“It’s clear, then, you’ll not take any of the ten. I am afraid after all, Mr. Spike, we cannot trade, unless you will consent to let me have two barrels. I’ll venture on two at ten dollars, high as the price is.”

“I shouldn’t forgive myself in six months for making so bad a bargain, lieutenant, so we’ll say no more about it if you please.”

“Here is a lady that wishes to say a word to you, Mr. Wallace, before we go back to the ship, if you are at leisure to hear her, or them—for there are two of them,” put in Archer.

At this moment Mrs. Budd was approaching with a dignified step, while Rose followed timidly a little in the rear. Wallace was a good deal surprised at this application, and Spike was quite as much provoked. As for Mulford, he watched the interview from a distance, a great deal more interested in its result than he cared to have known, more especially to his commanding officer. Its object was to get a passage in the vessel of war.



“You are an officer of that Uncle Sam vessel,” commenced Mrs. Budd, who thought that she would so much the more command the respect and attention of her listener, by showing him early how familiar she was with even the slang dialect of the seas.

“I have the honour, ma’am, to belong to that Uncle Sam craft,” answered Wallace gravely, though he bowed politely at the same time, looking intently at the beautiful girl in the back-ground as he so did.

“So I’ve been told, sir. She’s a beautiful vessel, lieutenant, and is full jiggered, I perceive.”

For the first time in his life, or at least for the first time since his first cruise, Wallace wore a mystified look, being absolutely at a loss to imagine what “full jiggered” could mean. He only looked, therefore, for he did not answer.

“Mrs. Budd means that you’ve a full rigged craft,” put in Spike, anxious to have a voice in the conference, “this vessel being only a half-rigged brig.”

“Oh! Ay; yes, yes—the lady is quite right. We are full jiggered from our dead-eyes to our eye-bolts.”

“I thought as much, sir, from your ground hamper and top-tackles,” added the relict smiling. “For my part there is nothing in nature that I so much admire as a full jiggered ship, with her canvas out of the bolt-ropes, and her clew-lines and clew-garnets braced sharp, and her yards all abroad.”

“Yes, ma’am, it is just as you say, a very charming spectacle. Our baby was born full grown, and with all her hamper aloft just as you see her. Some persons refer vessels to art, but I think you are quite right in referring them to nature.”

“Nothing can be more natural to me, lieutenant, than a fine ship standing on her canvas. It’s an object to improve the heart and to soften the understanding.”

“So I should think, ma’am,” returned Wallace, a little quizzically, “judging from the effect on yourself.”

This speech, unfortunately timed as it was, wrought a complete change in Rose’s feelings, and she no longer wished to exchange the *Swash* for the Poughkeepsie. She saw that her aunt was laughed at in secret, and that was a circumstance that never failed to grate on every nerve in her system. She had been prepared to second and sustain the intended application—she was now determined to oppose it.

“Yes, sir,” resumed the unconscious relict, “and to soften the understanding. Lieutenant, did you ever cross the Capricorn?”

“No less than six times; three going and three returning, you know.”



“And did Neptune come on board you, and were you shaved?”

“Everything was done *secundem artem*, ma’am. The razor was quite an example of what are called in poetry ‘thoughts too deep for tears.’ ”

“That must have been delightful. As for me, I’m quite a devotee of Neptune’s; but I’m losing time, for no doubt your ship is all ready to pull away and carry on sail—”

“Aunt, may I say a word to you before you go any further,” put in Rose in her quiet but very controlling way.

The aunt complied, and Wallace, as soon as left alone, felt like a man who was released from a quick-sand, into which every effort to extricate himself only plunged him so much the deeper. At this moment the ship hailed, and the lieutenant took a hasty leave of Spike, motioned to the midshipman to precede him, and followed the latter into his boat. Spike saw his visiter off in person, tending the side and offering the man-ropes with his own hands. For this civility Wallace thanked him, calling out as his boat pulled him from the brig’s side—“If we ‘pull away,’” accenting the “pull” in secret derision of the relict’s mistake, “you can pull away; our filling the topsail being a sign for you to do the same.”

