



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



Part 2: Chapter 3

I might have pass'd that lovely cheek,
Nor, perchance, my heart have left me;
But the sensitive blush that came trembling there,
Of my heart it for ever bereft me.
Who could blame had I loved that face,
Ere my eyes could twice explore her;
Yet it is for the fairy intelligence there,
And her warm, warm heart I adore her.

—Wolfe.

The stories of the respective parties who had thus so strangely met on that barren and isolated rock, were soon told. Harry confirmed all of Jack's statements as to his own proceedings, and Rose had little more to say than to add how much her own affections had led her to risk in his behalf. In a word, ten minutes made each fully acquainted with the other's movements. Then Tier considerably retired to the boat, under the pretence of minding it, and seeing everything ready for a departure, but as much to allow the lovers the ten or fifteen minutes of uninterrupted discourse that they now enjoyed, as for any other reason.

It was a strange scene that now offered on the rock. By this time the fire was burning not only brightly, but fiercely, shedding its bright light far and near. Under its most brilliant rays stood Harry and Rose, both smiling and happy, delighted in their meeting, and, for the moment, forgetful of all but their present felicity. Never, indeed, had Rose appeared more lovely than under these circumstances. Her face was radiant with those feelings which had so recently changed from despair to delight—a



condition that is ever most propitious to beauty; and charms that always appeared feminine and soft, now seemed elevated to a bright benignancy that might best be likened to our fancied images of angels. The mild, beaming, serene and intelligent blue eyes, the cheeks flushed with happiness, the smiles that came so easily, and were so replete with tenderness, and the rich hair, deranged by the breeze, and moistened by the air of the sea, each and all, perhaps, borrowed some additional lustre from the peculiar light under which they were exhibited. As for Harry, happiness had thrown all the disadvantages of exposure, want of dress, and a face that had not felt the razor for six-and-thirty hours, into the back-ground. When he left the wreck, he had cast aside his cap and his light summer jacket, in order that they might not encumber him in swimming, but both had been recovered when he returned with the boat to take off his friends. In his ordinary sea attire, then, he now stood, holding Rose's two hands in front of the fire, every garment clean and white as the waters of the ocean could make them, but all betraying some of the signs of his recent trials. His fine countenance was full of the love he bore for the intrepid and devoted girl who had risked so much in his behalf; and a painter might have wished to preserve the expression of ardent, manly admiration which glowed in his face, answering to the gentle sympathy and womanly tenderness it met in that of Rose.

The back-ground of this picture was the wide, even surface of the coral reef, with its exterior setting of the dark and gloomy sea. On the side of the channel, however, appeared the boat, already winded, with Bidy still on the rock, looking kindly at the lovers by the fire, while Jack was holding the painter, beginning to manifest a little impatience at the delay.

"They'll stay there an hour, holding each other's hands, and looking into each other's faces," half grumbled the little, rotund, assistant-steward, anxious to be on his way back to the brig, "unless a body gives 'em a call. Captain Spike will be in no very good humour to receive you and me on board ag'in, if he should find out what sort of a trip we've been making hereaway."

"Let 'em alone—let 'em alone, Jacky," answered the good-natured and kind-hearted Irish woman. "It's happy they bees, jist now, and it does my eyes good to look at 'em."

"Ay, they're happy enough, now; I only hope it may last."

"Last! what should help its lasting? Miss Rose is so good, and so handsome—and she's a fortin', too; and the mate so nice a young man. Think of the likes of them, Jack, wantin' the blessed gift of wather, and all within one day and two nights. Sure it's



Providence that takes care of, and not we ourselves! Kings on their thrones is n't as happy as them at this moment."

"Men's willians!" growled Jack; "and more fools women for trustin' 'em."

"Not sich a nice young man as our mate, Jacky; no, not he. Now the mate of the ship I came from Liverpool in, this time ten years ago, he was a villain. He grudged us our potaties, and our own bread; and he grudged us every dhrap of swate wather that went into our mouths. Call him a villain, if you will, Jack; but niver call the likes of Mr. Mulford by so hard a name."

"I wish him well, and nothing else; and for that very reason must put a stop to his looking so fondly into that young woman's face. Time won't stand still, Bidy, to suit the wishes of lovers; and Stephen Spike is a man not to be trifled with. Halloo, there, maty! It's high time to think of getting under way."

At this summons both Harry and Rose started, becoming aware of the precious moments they were losing. Carrying a large portion of the turtle, the former moved toward the craft, in which all were seated in less than three minutes, with the sail loose, and the boat in motion. For a few moments the mate was so much occupied with Rose, that he did not advert to the course; but one of his experience could not long be misled on such a point, and he turned suddenly to Tier, who was steering, to remonstrate.

"How's this, Jack!" cried Mulford; "you've got the boat's head the wrong way."

"Not I, sir. She's heading for the brig as straight as she can go. This wind favours us on both legs; and it's lucky it does, for't will be hard on upon daylight afore we are alongside of her. You'll want half an hour of dark, at the very least, to get a good start of the *Swash*, in case she makes sail a'ter you."

"Straight for the brig!—what have we to do with the brig? Our course is for Key West, unless it might be better to run down before the wind to the Dry Tortugas again, and look for the sloop-of-war. Duty, and perhaps my own safety, tells me to let Captain Mull know what Spike is about with the *Swash*; and I shall not hesitate a moment about doing it, after all that has passed. Give me the helm, Jack, and let us ware short round on our heel."

"Never, master maty—never. I must go back to the brig. Miss Rose, there, knows that my business is with Stephen Spike, and with him only."

"And I must return to my aunt, Harry," put in Rose, herself. "It would never do for me to desert my aunt, you know."

"And I have been taken from that rock, to be given up to the tender mercies of Spike again?"



This was said rather in surprise, than in a complaining way; and it at once induced Rose to tell the young man the whole of their project.

“Never, Harry, never,” she said firmly. “It is our intention to return to the brig ourselves, and let you escape in the boat afterwards. Jack Tier is of opinion this can be done without much risk, if we use proper caution and do not lose too much time. On no account would I consent to place you in the hands of Spike again—death would be preferable to that, Harry!”

“And on no account can or will I consent to place you again in the hands of Spike, Rose,” answered the young man. “Now that we know his intentions, such an act would be almost impious.”

“Remember my aunt, dear Harry. What would be her situation in the morning, when she found herself deserted by her niece and Biddy—by me, whom she has nursed and watched from childhood, and whom she loves so well.”

“I shall not deny your obligations to your aunt, Rose, and your duty to her under ordinary circumstances. But these are not ordinary circumstances; and it would be courting the direst misfortunes, nay, almost braving Providence, to place yourself in the hands of that scoundrel again, now that you are clear of them.”

“Spike’s a willian!” muttered Jack.

“And my desartin’ the missus would be a sin that no praste would overlook aisily,” put in Biddy. “When Miss Rose told me of this v’y’ge that she meant to make in the boat wid Jack Tier, I asked to come along, that I might take care of her, and see that there was plenty of wather; but ill-luck befall me if I would have t’ought of sich a thing, and the missus deserted.”

