



# Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



## Part 2: Chapter 9

The trusting heart's repose, the paradise  
Of home, with all its loves, doth fate allow  
The crown of glory unto woman's brow.

—Mrs. Hemans.

It has again become necessary to advance the time; and we shall take the occasion thus offered to make a few explanations touching certain events which have been passed over without notice.

The reason why Captain Mull did not chase the yawl of the brig in the Poughkeepsie herself, was the necessity of waiting for his own boats that were endeavouring to regain the sloop-of-war. It would not have done to abandon them, inasmuch as the men were so much exhausted by the pull to windward, that when they reached the vessel all were relieved from duty for the rest of the day. As soon, however, as the other boats were hoisted in, or run up, the ship filled away, stood out of the passage and ran down to join the cutter of Wallace, which was endeavouring to keep its position, as much as possible, by making short tacks under close-reefed luggs.

Spike had been received on board the sloop-of-war, sent into her sick bay, and put under the care of the surgeon and his assistants. From the first, these gentlemen pronounced the hurt mortal. The wounded man was insensible most of the time, until the ship had beat up and gone into Key West, where he was transferred to the regular hospital, as has already been mentioned.

The wreckers went out the moment the news of the calamity of the *Swash* reached their ears. Some went in quest of the doubloons of the schooner, and others to pick up anything valuable that might be discovered in the neighbourhood of the stranded



brig. It may be mentioned here, that not much was ever obtained from the brigantine, with the exception of a few spars, the sails, and a little rigging; but, in the end, the schooner was raised, by means of the chain Spike had placed around her, the cabin was ransacked, and the doubloons were recovered. As there was no one to claim the money, it was quietly divided among the conscientious citizens present at its re-visiting “the glimpses of the moon,” making gold plenty.

The doubloons in the yawl would have been lost but for the sagacity of Mulford. He too well knew the character of Spike to believe he would quit the brig without taking the doubloons with him. Acquainted with the boat, he examined the little locker in the stern-sheets, and found the two bags, one of which was probably the lawful property of Captain Spike, while the other, in truth, belonged to the Mexican government. The last contained the most gold, but the first amounted to a sum that our young mate knew to be very considerable. Rose had made him acquainted with the sex of Jack Tier since their own marriage; and he at once saw that the claims of this uncouth wife, who was so soon to be a widow, to the gold in question, might prove to be as good in law, as they unquestionably were in morals. On representing the facts of the case to Captain Mull and the legal functionaries at Key West, it was determined to relinquish this money to the heirs of Spike, as, indeed, they must have done under process, there being no other claimant. These doubloons, however, did not amount to the full price of the flour and powder that composed the cargo of the *Swash*. The cargo had been purchased with Mexican funds; and all that Spike or his heirs could claim, was the high freight for which he had undertaken the delicate office of transporting those forbidden articles, contraband of war, to the Dry Tortugas.

Mulford by this time was high in the confidence and esteem of all on board the Poughkeepsie. He had frankly explained his whole connexion with Spike, not even attempting to conceal the reluctance he had felt to betray the brig after he had fully ascertained the fact of his commander’s treason. The manly gentlemen with whom he was now brought in contact entered into his feelings, and admitted that it was an office no one could desire, to turn against the craft in which he sailed. It is true, they could not and would not be traitors, but Mulford had stopped far short of this; and the distinction between such a character and that of an informer was wide enough to satisfy all their scruples.

Then Rose had the greatest success with the gentlemen of the Poughkeepsie. Her youth, beauty, and modesty, told largely in her favour; and the simple, womanly affection she unconsciously betrayed in behalf of Harry, touched the heart of every



observer. When the intelligence of her aunt's fate reached her, the sorrow she manifested was so profound and natural, that every one sympathized with her grief. Nor would she be satisfied unless Mulford would consent to go in search of the bodies. The latter knew the hopelessness of such an excursion, but he could not refuse to comply. He was absent on that melancholy duty, therefore, at the moment of the scene related in our last chapter, and did not return until after that which we are now about to lay before the reader. Mrs. Budd, Bidy, and all of those who perished after the yawl got clear of the reef, were drowned in deep water, and no more was ever seen of any of them; or, if wreckers did pass them, they did not stop to bury the dead. It was different, however, with those, who were first sacrificed to Spike's selfishness. They were drowned on the reef, and Harry did actually recover the bodies of the Señor Montefalderon, and of Josh, the steward. They had washed upon a rock that is bare at low water. He took them both to the Dry Tortugas, and had them interred along with the other dead at that place. Don Juan was placed side by side with his unfortunate countryman, the master of his equally unfortunate schooner.