“There you go, and joy go with you,” muttered Spike, as he descended from the gangway. “A pretty kettle of fish would there have been cooked had I let him have his two barrels of flour.”

The man-of-war’s cutter was soon under the lee of the ship, where it discharged its freight, when it was immediately run up. During the whole time Wallace had been absent, Captain Mull and his officers remained on the poop, principally occupied in examining and discussing the merits of the *Swash*. No sooner had their officer returned, however, than an order was given to fill away, it being supposed that the Poughkeepsie had no further concern with the brigantine. As for Wallace, he ascended to the poop and made the customary report.

“It’s a queer cargo to be carrying to Key West from the Atlantic coast,” observed the captain in a deliberating sort of manner, as if the circumstance excited suspicion; “Yet the Mexicans can hardly be in want of any such supplies.”

“Did you see the flour, Wallace?” inquired the first lieutenant, who was well aware of his messmate’s indolence.

“Yes, sir, and felt it too. The lower hold of the brig is full of flour, and of nothing else.”

“Ware round, sir—ware round and pass athwart the brig’s wake,” interrupted the captain. “There’s plenty of room now, and I wish to pass as near that craft as we can.”



This manoeuvre was executed. The sloop-of-war no sooner filled her maintop-sail than she drew ahead, leaving plenty of room for the brigantine to make sail on her course. Spike did not profit by this opening, however, but he sent several men aloft forward, where they appeared to be getting ready to send down the upper yards and the topgallant-mast. No sooner was the sloop-of-war's helm put up than that vessel passed close along the brigantine's weather side, and kept off across her stern on her course. As she did this the canvas was fluttering aboard her, in the process of making sail, and Mull held a short discourse with Spike.

"Is anything the matter aloft?" demanded the man-of-war's man.

"Ay, ay; I've sprung my topgallant-mast, and think this a good occasion to get another up in its place."

"Shall I lend you a carpenter or two, Mr. Spike?"

"Thank'ee, sir, thank'ee with all my heart; but we can do without them. It's an old stick, and it's high time a better stood where it does. Who knows but I may be chased and feel the want of reliable spars."

Captain Mull smiled and raised his cap in the way of an adieu, when the conversation ended; the Poughkeepsie sliding off rapidly with a free wind, leaving the *Swash* nearly stationary. In ten minutes the two vessels were more than a mile apart; in twenty, beyond the reach of shot.

Notwithstanding the natural and common-place manner in which this separation took place, there was much distrust on board each vessel, and a good deal of consummate management on the part of Spike. The latter knew that every foot the sloop-of-war went on her course, carried her just so far to leeward, placing his own brig, in-so-much, dead to windward of her. As the *Swash*'s best point of sailing, relatively considered, was close-hauled, this was giving to Spike a great security against any change of purpose on the part of the vessel of war. Although his people were aloft and actually sent down the topgallant-mast, it was only to send it up again, the spar being of admirable toughness, and as sound as the day it was cut.

"I don't think, Mr. Mulford," said the captain sarcastically, "that Uncle Sam's glasses are good enough to tell the difference in wood at two leagues' distance, so we'll trust to the old stick a little longer. Ay, ay, let 'em run off before it, we'll find another road by which to reach our port."

"The sloop-of-war is going round the south side of Cuba, Captain Spike," answered the mate, "and I have understood you to say that you intended to go by the same passage."



“A body may change his mind, and no murder. Only consider, Harry, how common it is for folks to change their minds. I did intend to pass between Cuba and Jamaica, but I intend it no longer. Our run from Montauk has been uncommon short, and I’ve time enough to spare to go to the southward of Jamaica too, if the notion takes me.”

“That would greatly prolong the passage, Captain Spike,—a week at least.”

“What if it does—I’ve a week to spare; we’re nine days afore our time.”

“Our time for what, sir? Is there any particular time set for a vessel’s going into Key West?”

“Don’t be womanish and over-cur’ous, Mulford. I sail with sealed orders, and when we get well to windward of Jamaica, ’t will be time enough to open them.”