“We can then run alongside of the brig, and put Biddy and Jack on board of her,” said Mulford, reflecting a moment on what had just been said, “when you and I can make the best of our way to Key West, where the means of sending government vessels out after the *Swash* will soon offer. In this way we can not only get our friends out of the lion’s jaws, but keep out of them ourselves.”

“Reflect a moment, Harry,” said Rose, in a low voice, but not without tenderness in its tones; “it would not do for me to go off alone with you in this boat.”

“Not when you have confessed your willingness to go over the wide world with me, Rose—with me, and with me only?”

“Not even then, Harry. I know you will think better of this, when your generous nature has time to reason with your heart, on my account.”

“I can only answer in your own words, Rose—never. If you return to the *Swash*, I shall go on board with you, and throw defiance into the very teeth of Spike. I know the



men do not dislike me, and, perhaps, assisted by Señor Montefalderon, and a few friends among the people, I can muster a force that will prevent my being thrown into the sea.”

Rose burst into tears, and then succeeded many minutes, during which Mulford was endeavouring, with manly tenderness, to soothe her. As soon as our heroine recovered her self-command, she began to discuss the matter at issue between them more coolly. For half an hour everything was urged by each that feeling, affection, delicacy, or distrust of Spike could well urge, and Mulford was slowly getting the best of the argument, as well he might, the truth being mostly of his side. Rose was bewildered, really feeling a strong reluctance to quit her aunt, even with so justifiable a motive, but principally shrinking from the appearance of going off alone in a boat, and almost in the open sea, with Mulford. Had she loved Harry less, her scruples might not have been so active, but the consciousness of the strength of her attachment, as well as her fixed intention to become his wife the moment it was in her power to give him her hand with the decencies of her sex, contributed strangely to prevent her yielding to the young man’s reasoning. On the subject of the aunt, the mate made out so good a case, that it was apparent to all in the boat Rose would have to abandon that ground of refusal. Spike had no object to gain by ill-treating Mrs. Budd; and the probability certainly was that he would get rid of her as soon as he could, and in the most easy manner. This was so apparent to all, that Harry had little difficulty in getting Rose to assent to its probability. But there remained the reluctance to go off alone with the mate in a boat. This part of the subject was more difficult to manage than the other; and Mulford betrayed as much by the awkwardness with which he managed it. At length the discussion was brought to a close by Jack Tier suddenly saying,—

“Yonder is the brig; and we are heading for her as straight as if she was the pole, and the keel of this boat was a compass. I see how it is, Miss Rose, and a’ter all, I must give in. I suppose some other opportunity will offer for me to get on board of the brig ag’in, and I’ll trust to that. If you won’t go off with the mate alone, I suppose you’ll not refuse to go off in my company.”

“Will you accompany us, Jack? This is more than I had hoped for! Yes, Harry, if Jack Tier will be of the party, I will trust my aunt to Bidy, and go with you to Key West, in order to escape from Spike.”

This was said so rapidly, and so unexpectedly, as to take Mulford completely by surprise. Scarce believing what he heard, the young man was disposed, at first, to feel hurt, though a moment’s reflection showed him that he ought to rejoice in the result let the cause be what it might.



“More than I had hoped for!” he could not refrain from repeating a little bitterly; “is Jack Tier, then, of so much importance, that his company is thought preferable to mine!”

“Hush, Harry!” said Rose, laying her hand on Mulford’s arm, by way of strengthening her appeal. “Do not say that. You are ignorant of circumstances; at another time you shall know them, but not now. Let it be enough for the present, that I promise to accompany you if Jack will be of our party.”

“Ay, ay, Miss Rose, I will be of the party, seeing there is no other way of getting the lamb out of the jaws of the wolf. A’ter all, it may be the wisest thing I can do, though back to the *Swash* I must and will come, powder or no powder, treason or no treason, at the first opportunity. Yes, my business is with the *Molly*, and to the *Molly* I shall return. It’s lucky, Miss Rose, since you have made up your mind to ship for this new cruise, that I bethought me of telling Bidy to make up a bundle of duds for you. This carpet-bag has a change or two in it, and all owing to my forethought. Your woman said ‘Miss Rose will come back wid us, Jack, and what’s the use of rumplin’ the clothes for a few hours’ sail in the boat;’ but I knew womankind better, and foreseed that if master mate fell in alongside of you ag’in, you would not be apt to part company very soon.”

“I thank you, Jack, for the provision made for my comfort; though some money would have added to it materially. My purse has a little gold in it, but a very little, and I fear you are not much better off, Harry. It will be awkward to find ourselves in Key West penniless.”

“We shall not be quite that. I left the brig absolutely without a cent, but foreseeing that necessity might make them of use, I borrowed half a dozen of the doubloons from the bag of Señor Montefalderon, and, fortunately, they are still in my pocket. All I am worth in the world is in a bag of half-eagles, rather more than a hundred altogether, which I left in my chest, in my own state-room aboard the brig.”

“You’ll find that in the carpet-bag too, master mate,” said Jack, coolly.

“Find what, man—not my money, surely?”

“Ay, every piece of it. Spike broke into your chest this a’ternoon, and made me hold the tools while he was doing it. He found the bag, and overhauled it—a hundred and seven half, eleven quarter, and one full-grown eagle, was the count. When he had done the job, he put all back ag’in, a’ter giving me the full-grown eagle for my share of the plunder, and told me to say nothing of what I had seen. I did say nothing, but I did a good bit of work, for, while he was at supper. I confiserated that bag, as they call it—



and you will find it there among Miss Rose's clothes, with the full-grown gentleman back in his nest ag'in."

"This is being not only honest, Tier," cried Mulford, heartily, "but thoughtful. One-half that money shall be yours for this act."

"I thank'e, sir; but I'll not touch a cent of it. It came hard, I know, Mr. Mulford; for my own hands have smarted too much with tar, not to know that the seaman 'earns his money like the horse.'"

"Still it would not be 'spending it like an ass,' Jack, to give you a portion of mine. But there will be other opportunities to talk of this. It is a sign of returning to the concerns of life, Rose, that money begins to be of interest to us. How little did we think of the doubloons, or half-eagles, a few hours since, when on the wreck!"

"It was wather that we t'ought of then," put in Bidley. "Goold is good in a market, or in a town, or to send back to Ireland, to help a body's aged fader or mudder in comfort wid; but wather is the blessed thing on a wrack!"

"The brig is coming quite plainly into view, and you had better give me the helm, Jack. It is time to bethink us of the manner of approaching her, and how we are to proceed when alongside."

This was so obviously true, that everybody felt disposed to forget all other matters, in order to conduct the proceedings of the next twenty minutes, with the necessary prudence and caution. When Mulford first took the helm, the brig was just coming clearly into view, though still looking a little misty and distant. She might then have been half a league distant, and would not have been visible at all by that light, but for the circumstance that she had no back-ground to swallow up her outlines. Drawn against clouds, above which the rays of the moon were shed, her tracery was to be discerned, however, and, minute by minute, it was getting to be more and more distinct, until it was now so plainly to be seen as to admonish the mate of the necessity of preparation in the manner mentioned.