While Harry was absent and thus employed, Rose wept much and prayed more. She would have felt herself almost alone in the world, but for the youth to whom she had so recently, less than a week before, plighted her faith in wedlock. That new tie, it is true, was of sufficient importance to counteract many of the ordinary feelings of her situation; and she now turned to it as the one which absorbed most of the future duties of her life. Still she missed the kindness, the solicitude, even the weaknesses of her aunt; and the terrible manner in which Mrs. Budd had perished, made her shudder with horror whenever she thought of it. Poor Bidy, too, came in for her share of the regrets. This faithful creature, who had been in the relict's service ever since Rose's infancy, had become endeared to her, in spite of her uncouth manners and confused ideas, by the warmth of her heart, and the singular truth of her feelings. Bidy, of all her family, had come to America, leaving behind her not only brothers and sisters, but parents living. Each year did she remit to the last a moiety of her earnings, and many a half-dollar that had come from Rose's pretty little hand, had been converted into gold, and forwarded on the same pious errand to the green island of her nativity. Ireland, unhappy country! At this moment what are not the dire necessities of thy poor! Here, from the midst of abundance, in a land that God has blessed in its productions far beyond the limits of human wants, a land in which famine was never known, do we at this moment hear thy groans, and listen to tales of suffering that to us seem almost incredible. In the midst of these chilling narratives, our eyes fall on an appeal to the English nation, that appears



in what it is the fashion of some to term the first journal of Europe (!) in behalf of thy suffering people. A worthy appeal to the charity of England seldom fails; but it seems to us that one sentiment of this might have been altered, if not spared. The English are asked to be “forgetful of the past,” and to come forward to the relief of their suffering fellow-subjects. We should have written “mindful of the past,” in its stead. We say this in charity, as well as in truth. We come of English blood, and if we claim to share in all the ancient renown of that warlike and enlightened people, we are equally bound to share in the reproaches that original misgovernment has inflicted on thee. In this latter sense, then, thou hast a right to our sympathies, and they are not withheld.

As has been already said, we now advance the time eight-and-forty hours, and again transfer the scene to that room in the hospital which was occupied by Spike. The approaches of death, during the interval just named, had been slow but certain. The surgeons had announced that the wounded man could not possibly survive the coming night; and he himself had been made sensible that his end was near. It is scarcely necessary to add that Stephen Spike, conscious of his vigour and strength, in command of his brig, and bent on the pursuits of worldly gains, or of personal gratification, was a very different person from him who now lay stretched on his pallet in the hospital of Key West, a dying man. By the side of his bed still sat his strange nurse, less peculiar in appearance, however, than when last seen by the reader.

Rose Budd had been ministering to the ungainly externals of Jack Tier. She now wore a cap, thus concealing the short, grey bristles of hair, and lending to her countenance a little of that softness which is a requisite of female character. Some attention had also been paid to the rest of her attire; and Jack was, altogether, less repulsive in her exterior than when, unaided, she had attempted to resume the proper garb of her sex. Use and association, too, had contributed a little to revive her woman’s nature, if we may so express it, and she had begun, in particular, to feel the sort of interest in her patient which we all come in time to entertain toward any object of our especial care. We do not mean that Jack had absolutely ever ceased to love her husband; strange as it may seem, such had not literally been the case; on the contrary, her interest in him and in his welfare had never ceased, even while she saw his vices and detested his crimes; but all we wish to say here is, that she was getting, in addition to the long-enduring feelings of a wife, some of the interest of a nurse.

During the whole time which had elapsed between Jack’s revealing her true character, and the moment of which we are now writing, Spike had not once spoken to his wife. Often had she caught his eyes intently riveted on her, when he would turn



them away, as she feared, in distaste; and once or twice he groaned deeply, more like a man who suffered mental than bodily pain. Still the patient did not speak once in all the time mentioned. We should be representing poor Jack as possessing more philosophy, or less feeling, than the truth would warrant, were we to say that she was not hurt at this conduct in her husband.