Spike was as good as his word. As soon as he thought the sloop-of-war was far enough to leeward, or when she was hull down, he filled away and made sail on the wind to get nearer to Porto Rico. Long ere it was dark he had lost sight of the sloop-of-war, when he altered his course to south-westerly, which was carrying him in the direction he named, or to windward of Jamaica.

While this artifice was being practised on board the *Molly Swash*, the officers of the Poughkeepsie were not quite satisfied with their own mode of proceeding with the brigantine. The more they reasoned on the matter, the more unlikely it seemed to them that Spike could be really carrying a cargo of flour from New York to Key West, in the expectation of disposing of it to the United States’ contractors, and the more out of the way did he seem to be in running through the Mona Passage.

“His true course should have been by the Hole in the Wall, and so down along the north side of Cuba, before the wind,” observed the first lieutenant. “I wonder that never struck you, Wallace; you, who so little like trouble.”

“Certainly I knew it, but we lazy people like running off before the wind, and I did not know but such were Mr. Spike’s tastes,” answered the “ship’s gentleman.” “In my judgment, the reluctance he showed to letting us have any of his flour, is much the most suspicious circumstance in the whole affair.”

These two speeches were made on the poop, in the presence of the captain, but in a sort of an aside that admitted of some of the ward-room familiarity exhibited. Captain Mull was not supposed to hear what passed, though hear it he in fact did, as was seen by his own remarks, which immediately succeeded.

“I understood you to say, Mr. Wallace,” observed the captain, a little drily, “that you saw the flour yourself?”



“I saw the flour-barrels, sir; and as regularly built were they as any barrels that ever were branded. But a flour-barrel may have contained something beside flour.”

“Flour usually makes itself visible in the handling; were these barrels quite clean?”

“Far from it, sir. They showed flour on their staves, like any other cargo. After all, the man may have more sense than we give him credit for, and find a high market for his cargo.”

Captain Mull seemed to muse, which was a hint for his juniors not to continue the conversation, but rather to seem to muse, too. After a short pause, the captain quietly remarked—“Well, gentlemen, he will be coming down after us, I suppose, as soon as he gets his new topgallant-mast on-end, and then we can keep a bright look-out for him. We shall cruise off Cape St. Antonio for a day or two, and no doubt shall get another look at him. I should like to have one baking from his flour.”

But Spike had no intention to give the Poughkeepsie the desired opportunity. As has been stated, he stood off to the southward on a wind, and completely doubled the eastern end of Jamaica, when he put his helm up, and went, with favouring wind and current, toward the northward and westward. The consequence was, that he did not fall in with the Poughkeepsie at all, which vessel was keeping a sharp look-out for him in the neighbourhood of Cape St. Antonio and the Isle of Pines, at the very moment he was running down the coast of Yucatan. Of all the large maritime countries of the world, Mexico, on the Atlantic, is that which is the most easily blockaded, by a superior naval power. By maintaining a proper force between Key West and the Havanna, and another squadron between Cape St. Antonio and Loggerhead Key, the whole country, the Bay of Honduras excepted, is shut up, as it might be in a band-box. It is true the Gulf would be left open to the Mexicans, were not squadrons kept nearer in; but, as for anything getting out into the broad Atlantic, it would be next to hopeless. The distance to be watched between the Havanna and Key West is only about sixty miles, while that in the other direction is not much greater.

While the *Swash* was making the circuit of Jamaica, as described, her captain had little communication with his passengers. The misunderstanding with the relict embarrassed him as much as it embarrassed her; and he was quite willing to let time mitigate her resentment. Rose would be just as much in his power a fortnight hence as she was today. This cessation in the captain’s attentions gave the females greater liberty, and they improved it, singularly enough as it seemed to Mulford, by cultivating a strange sort of intimacy with Jack Tier. The very day that succeeded the delicate conversation with Mrs. Budd, to a part of which Jack had been an auditor, the uncouth-



looking steward's assistant was seen in close conference with the pretty Rose; the subject of their conversation being, apparently, of a most engrossing nature. From that hour, Jack got to be not only a confidant, but a favourite, to Mulford's great surprise. A less inviting subject for te-te-t'tes and confidential dialogues, thought the young man, could not well exist; but so it was; woman's caprices are inexplicable; and not only Rose and her aunt, but even the captious and somewhat distrustful Bidly, manifested on all occasions not only friendship, but kindness and consideration for Jack.