Tier now communicated to the mate his own proposed manner of proceeding. The brig tended to the trades, the tides having very little influence on her, in the bight of the reef where she lay. As the wind stood at about east south-east, the brig's stern pointed to about west north-west, while the boat was coming down the passage from a direction nearly north from her, having, as a matter of course, the wind just free enough to lay her course. Jack's plan was to pass the brig to windward, and having got well on her bow, to brail the sail, and drift down upon her, expecting to fall in alongside, abreast of the fore-chains, into which he had intended to help Bidley, and to ascend himself,



when he supposed that Mulford would again make sail, and carry off his mistress. To this scheme the mate objected that it was awkward, and a little lubberly. He substituted one in its place that differed in seamanship, and which was altogether better. Instead of passing to wind-ward, Mulford suggested the expediency of approaching to leeward, and of coming alongside under the open bow-port, letting the sheet fly and brailing the sail, when the boat should be near enough to carry her to the point of destination without further assistance from her canvass.

Jack Tier took his officer's improvement on his own plan in perfect good part, readily and cheerfully expressing his willingness to aid the execution of it all that lay in his power. As the boat sailed unusually well, there was barely time to explain to each individual his or her part in the approaching critical movements, ere the crisis itself drew near; then each of the party became silent and anxious, and events were regarded rather than words.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Mulford sailed a boat well. He held the sheet in his hand, as the little craft came up under the lee-quarter of the brig, while Jack stood by the brail. The eyes of the mate glanced over the hull of the vessel to ascertain, if possible, who might be stirring; but not a sign of life could he detect on board her. This very silence made Mulford more distrustful and anxious, for he feared a trap was set for him. He expected to see the head of one of the blacks at least peering over the bulwarks, but nothing like a man was visible. It was too late to pause, however, and the sheet was slowly eased off, Jack hauling on the brail at the same time; the object being to prevent the sail's flapping, and the sound reaching the ears of Spike. As Mulford used great caution, and had previously schooled Jack on the subject, this important point was successfully achieved. Then the mate put his helm down, and the boat shot up under the brig's lee-bow. Jack was ready to lay hold of one of the bow-sprit shrouds, and presently the boat was breasted up under the desired port, and secured in that position. Mulford quitted the stern-sheets, and cast a look in upon deck. Nothing was to be seen, though he heard the heavy breathing of the blacks, both of whom were sound asleep on a sail that they had spread on the forecastle.

The mate whispered for Biddy to come to the port. This the Irishwoman did at once, having kissed Rose, and taken her leave of her previously. Tier also came to the port, through which he passed, getting on deck with a view to assist Biddy, who was awkward, almost as a matter of course, to pass through the same opening. He had just succeeded, when the whole party was startled, some of them almost petrified, indeed, by a hail from the quarter-deck in the well-known, deep tones of Spike.



“For’ard, there?” hailed the captain. Receiving no answer, he immediately repeated, in a shorter, quicker call, “Forecastle, there?”

“Sir,” answered Jack Tier, who by this time had come to his senses.

“Who has the look-out on that forecandle?”

“I have it, sir—I, Jack Tier. You know, sir, I was to have it from two ’till daylight.”

“Ay, ay, I remember now. How does the brig ride to her anchor?”

“As steady as a church, sir. She’s had no more sheer the whole watch than if she was moored head and stern.”

“Does the wind stand as it did?”

“No change, sir. As dead a trade wind as ever blowed.”

“What hard breathing is that I hear for’ard?”

“’T is the two niggers, sir. They’ve turned in on deck, and are napping it off at the rate of six knots. There’s no keepin’ way with a nigger in snorin’.”

“I thought I heard loud whispering, too, but I suppose it was a sort of half-dream. I’m often in that way now-a-days. Jack!”

“Sir.”

“Go to the scuttle-butt and get me a pot of fresh water—my coppers are hot with hard thinking.”

Jack did as ordered, and soon stood beneath the coach-house deck with Spike, who had come out of his state-room, heated and uneasy at he knew not what. The captain drank a full pint of water at a single draught.

“That’s refreshing,” he said, returning Jack the tinpot, “and I feel the cooler for it. How much does it want of daylight, Jack?”

“Two hours, I think, sir. The order was passed to me to have all hands called as soon as it was broad day.”

“Ay, that is right. We must get our anchor and be off as soon as there is light to do it in. Doubloons may melt as well as flour, and are best cared for soon when cared for at all.”

“I shall see and give the call as soon as it is day. I hope, Captain Spike, I can take the liberty of an old ship-mate, however, and say one thing to you, which is this—look out for the Poughkeepsie, which is very likely to be on your heels when you least expect her.”

“That’s your way of thinking, is it, Jack. Well, I thank you, old one, for the hint, but have little fear of that craft. We’ve had our legs together, and I think the brig has the longest.”

As the captain said this, he gaped like a hound, and went into his state-room. Jack lingered on the quarter-deck, waiting to hear him fairly in his berth, when he made a sign



to Biddy, who had got as far aft as the galley, where she was secreted, to pass down into the cabin, as silently as possible. In a minute or two more, he moved forward, singing in a low, cracked voice, as was often his practice, and slowly made his way to the forecastle. Mulford was just beginning to think the fellow had changed his mind, and meant to stick by the brig, when the little, rotund figure of the assistant-steward was seen passing through the port, and to drop noiselessly on a thwart. Jack then moved to the bow, and cast off the painter, the head of the boat slowly falling off under the pressure of the breeze on that part of her mast and sail which rose above the hull of the *Swash*. Almost at the same moment, the mate let go the stern-fast, and the boat was free.

It required some care to set the sail without the canvas flapping. It was done, however, before the boat fairly took the breeze, when all was safe. In half a minute the wind struck the sail, and away the little craft started, passing swiftly ahead of the brig. Soon as far enough off, Mulford put up his helm and wore short round, bringing the boat's head to the northward, or in its proper direction; after which they flew along before the wind, which seemed to be increasing in force, with a velocity that really appeared to defy pursuit. All this time the brig lay in its silence and solitude, no one stirring on board her, and all, in fact, Biddy alone excepted, profoundly ignorant of what had just been passing alongside of her. Ten minutes of running off with a flowing sheet, caused the *Swash* to look indistinct and hazy again; in ten minutes more she was swallowed up, hull, spars, and all, in the gloom of night.

Mulford and Rose now felt something like that security, without the sense of which happiness itself is but an uneasy feeling, rendering the anticipations of evil the more painful by the magnitude of the stake. There they sat, now, in the stern-sheets by themselves, Jack Tier having placed himself near the bows of the boat, to look out for rocks, as well as to trim the craft. It was not long before Rose was leaning on Harry's shoulder, and ere an hour was past, she had fallen into a sweet sleep in that attitude, the young man having carefully covered her person with a capacious shawl, the same that had been used on the wreck. As for Jack, he maintained his post in silence, sitting with his arms crossed, and the hands thrust into the breast of his jacket, sailor fashion, a picture of nautical vigilance. It was some time after Rose had fallen asleep, that this singular being spoke for the first time.