On the contrary, she felt it deeply; and more than once it had so far subdued her pride, as to cause her bitterly to weep. This shedding of tears, however, was of service to Jack in one sense, for it had the effect of renewing old impressions, and in a certain way, of reviving the nature of her sex within her—a nature which had been sadly weakened by her past life.

But the hour had at length come when this long and painful silence was to be broken. Jack and Rose were alone with the patient, when the last again spoke to his wife.

“*Molly—poor Molly!*” said the dying man, his voice continuing full and deep to the last, “what a sad time you must have had of it after I did you that wrong!”

“It is hard upon a woman, Stephen, to turn her out, helpless, on a cold and selfish world,” answered Jack, simply, much too honest to affect a reserve she did not feel.

“It was hard, indeed; may God forgive me for it, as I hope ye do, *Molly.*”

No answer was made to this appeal; and the invalid looked anxiously at his wife. The last sat at her work, which had now got to be less awkward to her, with her eyes bent on her needle,—her countenance rigid, and, so far as the eye could discern, her feelings unmoved.

“Your husband speaks to you, Jack Tier,” said Rose, pointedly.

“May yours never have occasion to speak to you, Rose Budd, in the same way,” was the solemn answer. “I do not flatter myself that I ever was as comely as you, or that yonder poor dying wretch was a Harry Mulford in his youth; but we were young and happy, and respected once, and loved each other, yet you see what it’s all come to!”

Rose was silenced, though she had too much tenderness in behalf of her own youthful and manly bridegroom to dread a fate similar to that which had overtaken poor Jack. Spike now seemed disposed to say something, and she went to the side of his bed, followed by her companion, who kept a little in the back-ground, as if unwilling to let the emotion she really felt be seen, and, perhaps, conscious that her ungainly appearance did not aid her in recovering the lost affections of her husband.

“I have been a very wicked man, I fear,” said Spike, earnestly.

“There are none without sin,” answered Rose. “Place your reliance on the mediation of the Son of God, and sins even far deeper than yours may be pardoned.”





The captain stared at the beautiful speaker, but self-indulgence, the incessant pursuit of worldly and selfish objects for forty years, and the habits of a life into which the thought of God and the dread hereafter never entered, had encased his spiritual being in a sort of brazen armour, through which no ordinary blow of conscience could penetrate. Still he had fearful glimpses of recent events, and his soul, hanging as it was over the abyss of eternity, was troubled.

“What has become of your aunt?” half whispered Spike—“my old captain’s widow. She ought to be here; and Don Wan Montezuma—where is he?”

Rose turned aside to conceal her tears—but no one answered the questions of the dying man. Then a gleaming of childhood shot into the recollection of Spike, and, clasping his hands, he tried to pray. But, like others who have lived without any communication with their Creator through long lives of apathy to his existence and laws, thinking only of the present time, and daily, hourly sacrificing principles and duty to the narrow interests of the moment, he now found how hard it is to renew communications with a being who has been so long neglected. The fault lay in himself, however, for a gracious ear was open, even over the death-bed of Stephen Spike, could that rude spirit only bring itself to ask for mercy in earnestness and truth. As his companions saw his struggles, they left him for a few minutes to his own thoughts.

“*Molly*,” Spike at length uttered, in a faint tone, the voice of one conscious of being very near his end, “I hope you will forgive me, *Molly*. I know you must have a hard, hard time of it.”

“It is hard for a woman to unsex herself, Stephen; to throw off her very nature, as it might be, and to turn man.”

“It has changed you sadly—even your speech is altered. Once your voice was soft and womanish—more like that of Rose Budd’s than it is now.”

“I speak as they speak among whom I’ve been forced to live. The fore-castle and steward’s pantry, Stephen Spike, are poor schools to send women to learn language in.”

“Try and forget it all, poor *Molly*! Say to me, so that I can hear you, ‘I forget and forgive, Stephen.’ I am afraid God will not pardon my sins, which begin to seem dreadful to me, if my own wife refuse to forget and forgive, on my dying bed.”