"You quite put my nose out o' joint, you Jack Tier, with 'e lady," grumbled Josh, the steward de jure, if not now de facto, of the craft, "and I neber see nuttin' like it! I s'pose you expect ten dollar, at least, from dem passenger, when we gets in. But I'd have you to know, Misser Jack, if you please, dat a steward be a steward, and he don't like to hab trick played wid him, afore he own face."

"Poh! Poh! Joshua," answered Jack good-naturedly, "don't distress yourself on a consail. In the first place, you've got no nose to be put out of joint; or, if you have really a nose, it has no joint. It's nat'ral for folks to like their own colour, and the ladies prefer me, because I'm white."

"No so worry white as all dat, nudder," grumbled Josh. "I see great many whiter dan you. But, if dem lady like you so much as to gib you ten dollar, as I expects, when we gets in, I presumes you'll hand over half, or six dollar, of dat money to your superior officer, as is law in de case."

"Do you call six the half of ten, Joshua, my scholar, eh?"

"Well, den, seven, if you like dat better. I wants just half, and just half I means to git."

"And half you shall have, maty. I only wish you would just tell me where we shall be, when we gets in."

"How I know, white man? Dat belong to skipper, and better ask him. If he do n't gib you lick in de chop, p'rhaps he tell you."

As Jack Tier had no taste for "licks in the chops," he did not follow Josh's advice. But his agreeing to give half of the ten dollars to the steward kept peace in the cabins. He was even so scrupulous of his word, as to hand to Josh a half-eagle that very day; money he had received from Rose; saying he would trust to Providence for his own half of the expected douceur. This concession placed Jack Tier on high grounds with his "superior officer," and from that time the former was left to do the whole of the customary service of the ladies' cabin.

As respects the vessel, nothing worthy of notice occurred until she had passed Loggerhead Key, and was fairly launched in the Gulf of Mexico. Then, indeed, Spike



took a step that greatly surprised his mate. The latter was directed to bring all his instruments, charts, etc., and place them in the captain's state-room, where it was understood they were to remain until the brig got into port. Spike was but an indifferent navigator, while Mulford was one of a higher order than common. So much had the former been accustomed to rely on the latter, indeed, as they approached a strange coast, that he could not possibly have taken any step, that was not positively criminal, which would have given his mate more uneasiness than this.

At first, Mulford naturally enough suspected that Spike intended to push for some Mexican port, by thus blinding his eyes as to the position of the vessel. The direction steered, however, soon relieved the mate from this apprehension. From the eastern extremity of Yucatan, the Mexican coast trends to the westward, and even to the south of west, for a long distance, whereas the course steered by Spike was north, easterly. This was diverging from the enemy's coast instead of approaching it, and the circumstance greatly relieved the apprehensions of Mulford.

Nor was the sequestration of the mate's instruments the only suspicious act of Spike. He caused the brig's paint to be entirely altered, and even went so far toward disguising her, as to make some changes aloft. All this was done as the vessel passed swiftly on her course, and everything had been effected, apparently to the captain's satisfaction, when the cry of "land-ho!" was once more heard. The land proved to be a cluster of low, small islands, part coral, part sand, that might have been eight or ten in number, and the largest of which did not possess a surface of more than a very few acres. Many were the merest islets imaginable, and on one of the largest of the cluster rose a tall, gaunt light-house, having the customary dwelling of its keeper at its base. Nothing else was visible; the broad expanse of the blue waters of the Gulf excepted. All the land in sight would not probably have made one field of twenty acres in extent, and that seemed cut off from the rest of the world, by a broad barrier of water. It was a spot of such singular situation and accessories, that Mulford gazed at it with a burning desire to know where he was, as the brig steered through a channel between two of the islets, into a capacious and perfectly safe basin, formed by the group, and dropped her anchor in its centre.