"Keep her away a bit, maty," he said, "keep her away, half a point or so. She's been travelin' like a racer since we left the brig; and yonder's the first streak of day."

"By the time we have been running," observed Mulford, "I should think we must be getting near the northern side of the reef."



“All of that, sir, depend on it. Here’s a rock close aboard on us, to which we’re comin’ fast—just off here, on our weather-bow, that looks to me like the place where you landed a’ter that swim, and where we had stowed ourselves when Stephen Spike made us out, and gave chase.”

“It is surprising to me, Jack, that you should have any fancy to stick by a man of Spike’s character. He is a precious rascal, as we all can see, now, and you are rather an honest sort of fellow.”

“Do you love the young woman there, that’s lying in your arms, as it might be, and whom you say you wish to marry.”

“The question is a queer one, but it is easily answered. More than my life, Jack.”

“Well, how happens it that you succeed, when the world has so many other young men who might please her as well as yourself.”

“It may be that no other loves her as well, and she has had the sagacity to discover it.”

“Quite likely. So it is with me and Stephen Spike. I fancy a man whom other folk despise and condemn. Why I stand by him is my own secret; but stand by him I do and will.”

“This is all very strange, after your conduct on the island, and your conduct to-night. I shall not disturb your secret, however, Jack, but leave you to enjoy it by yourself. Is this the rock of which you spoke, that we are now passing?”

“The same; and there’s the spot in which we was stowed when they made us out from the brig; and here-away, a cable’s length, more or less, the wreck of that Mexican craft must lie.”

“What is that rising above the water, thereaway, Jack; more on our weather-beam?”

“I see what you mean, sir; it looks like a spar. By George! there’s two on ’em; and they do seem to be the schooner’s masts.”

Sure enough! a second look satisfied Mulford that two mast-heads were out of water, and that within a hundred yards of the place the boat was running past. Standing on a short distance, or far enough to give himself room, the mate put his helm down, and tacked the boat. The flapping of the sail, and the little movement of shifting over the sheet, awoke Rose, who was immediately apprized of the discovery. As soon as round, the boat went glancing up to the spars, and presently was riding by one, Jack Tier having caught hold of a topmast-shroud, when Mulford let fly his sheet again, and luffed short up to the spot. By this time the increasing light was sufficiently strong to render objects distinct, when near by, and no doubt remained any longer in the mind of Mulford about the two mast-heads being those of the unfortunate Mexican schooner.



“Well, of all I have ever seen I’ve never see’d the like of this afore!” exclaimed Jack. “When we left this here craft, sir, you’ll remember, she had almost turned turtle, laying over so far as to bring her upper coamings under water; now she stands right side up, as erect as if docked! My navigation can’t get along with this, Mr. Mulford, and it does seem like witchcraft.”

“It is certainly a very singular incident, Jack, and I have been trying to come at its causes.”

“Have you succeeded, Harry?” asked Rose, by this time wide awake, and wondering like the others.

“It must have happened in this wise. The wreck was abandoned by us some little distance out here, to windward. The schooner’s masts, of course, pointed to leeward, and when she drifted in here, they have first touched on a shelving rock, and as they have been shoved up, little by little, they have acted as levers to right the hull, until the cargo has shifted back into its proper berth, which has suddenly set the vessel up again.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Jack, “all that might have happened had she been above water, or any part of her above water; but you’ll remember, maty, that soon after we left her she went down.”

“Not entirely. The wreck settled in the water no faster after we had left it, than it had done before. It continued to sink, inch by inch, as the air escaped, and no faster after it had gone entirely out of sight than before; not as fast, indeed, as the water became denser the lower it got. The great argument against my theory, is the fact, that after the hull got beneath the surface, the wind could not act on it. This is true in one sense, however, and not in another. The waves, or the pressure of the water produced by the wind, might act on the hull for some time after we ceased to see it. But the currents have set the craft in here, and the hull floating always, very little force would cant the craft. If the rock were shelving and slippery, I see no great difficulty in the way; and the barrels may have been so lodged, that a trifle would set them rolling back again, each one helping to produce a change that would move another. As for the ballast, that, I am certain, could not shift, for it was stowed with great care. As the vessel righted, the air still in her moved, and as soon as the water permitted, it escaped by the hatches, when the craft went down, as a matter of course. This air may have aided in bringing the hull upright by its movements in the water.”

This was the only explanation to which the ingenuity of Mulford could help him, under the circumstances, and it may have been the right one, or not. There lay the



schooner, however, in some five or six fathoms of water, with her two topmasts, and lower mast-heads out of the element, as upright as if docked! It may all have occurred as the mate fancied, or the unusual incident may have been owing to some of the many mysterious causes which baffle inquiry, when the agents are necessarily hidden from examination.

“Spike intends to come and look for this wreck, you tell me, Jack; in the hope of getting at the doubloons it contains?” said Mulford; when the boat had lain a minute or two longer, riding by the mast-head.

“Ay, ay, sir; that’s his notion, sir, and he’ll be in a great stew, as soon as he turns out, which must be about this time, and finds me missing; for I was to pilot him to the spot.”

“He’ll want no pilot now. It will be scarcely possible to pass anywhere near this and not see these spars. But this discovery almost induces me to change my own plans. What say you, Rose? We have now reached the northern side of the reef, when it is time to haul close by the wind, if we wish to beat up to Key West. There is a moral certainty, however, that the sloop-of-war is somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Dry Tortugas, which are much the most easily reached, being to leeward. We might run down to the light-house by mid-day, while it is doubtful if we could reach the town until to-morrow morning. I should like exceedingly to have five minutes conversation with the commander of the Poughkeepsie.”

“Ay, to let him know where he will be likely to fall in with the *Molly Swash* and her traitor master, Stephen Spike,” cried Jack Tier. “Never mind, maty; let ’em come on; both the *Molly* and her master have got long legs and clean heels. Stephen Spike will show ’em how to thread the channels of a reef.”

“It is amazing to me, Jack, that you should stand by your old captain in feeling, while you are helping to thwart him, all you can, in his warmest wishes.”

“He’s a willian!” muttered Jack—“a reg’lar willian is Stephen Spike!”

“If a villain, why do you so evidently wish to keep him out of the hands of the law? Let him be captured and punished, as his crimes require.”

“Men’s willians, all round,” still muttered Jack. “Hark’e, Mr. Mulford, I’ve sailed in the brig longer than you, and know’d her in her comeliest and best days—when she was young, and blooming, and lovely to the eye, as the young creature at your side—and it would go to my heart to have anything happen to her. Then, I’ve know’d Stephen a long time, too, and old shipmates get a feelin’ for each other, sooner or later. I tell you now, honestly, Mr. Mulford, Captain Adam Mull shall never make a prisoner of Stephen Spike, if I can prevent it.”