Jack was much mollified by this appeal. Her interest in her offending husband had never been entirely extinguished. She had remembered him, and often with woman’s kindness, in all her wanderings and sufferings, as the preceding parts of our narrative must show; and though resentment had been mingled with the grief and mortification she felt at finding how much he still submitted to Rose’s superior charms, in a breast



as really generous and humane as that of Jack Tier's, such a feeling was not likely to endure in the midst of a scene like that she was now called to witness. The muscles of her countenance twitched, the hard-looking, tanned face began to lose its sternness, and every way she appeared like one profoundly disturbed.

"Turn to Him whose goodness and mercy may serve you, Stephen," she said, in a milder and more feminine tone than she had used now for years, making her more like herself than either her husband or Rose had seen her since the commencement of the late voyage; "my sayin' that I forget and forgive cannot help a man on his death-bed."

"It will settle my mind, *Molly*, and leave me freer to turn my thoughts to God."

Jack was much affected, more by the countenance and manner of the sufferer, perhaps, than by his words. She drew nearer to the side of her husband's pallet, knelt, took his hands, and said solemnly,

"Stephen Spike, from the bottom of my heart, I do forgive you; and I shall pray to God that he will pardon your sins as freely and more mercifully than I now pardon all, and try to forget all that you have done to me."

Spike clasped his hands, and again he tried to pray; but the habits of a whole life are not to be thrown off at will; and he who endeavours to regain, in his extremity, the moments that have been lost, will find, in bitter reality, that he has been heaping mountains on his own soul, by the mere practice of sin, which were never laid there by the original fall of his race. Jack, however, had disburthened her spirit of a load that had long oppressed it, and, burying her face in the rug, she wept.

"I wish, *Molly*," said the dying man, several minutes later, "I wish I had never seen the brig. Until I got that craft, no thought of wronging human being ever crossed my mind."

"It was the Father of Lies that tempts all to do evil, Stephen, and not the brig which caused the sins."

"I wish I could live a year longer—only one year; that is not much to ask for a man who is not yet sixty."

"It is hopeless, poor Stephen. The surgeons say you cannot live one day."

Spike groaned—for the past, blended fearfully with the future, gleamed on his conscience with a brightness that appalled him. And what is that future, which is to make us happy or miserable through an endless vista of time? Is it not composed of an existence, in which conscience, released from the delusions and weaknesses of the body, sees all in its true colours, appreciates all, and punishes all? Such an existence would make every man the keeper of the record of his own transgressions, even to the



most minute exactness. It would of itself mete out perfect justice, since the sin would be seen amid its accompanying facts, every aggravating or extenuating circumstance. Each man would be strictly punished according to his talents. As no one is without sin, it makes the necessity of an atonement indispensable, and, in its most rigid interpretation, it exhibits the truth of the scheme of salvation in the clearest colours. The soul, or conscience, that can admit the necessary degree of faith in that atonement, and in admitting, feels its efficacy, throws the burthen of its own transgressions away, and remains for ever in the condition of its original existence, pure, and consequently happy.

We do not presume to lay down a creed on this mighty and mysterious matter, in which all have so deep an interest, and concerning which so very small a portion of the human race think much, or think with any clearness when it does become the subject of their passing thoughts at all. We too well know our own ignorance to venture on dogmas which it has probably been intended that the mind of man should not yet grapple with and comprehend. To return to our subject.

Stephen Spike was now made to feel the incubus-load, which perseverance in sin heaps on the breast of the reckless offender. What was the most grievous of all, his power to shake off this dead weight was diminished in precisely the same proportion as the burthen was increased, the moral force of every man lessening in a very just ratio to the magnitude of his delinquencies. Bitterly did this deep offender struggle with his conscience, and little did his half-unsexed wife know how to console or aid him. Jack had been superficially instructed in the dogmas of her faith, in childhood and youth, as most persons are instructed in what are termed Christian communities—had been made to learn the Catechism, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed—and had been left to set up for herself on this small capital, in the great concern of human existence, on her marriage and entrance on the active business of life. When the manner in which she had passed the last twenty years is remembered, no one can be surprised to learn that Jack was of little assistance to her husband in his extremity. Rose made an effort to administer hope and consolation, but the terrible nature of the struggle she witnessed, induced her to send for the chaplain of the Poughkeepsie. This divine prayed with the dying man; but even he, in the last moments of the sufferer, was little more than a passive but shocked witness of remorse, suspended over the abyss of eternity in hopeless dread. We shall not enter into the details of the revolting scene, but simply add that curses, blasphemy, tremulous cries for mercy, agonized entreaties to be advised, and sullen defiance, were all strangely and fearfully blended. In the midst of one of