The mate laughed at this sally, but Rose appeared anxious to change the conversation, and she managed to open a discussion on the subject of the course it might be best to steer. Mulford had several excellent reasons to urge for wishing to run down to the islets, all of which, with a single exception, he laid before his betrothed. The concealed reason was one of the strongest of them all, as usually happens when there is a reason to conceal, but of that he took care to say nothing. The result was an acquiescence on the part of Rose, whose consent was yielded more to the influence of one particular consideration than to all the rest united. That one was this: Harry had pointed out to her the importance to himself of his appearing early to denounce the character and movements of the brig, lest, through his former situation in her, his own conduct might be seriously called in question.

As soon as the matter was determined, Jack was told to let go his hold, the sheet was drawn aft, and away sped the boat. No sooner did Mulford cause the little craft to keep away than it almost flew, as if conscious it were bound to its proper home, skimming swiftly over the waves, like a bird returning eagerly to its nest. An hour later the party breakfasted. While at this meal, Jack Tier pointed out to the mate a white speck, in the south-eastern board, which he took to be the brig coming through the passage, on her way to the wreck.

“No matter,” returned the mate. “Though we can see her, she cannot see us. There is that much advantage in our being small, Rose, if it do prevent our taking exercise by walking the deck.”

Soon after, Mulford made a very distant sail in the north-western board, which he hoped might turn out to be the Poughkeepsie. It was but another speck, but its position was somewhat like that in which he had expected to meet the sloop-of-war. The two vessels were so far apart that one could not be seen from the other, and there was little hope that the Poughkeepsie would detect Spike at his toil on the wreck; but the mate fully expected that the ship would go into the anchorage, among the islets, in order to ascertain what had become of the schooner. If she did not go in herself, she would be almost certain to send in a boat.

The party from the brigantine had run down before the wind more than two hours before the light-house began to show itself, just rising out of the waves. This gave them the advantage of a beacon, Mulford having steered hitherto altogether by the sun, the direction of the wind, and the treading of the reef. Now he had his port in sight, it being his intention to take possession of the dwelling of the light-house keeper, and to remain in it, until a favourable opportunity occurred to remove Rose to Key West. The young



man had also another important project in view, which it will be in season to mention as it reaches the moment of its fulfillment.

The rate of sailing of the light-house boat, running before a brisk trade wind, could not be much less than nine miles in the hour. About eleven o'clock, therefore, the lively craft shot through one of the narrow channels of the islets, and entered the haven. In a few minutes all three of the adventurers were on the little wharf where the light-house people were in the habit of landing. Rose proceeded to the house, while Harry and Jack remained to secure the boat. For the latter purpose a sort of slip, or little dock, had been made, and when the boat was hauled into it, it lay so snug that not only was the craft secure from injury, but it was actually hid from the view of all but those who stood directly above it.

“This is a snug berth for the boat, Jack,” observed the mate, when he had hauled it into the place mentioned, “and by unstepping the mast, a passer-by would not suspect such a craft of lying in it. Who knows what occasion there may be for concealment, and I’ll e’en do that thing.”

To a casual listener, Harry, in unstepping the mast, might have seemed influenced merely by a motiveless impulse; but, in truth, a latent suspicion of Jack’s intentions instigated him, and as he laid the mast, sprit and sail on the thwarts, he determined, in his own mind, to remove them all to some other place, as soon as an opportunity for doing so unobserved should occur. He and Jack now followed Rose to the house.

The islets were found deserted and tenantless. Not a human being had entered the house since Rose left it, the evening she had remained so long ashore, in company with her aunt and the Señor Montefalderon. This our heroine knew from the circumstance of finding a slight fastening of the outer door in the precise situation in which she had left it with her own hands. At first a feeling of oppression and awe prevailed with both Harry and Rose, when they recollected the fate of those who had so lately been tenants of the place; but this gradually wore off, and each soon got to be more at home. As for Jack, he very coolly rummaged the lockers, as he called the drawers and closets of the place, and made his preparations for cooking a very delicious repast, in which callipash and callipee were to be material ingredients. The necessary condiments were easily enough found in that place, turtle being a common dish there, and it was not long before steams that might have quickened the appetite of an alderman filled the kitchen. Rose rummaged, too, and found a clean table-cloth, plates, glasses, bowls, spoons, and knives; in a word, all that was necessary to spread a plain but plentiful board. While all this was doing, Harry took some fishing-tackle, and proceeded to a favourable spot



among the rocks. In twenty minutes he returned with a fine mess of that most delicious little fish that goes by the very unpoetical name of “hog-fish,” from the circumstance of its giving a grunt not unlike that of a living porker, when rudely drawn from its proper element. Nothing was now wanting to not only a comfortable, but to what was really a most epicurian meal, and Jack just begged the lovers to have patience for an hour or so, when he promised them dishes that even New York could not furnish.

Harry and Rose first retired to pay a little attention to their dress, and then they joined each other in a walk. The mate had found some razors, and was clean shaved. He had also sequestered a shirt, and made some other little additions to his attire, that contributed to give him the appearance of being, that which he really was, a very gentleman-like looking young sailor. Rose had felt no necessity for taking liberties with the effects of others, though a good deal of female attire was found in the dwelling. As was afterward ascertained, a family ordinarily dwelt there, but most of it had gone to Key West, on a visit, at the moment when the man and boy left in charge had fallen into the hands of the Mexicans, losing their lives in the manner mentioned.

While walking together, Harry opened his mind to Rose, on the subject which lay nearest to his heart, and which had been at the bottom of this second visit to the islets of the Dry Tortugas. During the different visits of Wallace to the brig, the boat’s crew of the Poughkeepsie had held more or less discourse with the people of the *Swash*. This usually happens on such occasions, and although Spike had endeavoured to prevent it, when his brig lay in this bay, he had not been entirely successful. Such discourse is commonly jocular, and sometimes witty; every speech, coming from which side it may, ordinarily commencing with “shipmate,” though the interlocutors never saw each other before that interview. In one of the visits an allusion was made to cargo, when “the pretty gal aft,” was mentioned as being a part of the cargo of the *Swash*. In answer to this remark, the wit of the Poughkeepsie had told the brig’s man, “you had better send her on board us, for we carry a chaplain, a regular-built one, that will be a bishop some day or other, perhaps, and we can get her spliced to one of our young officers.” This remark had induced the sailor of the *Molly* to ask if a sloop-of-war really carried such a piece of marine luxury as a chaplain, and the explanation given went to say that the clergyman in question did not properly belong to the Poughkeepsie, but was to be put on board a frigate, as soon as they fell in with one that he named. Now, all this Mulford overheard, and he remembered it at a moment when it might be of use. Situated as he and Rose were, he felt the wisdom and propriety of their being united, and his present object was to persuade his companion to be of the same way of thinking. He



doubted not that the sloop-of-war would come in, ere long, perhaps that very day, and he believed it would be an easy matter to induce her chaplain to perform the ceremony. America is a country in which every facility exists, with the fewest possible impediments, to getting married; and, we regret to be compelled to add, to getting unmarried also. There are no banns, no licenses, no consent of parents even, usually necessary, and persons who are of the age of discretion, which, as respects females and matrimony, is a very tender age indeed, may be married, if they see fit, almost without form or ceremony. There existed, therefore, no legal impediment to the course Mulford desired to take; and his principal, if not his only difficulty, would be with Rose. Over her scruples he hoped to prevail, and not without reason, as the case he could and did present, was certainly one of a character that entitled him to be heard with great attention.

In the first place, Mrs. Budd had approved of the connection, and it was understood between them, that the young people were to be united at the first port in which a clergyman of their own persuasion could be found, and previously to reaching home. This had been the aunt's own project, for, weak and silly as she was, the relict had a woman's sense of the proprieties. It had occurred to her that it would be more respectable to make the long journey which lay before them, escorted by a nephew and husband, than escorted by even an accepted lover. It is true that she had never anticipated a marriage in a light-house, and under the circumstances in which Rose was now placed, though it might be more reputable that her niece should quit the islets as the wife of Harry than as his betrothed. Then Mulford still apprehended Spike. In that remote part of the world, almost beyond the confines of society, it was not easy to foretell what claims he might set up, in the event of his meeting them there. Armed with the authority of a husband, Mulford could resist him, in any such case, with far better prospects of success than if he should appear only in the character of a suitor.

Rose listened to these arguments, ardently and somewhat eloquently put, as a girl of her years and habits would be apt to listen to a favoured lover. She was much too sincere to deny her own attachment, which the events of the last few days had increased almost to intenseness, so apt is our tenderness to augment in behalf of those for whom we feel solicitude; and her judgment told her that the more sober part of Harry's reasoning was entitled to consideration. As his wife, her situation would certainly be much less equivocal and awkward, than while she bore a different name, and was admitted to be a single woman, and it might yet be weeks before the duty she owed her aunt would allow her to proceed to the north. But, after all, Harry prevailed more



through the influence of his hold on Rose's affections, as would have been the case with almost every other woman, than through any force of reasoning. He truly loved, and that made him eloquent when he spoke of love; sympathy in all he uttered being his great ally. When summoned to the house, by the call of Jack, who announced that the turtle-soup was ready, they returned with the understanding that the chaplain of the Poughkeepsie should unite them, did the vessel come in, and would the functionary mentioned consent to perform the ceremony.

"It would be awkward—nay, it would be distressing, Harry, to have him refuse," said the blushing Rose, as they walked slowly back to the house, more desirous to prolong their conversation than to partake of the bountiful provision of Jack Tier. The latter could not but be acceptable, nevertheless, to a young man like Mulford, who was in robust health, and who had fared so badly for the last eight-and-forty hours. When he sat down to the table, therefore, which was covered by a snow-white cloth, with smoking and most savoury viands on it, it will not be surprising if we say it was with a pleasure that was derived from one of the great necessities of our nature.

Sancho calls for benediction "on the man who invented sleep." It would have been more just to have asked this boon in behalf of him who invented eating and turtle-soup. The wearied fall into sleep, as it might be unwittingly; sometimes against their will, and often against their interests; while many a man is hungry without possessing the means of appeasing his appetite. Still more daily feel hunger without possessing turtle-soup. Certain persons impute this delicious compound to the genius of some London alderman, but we rather think unjustly. Aldermanic genius is easily excited and rendered active, no doubt, by strong appeals on such a theme, but our own experience inclines us to believe that the tropics usually send their inventions to the less fruitful regions of the earth along with their products. We have little doubt, could the fact be now ascertained, that it would be found turtle-soup was originally invented by just some such worthy as Jack Tier, who in filling his coppers to tickle the captain's appetite, had used all the condiments within his reach; ventured on a sort of Regent's punch; and, as the consequence, had brought forth the dish so often eulogized, and so well beloved. It is a little extraordinary that in Paris, the seat of gastronomy, one rarely, if ever, hears of or sees this dish; while in London it is to be met in almost as great abundance as in one of our larger commercial towns. But so it is, and we cannot say we much envy a cuisine its patés, and soufflets, and its à la this and à la thats, but which was never redolent with the odours of turtle-soup.



“Upon my word, Jack, you have made out famously with your dinner, or supper, whichever you may please to call it,” cried Mulford gaily, as he took his seat at table, after having furnished Rose with a chair. “Nothing appears to be wanting; but here is good pilot bread, potatoes even, and other little niceties, in addition to the turtle and the fish. These good people of the light seem to have lived comfortably, at any rate.”

“Why should they not, maty?” answered Jack, beginning to help to soup. “Living on one of these islets is like living afloat. Everything is laid in, as for an outward bound craft; then the reef must always furnish fish and turtle. I’ve overhauled the lockers pretty thoroughly, and find a plenty of stores to last us a month. Tea, sugar, coffee, bread, pickles, potatoes, onions, and all other knick-knacks.”

“The poor people who own these stores will be heavy-hearted enough when they come to learn the reason why we have been put in undisturbed possession of their property,” said Rose. “We must contrive some means of repaying them for such articles as we may use, Harry.”

“That’s easily enough done, Miss Rose. Drop one of the half-eagles in a tea-pot, or a mug, and they’ll be certain to fall in with it when they come back. Nothin’ is easier than to pay a body’s debts, when a body has the will and the means. Now, the worst enemy of Stephen Spike must own that his brig never quits port with unsettled bills. Stephen has his faults, like other mortals; but he has his good p’int, too.”

“Still praising Spike, my good Jack,” cried the mate, a little provoked at this pertinacity in the deputy-steward, in sticking to his ship and his shipmate. “I should have thought that you had sailed with him long enough to have found him out, and to wish never to put your foot in his cabin again.”

“Why, no, maty, a craft is a craft, and a body gets to like even the faults of one in which a body has gone through gales, and squalls, with a whole skin. I like the *Swash*, and, for sartain things I like her captain.”

“Meaning by that, it is your intention to get on board of the one, and to sail with the other, again, as soon as you can.”

“I do, Mr. Mulford, and make no bones in telling on’t. You know that I came here without wishing it.”

“Well, Jack, no one will attempt to control your movements, but you shall be left your own master. I feel it to be a duty, however, as one who may know more of the law than yourself, as well as more of Stephen Spike, to tell you that he is engaged in a treasonable commerce with the enemy, and that he, and all who voluntarily remain with him, knowing this fact, may be made to swing for it.”



“Then I’ll swing for it,” returned Jack, sullenly.

“There is a little obstinacy in this, my good fellow, and you must be reasoned out of it. I am under infinite obligations to you, Jack, and shall ever be ready to own them. Without you to sail the boat, I might have been left to perish on that rock,—for God only knows whether any vessel would have seen me in passing. Most of those who go through that passage keep the western side of the reef aboard, they tell me, on account of there being better water on that side of the channel, and the chance of a man’s being seen on a rock, by ships a league or two off, would be small indeed. Yes, Jack, I owe my life to you, and am proud to own it.”

“You owe it to Miss Rose, maty, who put me up to the enterprise, and who shared it with me.”

“To her I owe more than life,” answered Harry, looking at his beloved as she delighted in being regarded by him, “but even she, with all her wishes to serve me, would have been helpless without your skill in managing a boat. I owe also to your good-nature the happiness of having Rose with me at this moment; for without you she would not have come.”