these revolting paroxysms, Spike breathed his last. A few hours later, his body was interred in the sands of the shore. It may be well to say in this place, that the hurricane of 1846, which is known to have occurred only a few months later, swept off the frail covering, and that the body was washed away to leave its bones among the wrecks and relics of the Florida Reef.

Mulford did not return from his fruitless expedition in quest of the remains of Mrs. Budd, until after the death and interment of Spike. As nothing remained to be done at Key West, he and Rose accompanied by Jack Tier, took passage for Charleston in the first convenient vessel that offered. Two days before they sailed, the Poughkeepsie went out to cruise in the Gulf, agreeably to her general orders. The evening previously Captain Mull, Wallace, and the chaplain, passed with the bridegroom and bride, when the matter of the doubloons found in the boat was discussed. It was agreed that Jack Tier should have them; and into her hands the bag was now placed. On this occasion, to oblige the officers, Jack went into a narrative of all she had seen and suffered, from the moment when abandoned by her late husband down to that when she found him again. It was a strange account, and one filled with surprising adventures. In most of the vessels in which she had served, Jack had acted in the steward's department, though she had frequently done duty as a fore-mast hand. In strength and skill she admitted that she had often failed; but in courage, never. Having been given reason to think her husband was reduced to serving in a vessel of war, she had shipped on board a frigate bound to the Mediterranean, and had actually made a whole cruise as a ward-room boy on that station. While thus employed, she had met with two of the gentlemen present; Captain Mull and Mr. Wallace. The former was then first-lieutenant of the frigate, and the latter a passed-midshipman; and in these capacities both had been well known to her. As the name she then bore was the same as that under which she now "hailed," these officers were soon made to recollect her, though Jack was no longer the light, trim-built lad he had then appeared to be. Neither of the gentlemen named had made the whole cruise in the ship, but each had been promoted and transferred to another craft, after being Jack's shipmate rather more than a year. This information greatly facilitated the affair of the doubloons.

From Charleston the travellers came north by rail-road. Harry made several stops by the way, in order to divert the thoughts of his beautiful young bride from dwelling too much on the fate of her aunt. He knew that home would revive all these recollections painfully, and wished to put off the hour of their return, until time had a little weakened Rose's regrets. For this reason, he passed a whole week in



Washington, though it was a season of the year that the place is not in much request. Still, Washington is scarce a town, at any season. It is much the fashion to deride the American capital, and to treat it as a place of very humble performance with very sounding pretensions. Certainly, Washington has very few of the peculiarities of a great European capital, but few as these are, they are more than belong to any other place in this country. We now allude to the distinctive characteristics of a capital, and not to a mere concentration of houses and shops within a given space. In this last respect, Washington is much behind fifty other American towns, even while it is the only place in the whole republic which possesses specimens of architecture, on a scale approaching that of the higher classes of the edifices of the old world. It is totally deficient in churches, and theatres, and markets; or those it does possess are, in an architectural sense, not at all above the level of village or countrytown pretensions, but one or two of its national edifices do approach the magnificence and grandeur of the old world. The new Treasury Buildings are unquestionably, on the score of size, embellishments and finish, the American edifice that comes nearest to first class architecture on the other side of the Atlantic. The Capitol comes next, though it can scarce be ranked, relatively, as high. As for the White House, it is every way sufficient for its purposes and the institutions; and now that its grounds are finished, and the shrubbery and trees begin to tell, one sees about it something that is not unworthy of its high uses and origin. Those grounds, which so long lay a reproach to the national taste and liberality, are now fast becoming beautiful, are already exceedingly pretty, and give to a structure that is destined to become historical, having already associated with it the names of Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and Quincy Adams, together with the *ci polloi* of the later Presidents, an entourage that is suitable to its past recollections and its present purposes. They are not quite on a level with the parks of London, it is true; or even with the Tuileries, or Luxembourg, or the Boboli, or the Villa Reale, or fifty more grounds and gardens, of a similar nature, that might be mentioned; but, seen in the spring and early summer, they adorn the building they surround, and lend to the whole neighbourhood a character of high civilization, that no other place in America can show, in precisely the same form, or to the same extent.