“I’ll not deny it, maty—take another ladle-full of the soup, Miss Rosy: a quart of it wouldn’t hurt an infant—I’ll not deny it, Mr. Mulford—I know by the way you’ve got rid of the first bowl-full that you are ready for another, and there it is—I’ll not deny it, and all I can say is that you are heartily welcome to my services.”

“I thank you, Jack; but all this only makes me more desirous of being of use to you, now, when it’s in my power. I wish you to stick by me, and not to return to the *Swash*. As soon as I get to New York I shall build or buy a ship, and the berth of steward in her shall always be open to you.”

“Thank’e, maty; thank’e, with all my heart. It’s something to know that a port is open to leeward, and, though I cannot now accept your offer, the day may come when I shall be glad to do so.”

“If you like living ashore better, our house will always be ready to receive you. I should be glad to leave as handy a little fellow as yourself behind me whenever I went to sea. There are a hundred things in which you might be useful, and fully earn your biscuit, so as to have no qualms about eating the bread of idleness.”

“Thank’e, thank’e, maty,” cried Jack, dashing a tear out of his eye with the back of his hand, “thank’e, sir, from the bottom of my heart. The time may come, but not now. My papers is signed for this v’y’ge. Stephen Spike has a halter round his neck, as you say yourself, and it’s necessary for me to be there to look to’t. We all have our callin’s



and duties, and this is mine. I stick by the *Molly* and her captain until both are out of this scrape, or both are condemned. I know nothin' of treason; but if the law wants another victim, I must take my chance."

Mulford was surprised at this steadiness of Jack's, in what he thought a very bad cause, and he was quite as much surprised that Rose did not join him, in his endeavours to persuade the steward not to be so foolhardy, as to endeavour to go back to the brig. Rose did not, however; sitting silently eating her dinner the whole time, though she occasionally cast glances of interest at both the speakers the while. In this state of things the mate abandoned the attempt, for the moment, intending to return to the subject, after having had a private conference with his betrothed.

Notwithstanding the little drawback just related, that was a happy as well as a delicious repast. The mate did full justice to the soup, and afterward to the fish with the unpoetical name; and Rose ate more than she had done in the last three days. The habits of discipline prevented Jack from taking his seat at table, though pressed by both Rose and Harry to do so, but he helped himself to the contents of a bowl and did full justice to his own art, on one side. The little fellow was delighted with the praises that were bestowed on his dishes; and for the moment, the sea, its dangers, its tornadoes, wrecks and races, were all forgotten in the security and pleasures of so savoury a repast.

"Folk ashore don't know how sailors sometimes live," said Jack, holding a large spoon filled with the soup ready to plunge into a tolerably capacious mouth.

"Or how they sometimes starve," answered Rose. "Remember our own situation, less than forty-eight hours since!"

"All very true, Miss Rose; yet, you see, turtle-soup brings us up, a'ter all. Would you like a glass of wine, maty?"

"Very much indeed, Jack, after so luscious a soup; but wishing for it will not bring it here."

"That remains to be seen, sir. I call this a bottle of something that looks wery much like a wine."

"Claret, as I live! Why, where should light-house keepers get the taste for claret?"

"I've thought of that myself, Mr. Mulford, and have supposed that some of Uncle Sam's officers have brought the liquor to this part of the world. I understand a party on 'em was here surveyin' all last winter. It seems they come in the cool weather, and get their sights and measure their distances, and go home in the warm weather, and work out their traverses in the shade, as it might be."



“This seems likely, Jack; but, come whence it may it is welcome, and we will taste it.”

Mulford then drew the cork of this mild and grateful liquor, and helped his companions and himself. In this age of moral tours de force, one scarcely dare say anything favourable of a liquid that even bears the name of wine, or extol the shape of a bottle. It is truly the era of exaggeration. Nothing is treated in the old-fashioned, natural, common sense way. Virtue is no longer virtue, unless it get upon stilts; and, as for sin’s being confined to “transgression against the law of God,” audacious would be the wretch who should presume to limit the sway of the societies by any dogma so narrow! A man may be as abstemious as an anchorite and get no credit for it, unless “he sign the pledge,” or, signing the pledge, he may get fuddled in corners, and be cited as a miracle of sobriety. The test of morals is no longer in the abuse of the gifts of Providence, but in their use; prayers are deserting the closet for the corners of streets, and charity (not the giving of alms) has got to be so earnest in the demonstration of its nature, as to be pretty certain to “begin at home,” and to end where it begins. Even the art of mendacity has been aroused by the great progress which is making by all around it, and many manifest the strength of their ambition by telling ten lies where their fathers would have been satisfied with telling only one. This art has made an extraordinary progress within the last quarter of a century, aspiring to an ascendancy that was formerly conceded only to truth, until he who gains his daily bread by it has some such contempt for the sneaking wretch who does business on the small scale, as the slayer of his thousands in the field is known to entertain for him who kills only a single man in the course of a long life.

At the risk of damaging the reputations of our hero and heroine, we shall frankly aver the fact that both Harry and Rose partook of the vin de Bordeaux, a very respectable bottle of Medoc, by the way, which had been forgotten by Uncle Sam’s people, in the course of the preceding winter, agreeably to Jack Tier’s conjecture. One glass sufficed for Rose, and, contrary as it may be to all modern theory, she was somewhat the better for it; while the mate and Jack Tier quite half emptied the bottle, being none the worse. There they sat, enjoying the security and abundance which had succeeded to their late danger, happy in that security, happy in themselves, and happy in the prospects of a bright future. It was just as practicable for them to remain at the Dry Tortugas, as it was for the family which ordinarily dwelt at the light. The place was amply supplied with everything that would be necessary for their wants, for months to come, and Harry caused his betrothed to blush, as he whispered to her, should the chaplain arrive, he should delight in passing the honey-moon where they then were.



“I could tend the light,” he added, smiling, “which would be not only an occupation, but a useful occupation; you could read all those books from beginning to end, and Jack could keep us supplied with fish. By the way, master steward, are you in the humour for motion, so soon after your hearty meal?”

“Anything to be useful,” answered Jack, cheerfully.

“Then do me the favour to go up into the lantern of the light-house, and take a look for the sloop-of-war. If she’s in sight at all, you’ll find her off here to the northward; and while you are aloft you may as well make a sweep of the whole horizon. There hangs the light-house keeper’s glass, which may help your eyes, by stepping into the gallery outside of the lantern.”

Jack willingly complied, taking the glass and proceeding forthwith to the other building. Mulford had two objects in view in giving this commission to the steward. He really wished to ascertain what was the chance of seeing the Poughkeepsie, in the neighbourhood of the islets, and felt just that indisposition to move himself, that is apt to come over one who has recently made a very bountiful meal, while he also desired to have another private conversation with Rose.

A good portion of the time that Jack was gone, and he stayed quite an hour in the lantern, our lovers conversed as lovers are much inclined to converse; that is to say, of themselves, their feelings, and their prospects. Mulford told Rose of his hopes and fears, while he visited at the house of her aunt, previously to sailing, and the manner in which his suspicions had been first awakened in reference to the intentions of Spike—intentions, so far as they were connected with an admiration of his old commander’s niece, and possibly in connection also with the little fortune she was known to possess, but not in reference to the bold project to which he had, in fact, resorted. No distrust of the scheme finally put in practice had ever crossed the mind of the young mate, until he received the unexpected order, mentioned in our opening chapter, to prepare the brig for the reception of Mrs. Budd and her party. Harry confessed his jealousy of one youth whom he dreaded far more even than he had ever dreaded Spike, and whose apparent favour with Rose, and actual favour with her aunt, had given him many a sleepless night.

They next conversed of the future, which to them seemed full of flowers. Various were the projects started, discussed, and dismissed, between them, the last almost as soon as proposed. On one thing they were of a mind, as soon as proposed. Harry was to have a ship as quick as one could be purchased by Rose’s means, and the promised bride laughingly consented to make one voyage to Europe along with her husband.



“I wonder, dear Rose, my poverty has never presented any difficulties in the way of our union,” said Harry, sensibly touched with the free way his betrothed disposed of her own money in his behalf; “but neither you nor Mrs. Budd has ever seemed to think of the difference there is between us in this respect.”

“What is the trifle I possess, Harry, set in the balance against your worth? My aunt, as you say, has thought I might even be the gainer by the exchange.”

“I am sure I feel a thousand times indebted to Mrs. Budd—”

“Aunt Budd. You must learn to say, ‘my Aunt Budd,’ Mr. Harry Mulford, if you mean to live in peace with her unworthy niece.”

“Aunt Budd, then,” returned Harry, laughing, for the laugh came easily that evening; “Aunt Budd, if you wish it, Rose. I can have no objection to call any relative of yours, uncle or aunt.”

“I think we are intimate enough, now, to ask you a question or two, Harry, touching my aunt,” continued Rose, looking stealthily over her shoulder, as if apprehensive of being overheard. “You know how fond she is of speaking of the sea, and of indulging in nautical phrases?”

“Any one must have observed that, Rose,” answered the young man, gazing up at the wall, in order not to be compelled to look the beautiful creature before him in the eyes—“Mrs. Budd has very strong tastes that way.”

“Now tell me, Harry—that is, answer me frankly—I mean—she is not always right, is she?”

“Why, no; not absolutely so—that is, not absolutely always so—few persons are always right, you know.”

Rose remained silent and embarrassed for a moment; after which she pursued the discourse.

“But aunty does not know as much of the sea and of ships as she thinks she does?”

“Perhaps not. We all overrate our own acquirements. I dare say that even I am not as good a seaman as I fancy myself to be.”

“Even Spike admits that you are what he calls ‘a prime seaman.’ But it is not easy for a woman to get a correct knowledge of the use of all the strange, and sometimes uncouth, terms that you sailors use.”

“Certainly not, and for that reason I would rather you should never attempt it, Rose. We rough sons of the ocean would prefer to hear our wives make divers pretty blunders, rather than to be swaggering about like so many ‘old salts.’”

“Mr. Mulford! Does Aunt Budd swagger like an old salt?”



“Dearest Rose, I was not thinking of your aunt, but of you. Of you, as you are, feminine, spirited, lovely alike in form and character, and of you a graduate of the ocean, and full of its language and ideas.”

It was probable Rose was not displeased at this allusion to herself, for a smile struggled around her pretty mouth, and she did not look at all angry. After another short pause, she resumed the discourse.

“My aunt did not very clearly comprehend those explanations of yours about the time of day, and the longitude,” she said, “nor am I quite certain that I did myself.”

“You understood them far better than Mrs. Budd, Rose. Women are so little accustomed to think on such subjects at all, that it is not surprising they sometimes get confused. I do wish, however, that your aunt could be persuaded to be more cautious in the presence of strangers, on the subject of terms she does not understand.”

“I feared it might be so, Harry,” answered Rose, in a low voice, as if unwilling even he should know the full extent of her thoughts on this subject; “but my aunt’s heart is most excellent, though she may make mistakes occasionally, I owe her a great deal, if not absolutely my education, certainly my health and comfort through childhood, and more prudent, womanly advice than you may suppose, perhaps, since I have left school. How she became the dupe of Spike, indeed, is to me unaccountable; for in all that relates to health, she is, in general, both acute and skilful.”

“Spike is a man of more art than he appears to be to superficial observers. On my first acquaintance with him, I mistook him for a frank, fearless but well-meaning sailor, who loved hazardous voyages and desperate speculation—a sort of innocent gambler; but I have learned to know better. His means are pretty much reduced to his brig, and she is getting old, and can do but little more service. His projects are plain enough, now. By getting you into his power, he hoped to compel a marriage, in which case both your fortune and your aunt’s would contribute to repair his.”

“He might have killed me, but I never would have married him,” rejoined Rose, firmly. “Is not that Jack coming down the steps of the light-house?”

“It is. I find that fellow’s attachment to Spike very extraordinary, Rose. Can you, in any manner, account for it?”

Rose at first seemed disposed to reply. Her lips parted, as if about to speak, and closed again, as glancing her eyes toward the open door, she seemed to expect the appearance of the steward’s little, rotund form on its threshold, which held her tongue-tied. A brief interval elapsed, however, ere Jack actually arrived, and Rose, perceiving that Harry was curiously expecting her answer, said hurriedly—“It may be hatred, not attachment.”



The next instant Jack Tier entered the room. He had been gone rather more than an hour, not returning until just as the sun was about to set in a flame of fire.

“Well, Jack, what news from the Poughkeepsie?” demanded the mate. “You have been gone long enough to make sure of your errand. Is it certain that we are not to see the man-of-war’s-men to-night.”

“Whatever you see, my advice to you is to keep close, and to be on your guard,” answered Jack, evasively.

“I have little fear of any of Uncle Sam’s craft. A plain story, and an honest heart, will make all clear to a well-disposed listener. We have not been accomplices in Spike’s treasons, and cannot be made to answer for them.”

“Take my advice, maty, and be in no hurry to hail every vessel you see. Uncle Sam’s fellows may not always be at hand to help you. Do you not know that this island will be tabooed to seamen for some time to come?”

“Why so, Jack? The islet has done no harm, though others may have performed wicked deeds near it.”

“Two of the drowned men lie within a hundred yards of this spot, and sailors never go near new-made graves, if they can find any other place to resort to.”

“You deal in enigmas, Jack; and did I not know that you are very temperate, I might suspect that the time you have been gone has been passed in the company of a bottle of brandy.”

“That will explain my meanin’,” said Jack, laconically, pointing as he spoke seemingly at some object that was to be seen without.

The door of the house was wide open, for the admission of air. It faced the haven of the islets, and just as the mate’s eyes were turned to it, the end of a flying-jib-boom, with the sail down, and fluttering beneath it, was coming into the view. “The Poughkeepsie!” exclaimed Mulford, in delight, seeing all his hopes realized, while Rose blushed to the eyes. A pause succeeded, during which Mulford drew aside, keeping his betrothed in the back-ground, and as much out of sight as possible. The vessel was shooting swiftly into view, and presently all there could see it was the *Swash*.