This much have we said on the subject of the White House and its precincts, because we took occasion, in a former work, to berate the narrow-minded parsimony which left the grounds of the White House in a condition that was discreditable to the republic. How far our philippic may have hastened the improvements which have been made, is more than we shall pretend to say; but having made the former strictures,



we are happy to have an occasion to say (though nearly twenty years have intervened between the expressions of the two opinions) that they are no longer merited.

And here we will add another word, and that on a subject that is not sufficiently pressed on the attention of a people, who, by position, are unavoidably provincial. We invite those whose gorges rise at any stricture on anything American, and who fancy it is enough to belong to the great republic to be great in itself, to place themselves in front of the State Department, as it now stands, and to examine its dimensions, material and form with critical eyes, then to look along the adjacent Treasury Buildings, to fancy them completed, by a junction with new edifices of a similar construction to contain the department of state; next to fancy similar works completed for the two opposite departments; after which, to compare the past and present with the future as thus finished, and remember how recent has been the partial improvement which even now exists. If this examination and comparison do not show, directly to the sense of sight, how much there was and is to criticise, as put in contrast with other countries, we shall give up the individuals in question, as too deeply dyed in the provincial wool ever to be whitened. The present Trinity church, New York, certainly not more than a third class European church, if as much, compared with its village-like predecessor, may supply a practical homily of the same degree of usefulness. There may be those among us, however, who fancy it patriotism to maintain that the old Treasury Buildings were quite equal to the new, and of these intense Americans we cry their mercy!

Rose felt keenly on reaching her late aunt's very neat dwelling in Fourteenth Street, New York. But the manly tenderness of Mulford was a great support to her, and a little time brought her to think of that weak-minded, but well-meaning and affectionate relative, with gentle regret, rather than with grief. Among the connexions of her young husband, she found several females of a class in life certainly equal to her own, and somewhat superior to the latter in education and habits. As for Harry, he very gladly passed the season with his beautiful bride, though a fine ship was laid down for him, by means of Rose's fortune, now much increased by her aunt's death, and he was absent in Europe when his son was born; an event that occurred only two months since.

The *Swash*, and the shipment of gunpowder, were thought of no more in the good town of Manhattan. This great emporium—we beg pardon, this great commercial emporium—has a trick of forgetting, condensing all interests into those of the present moment. It is much addicted to believing that which never had an existence, and of overlooking that which is occurring directly under its nose. So marked is this tendency to forgetfulness, we should not be surprised to hear some of the Manhattanese pretend



that our legend is nothing but a fiction, and deny the existence of the *Molly*, Captain Spike, and even of Bidly Noon. But we know them too well to mind what they say, and shall go on and finish our narrative in our own way, just as if there were no such raven-throated commentators at all.

Jack Tier, still known by that name, lives in the family of Captain Mulford. She is fast losing the tan on her face and hands, and every day is improving in appearance. She now habitually wears her proper attire, and is dropping gradually into the feelings and habits of her sex. She never can become what she once was, any more than the blackamoor can become white, or the leopard change his spots; but she is no longer revolting. She has left off chewing and smoking, having found a refuge in snuff. Her hair is permitted to grow, and is already turned up with a comb, though constantly concealed beneath a cap. The heart of Jack, alone, seems unaltered. The strange, tiger-like affection that she bore for Spike, during twenty years of abandonment, has disappeared in regrets for his end. It is succeeded by a most sincere attachment for Rose, in which the little boy, since his appearance on the scene, is becoming a large participator. This child Jack is beginning to love intensely; and the doubloons, well invested, placing her above the feeling of dependence, she is likely to end her life, once so errant and disturbed, in tranquillity and a home-like happiness.

THE END.

